

Unwanted sexual contact

Young children

Some adults befriend children online for sexual purposes. This is called grooming. It is illegal and should be reported to police. In many cases police can prosecute adults seeking children for sexual purposes even if they haven't made face to face contact with a child.

Young children generally won't be using websites that enable direct interaction with others without supervision. The following general tips will help manage who can contact your child online and their responses to inappropriate contact.

- At this age children's internet use should be closely monitored. To help with this try to keep the computer in a shared or visible place in the home.
- Be aware of how your child uses the internet and explore it with them. Bookmark a list of 'Favourites' you are comfortable with your child visiting and teach them how to access this list.
- If your child is at an age where you have begun educating them about strangers and protecting their body it may be useful to expand those lessons to cover online. The appropriate age for this education will vary and is a decision for you and your family.
- If you are educating your child about their body and keeping it safe it may be useful to make a rule about what is and isn't okay to discuss on the computer and what should be reported to you or a trusted adult. For example, one rule might be 'if anyone asks you about your underwear or private parts when you are on the computer get Mum to check that what they are saying is okay'.
- Another good rule is for your child to report anything that makes them feel uncomfortable or funny in their tummy.
- If your child shows changes in behaviour or mood that are concerning including increased or decreased sexualised behaviours, clinginess or withdrawal explore your concerns with them and if necessary seek professional support, including through the Cybersmart Online Helpline at www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx. The Cybersmart Online Helpline provides free, confidential online counselling for children and young people.
- If there is a threat to your child's safety the police can help. In a life threatening and time critical situation call Triple Zero (000).

More information

The Cybersmart program provides a range of cybersafety materials for parents and their children. For more information, resources, advice and tips, visit the Cybersmart website at www.cybersmart.gov.au. Encourage your children and teens to take a look around the website. If you have young children, you may like to explore it together to help them understand how to protect themselves against online risks and make the most of their experiences online.