Protecting your child's identity

Blocking unwanted contact for your child

The digital world is now an intrinsic part of a child's growth – it is where they can get new information, keep in touch with friends, and discover new interests.

On the other hand, your child's interactions online might turn into something unsafe or unwanted. It is important to know what kind of support you can provide to your child if those situations arise.

Help protect your child by talking to them about blocking unwanted contact with the help of privacy settings, reporting options and more.

This guide will help you talk to your child about:

✓ What unwanted contact is and its warning signs

✓ How to keep themselves safe from unwanted contact

✓ What to do if they experience unwanted contact

✓ How to block and report accounts

✓ Where to find more help if they need it

Unwanted contact is any type of online communication that your child finds unpleasant or upsetting, or that leads them into a situation where they may be unsafe. This can happen even if they initially welcomed the contact. It can come from strangers, online friends your child has not met face-to-face, or from someone they actually know.[1]

Capping is a term used by offenders that involves attempts to capture or screenshot (screen-cap) sexually explicit images of young people while they live stream or video, often without their knowledge.[2]

Did you know...

According to research by the eSafety Commissioner...

38%

38% of young people in Australia chat to strangers online...

25%

and **1 in 4** young people have been contacted by someone they don't know online.[3]

You challenge your child to a battle on their favourite online game

During the game, a notification alerts that they have a new message from an unknown player who is currently online.

Online gaming can be a healthy activity for young people, that helps build creativity and problem-solving skills. They also get to socialise with school friends and make new friends online. It's important to understand though that online gaming – and any form of digital communications such as social and messaging apps - can expose your child to predators who may pose as young people to gain their trust.

Stay curious about your child's online experiences and help them self-identify the signs of unwanted contact.

Conversation starter

What are the differences between contact from a real online friend who wants to chat with you and a stranger who you don't vibe with?

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[1] Child grooming and unwanted contact | eSafety Commissioner
[2] Sextortion | ACCCE
[3] Unwanted contact and grooming: factsheet | eSafety Commissioner

Protecting your child from unwanted contact

Unwanted contact is online communication that is inappropriate, unsafe and offensive, or makes your child feel uncomfortable. It can come from a stranger, but also from someone they know.

Most gaming and social media and messaging platforms state the type of behaviour they consider as inappropriate in their community guidelines or rules and policies. To help your child protect themselves from unwanted contact, start by talking about age-appropriate classification and community guidelines.

Conversation starter

Can you think why some games or social media platforms restrict young users? If we read the community guidelines, we can understand the behaviour that is and isn't accepted. Also, there are things you can do to help protect yourself from unwanted contact, like setting your account to private.

How to spot the signs of unwanted contact

Protect your child from unwanted contact by talking together about what to look out for.

Inconsistent

The unwanted contact tells stories that don't match up to information they previously shared.

Conversation starter

What if an online friend told you that they are 13 years old but talks about going on a night drive. What is inconsistent about their story?

Persistent

The unwanted contact keeps contacting your child or asks them to respond across multiple online platforms.

Conversation starter

Have you ever received a DM on Instagram from a stranger? And then have they gone so far as to find you on another social media like Snapchat? Would you consider that odd behaviour from a stranger? Why or why not?

Intrusive

The unwanted contact demands that your child share personal details such as their address, mode of transportation to school, family members, etc.

Conversation starter

Can you think of some examples of personal information that an online stranger might want to know about you? Can you name the risks of sharing that information with someone you haven't met in real life?

Inappropriate

The unwanted contact makes your child feel embarrassed or uncomfortable by asking personal questions that intrude their privacy.

Conversation starter

Can you think of a time someone online made an inappropriate comment about your appearance? Or asked about your relationship status? Or sexual experience? Sometimes you might feel unsure about these comments, but if it makes you feel uncomfortable at all, it's not OK.

Offensive

The unwanted contact sounds threatening or extreme, or say and send things that are insensitive, hateful or violent without your child's consent.

Conversation starter

Is there an example of violent, hateful or abusive content that you have experienced online that you wish you didn't? How can we encourage positive online communities to make sure we prevent offensive content being circulated? If someone sends you mean messages or posts something that attacks you, that is cyberbullying and we can do something about it.

Asking for favours

The unwanted contact asks for money, in-game tokens, payments or pictures of your child.

Conversation starter

If an online stranger asks you for money to help play for their relative's medical bills, would you send them money? How about if it was a kid from another school that you play in an online game? How about if they asked you to send photos of yourself, is that appropriate? Do you think they would ask for these same favours face-to-face?

Your child asks you if they can meet up with a friend they met online

They tell you that the 'friend' is in Grade 6 at a school nearby and that they have money to spend on lollies because their Mum gave it to them.

Making friends with someone through online channels becomes increasingly common as a young person grows up.[4] They need your guidance to navigate the uncertainties and potential dangers of the world – both online and IRL.

Help your child understand how and why people online might hide who they really are. To avoid raising fearful emotions, remember to make the conversation age-appropriate.

Conversation starter

What is the difference between meeting someone face-to-face verses online? When we make friends online, how can we be sure that they are who they say they are?
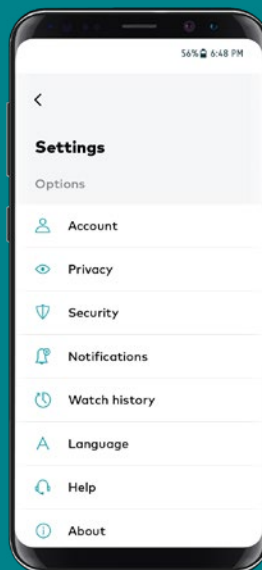
Setting online accounts to private

Privacy settings can also act as the first line of defence against unwanted contact. The privacy settings across different platforms and apps may look different but will always follow these general steps.
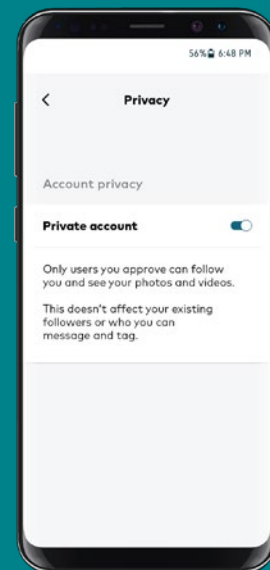
1 Go to settings
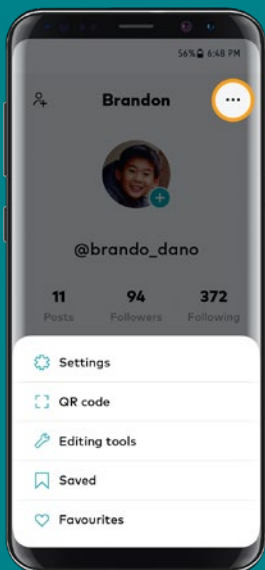
2 Find privacy settings

3 Select private account/limit who can contact me

A step-by-step guide on how to safeguard your child's privacy on popular apps and games can be found here.

4 Microsoft Word - Youth_kids_and_digital.docx (esafety.gov.au)

Your child becomes distressed after checking a social media notification

They show you that an older student from their school sent them a gore video.

The internet circulates both positive and negative content. One in five young people report receiving inappropriate or uninvited content such as pornography or violent material.[5] As parents, we might be compelled to separate our child from unwanted contact completely by cutting off access to their devices. However, independent learning of the digital world is also important to their personal growth.[6]

Help your child become aware of the dangers of unwanted contact by developing their digital decision-making skills.

Conversation starter

Can you name some things you do to keep yourself safe IRL? Like locking the door, putting on a seatbelt or avoiding older kids or bullies? How can you do the same in your online experiences?

What to do if your child experiences unwanted contact

According to research by the eSafety Commissioner, young people usually show signs of sadness, anger, self-doubt or struggle with their schoolwork when they are confronted with a negative experience like unwanted contact online.[7]

When you notice something is wrong, there are different actions you can take with your child to deal with unwanted contact. Remember to remain calm and create a safe space to work through these actions with your child so they wouldn't feel ashamed or regret asking for help.

[5] The digital lives of Aussie teens.pdf (esafety.gov.au)
[6] Screen time & social life: kids & teens | Raising Children Network
[7] Mind the Gap - Parental awareness of children's exposure to risks online - FINAL.pdf (esafety.gov.au), p. 50-51.

Tell someone

Acknowledge that by telling someone, our child decides to take action against something they don't want.

Ask them to stop

If it is safe, your child can ask the unwanted contact to stop and change their behaviour, especially if it is someone they know already. Your child's boundaries might not have been made clear to them or they might not know they have done something wrong.

Block them

Use the platform or app settings to block, mute or unfollow the unwanted contact so they can't reach your child anymore.

Report them via the platform or app

Screenshot or screen record the evidence of the unwanted contact's actions and report them to the app or platform.

If someone is threatening to share, or has shared, nudes, intimate or private images of your child, they are committing a crime – even if they are both under 18 years.

You can take screenshots or recordings of when and where it was shared, but do not take screenshots of the intimate image or video, itself, as this can be a crime. There's more information from the Office of the eSafety Commissioner here.

Report them to the Office of the eSafety Commissioner

If the unwanted contact is still bothering your child after 48 hours of reporting to the platform or app, you can make a report to the Office of the eSafety Commissioner to get the unwanted contact removed from the platform.

Report them to the police

If the unwanted contact persists and becomes unsafe or violent, you should contact the [Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE)](#) who accepts reports about inappropriate online behaviour like this.

Blocking and reporting unwanted contact

Like privacy settings, blocking and reporting unwanted contact may vary slightly across the different platforms and apps but most will follow these general steps.
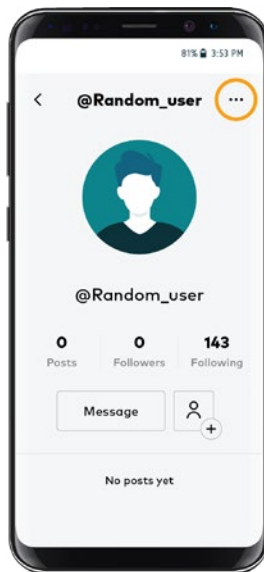
1

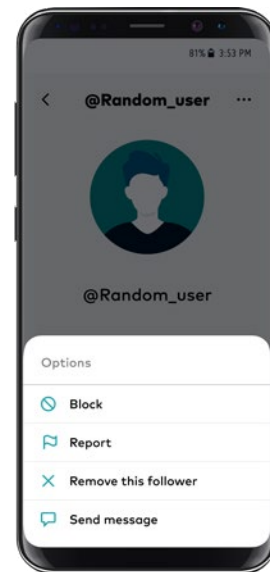**Identify the profile or post of the unwanted contact**
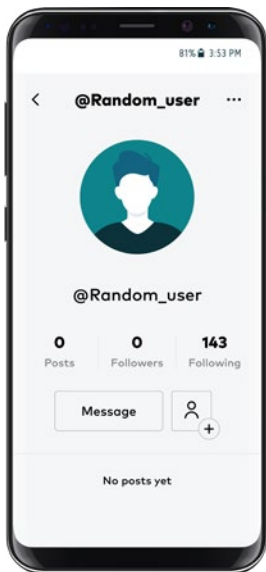
2

Click the three-dots or more button

3

Find and click on the block or report buttons

Encourage them to reach out for support when it gets tricky or uncomfortable online.

Conversation starter

Can you describe a situation where you would want to block someone or report them? I can help you if you are in a situation that you are unsure about.

What to do if your child needs more help

Take action by contacting:

- eSafety Commissioner
  to report cyberbullying, image-based abuse and illegal and restricted content

- Australian Cyber Security Centre
  to report cybercrime, including online threats and abuse, scams and hacks, data breaches, identity theft and fraud

- Scamwatch
  to report scams

- Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation to report online grooming and inappropriate contact

- Triple Zero (000) for situations where your child's physical safety is at risk

- IDCARE
  to get identity theft, data breach, scam and cyber security support

If your child needs to talk to someone about their feelings or worries, they can contact:

- Kids Helpline
  on 1800 55 1800 for free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling services

- 13YARN
  on 13 92 76 for a free, private and confidential talk 24/7 with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter

About Optus Digital Thumbprint

Optus Digital Thumbprint supports digital safety and wellbeing for young people and families. Find out more at www.digitalthumbprint.com.au

Trusted eSafetyProvider
esafety.gov.au