Optus Digital Thumbprint

Generative AI and online safety
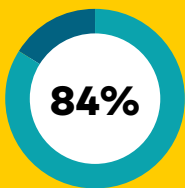
Is your child using AI safely?

Technology is moving fast, and it can be hard to keep up. Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming part of everyday life – from checking the route to work with Google maps – to picking a movie to watch.

One type of AI, called Generative AI (Gen AI), goes even further by creating new content. Popular games such as Roblox and Minecraft are now using it within the design, and social media apps such as Instagram and TikTok use it to tailor content that you or your child sees in their feed.

By understanding Gen AI, you can support your child's use of this technology as a tool for learning, creativity and problem-solving. Just remember – AI is best used to enhance your child's unique skills, thinking and talents, not replace them.

This guide provides practical tips and conversation starters:

- ✓ Breaking down what Gen AI is (and isn't)
- ✓ The pros and cons of Gen AI
- ✓ Helping your child engage with Gen AI safely and productively

What's the difference between Artificial Intelligence vs Generative AI?

AI is technology that performs tasks which traditionally require human thinking. For example, recommending products to purchase or a TV show to watch.

Gen AI goes a step further by creating new content on its own, like text, images, conversations, music, and even videos. The latest versions of ChatGPT and Co-Pilot can do these tasks. It's becoming harder to tell the difference between content made by GenAI and content made by humans.

There are a few key terms to understand how Gen AI applications are built.

- Large Language Models (LLMs) can create text that sounds like it was written by a human and are used in tools like ChatGPT and Co-Pilot.

- Multimodal Foundation Models (MFMs) take it a step further, allowing AI to process and create text, images, and audio.

Did you know...

84% of Gen Z Australians (aged 5-24) have used Generative AI[1]

[1] Year13, Microsoft, & KPMG. (2024). AI amplified - What Gen Zs think of AI

Understanding Gen AI

Understanding Gen AI equips you to support your child in today's tech-driven world. Learning where it appears helps you guide them to use it safely and confidently. Here are key terms and tools to know:

AI tools	What you need to know	How Gen AI helps	What to watch out for
Text-based tools such as ChatGPT and Microsoft Co-Pilot	Assists with tasks like answering questions, sharing information, and creating content like stories, articles, or images. Unlike basic AI, it learns from input and adapts to your requests.	✓ Supports learning and homework by providing information quickly. ✓ Sparks creativity, helping generate ideas like stories. ✓ Enables collaboration, ideal for group projects.	✕ May give incorrect answers. ✕ Requires parental supervision for safe use. ✕ Can lead to reliance on technology over independent thinking.
	Conversation starters	• How can these tools help you? • What can you do that these tools cannot? • When is it okay to use these tools, and when should you rely on your own skills? • Do these tools always provide the right answers? Why or why not? • How do these tools decide what to show or tell you?	
Image-based tools such as DALL-E	Can create realistic images from text descriptions. Unlike traditional AI, which only categorises images it knows, DALL-E generates new ones based on your input.	✓ Creates unique and imaginative images from text descriptions. ✓ Enhances learning by helping children visualise concepts.	✕ May create harmful or inappropriate images if misused. ✕ Blurs the line between real and fake visuals. ✕ Can reduce children's creativity by encouraging over-reliance on the tool.
	Conversation starters	• Why might some images from this tool not match what you imagined? • Why is it important to choose words carefully when using this tool?	

Gen AI tools	What you need to know	How Gen AI helps	What to watch out for
Chatbots	Gen AI chatbots go beyond setting alarms or ordering food. They learn from interactions to create flexible responses, handle diverse questions, and generate new content.	✓ Provides quick answers to questions. ✓ Can offer support, companionship, or a safe space to explore personal topics.	✕ Can encourage unsafe behaviour. ✕ Can spread inaccurate or harmful information. ✕ Can allow children to share sensitive or personal information.
	Conversation starters	• Why might someone use a Gen AI chatbot? • How are Gen AI chatbots different from humans? • What do you like most about using a GenAI chatbot when you need someone to listen?	
Deepfakes	Gen AI powers deepfakes, creating fake videos, audio, or images that mimic someone's voice, face, or actions.	✓ Can help children learn about special effects or editing. ✓ Can entertain by creating fun, fictional content. ✓ Has potential in education and training, simulating real-life situations.	✕ Can be used to create harmful or inappropriate content, including for fake news, scams and cyberbullying. ✕ Children may not recognise fake content, especially from celebrities or influencers.
	Conversation starters	• Why might a video's story or speech stop and start or feel incomplete? • Why might someone's movements look unnatural in a video?	
Nudify Apps	Nudify apps use Gen AI to alter images, adding or removing clothing to create fake explicit content, often without consent.		✕ Nudify apps are harmful ✕ Makes explicit fake images easy to create and misuse in cyberbullying and extortion. ✕ Spreads misinformation, blurring real and fake.
	Conversation starters	• How can you keep your personal images safe? • How can you tell if an app is trustworthy?	

Actions you can take to support your child

1 Stay curious and encourage critical thinking

Encourage your child to stay curious by asking 'why' and 'how' when using Gen AI tools. This helps them think critically and engage with the information more thoughtfully, using this technology to their benefit.

2 Keep security in mind

Gen AI tools might not always be clear about how they use your child's data. To keep your child safe, remind your child not to share or upload personal information, photos or videos to these tools. This protects their privacy and keeps their data safe.

3 Know the limits

Make sure AI tools are right for your child's age and maturity. Some platforms, like Chat GPT and DALL-E, require users to be at least 13 years old. Other platforms need parents' permission if a child is under 18. Always check the platform's terms of service to make sure it is safe for your child.

Pro tip:
How can I check Gen AI information?

1. **Question the Answer:** Does it sound too perfect, or does it have any mistakes?

2. **Check the Source:** Is the content from a trusted source or Gen AI tool?

3. **Cross Reference:** Check with trusted sources to make sure the information is correct.

4 Start (and keep) the conversation going

Gen AI technology is always changing, so talk to your child often about how and when they use these tools. Regular talks and check-ins will help your child learn about Gen AI and how it affects their life now and in the future.
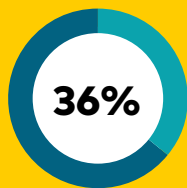
Pro tip:
How can I kick off a conversation?

Start conversations with open-ended questions like 'Why do you think Gen AI is used to create voices and images?' or 'How can tools that use Gen AI help you?' This shows interest and encourages your child to think more creatively while exploring the topic together.

Did you know...

36%

One third of Australian consumers have been targeted by Gen AI scams.[2]

Criminals are now using AI and Gen AI to create sophisticated scams, with many targeting young people. They collect information from online platforms, send mass messages, and use Gen AI to create convincing fake profiles to engage with victims.

Young people are often targeted by scams, including sexual extortion. This case study of 15-year-old "Hunter" shows how it happens.

Fifteen-year-old Hunter received a friend request from "Bella," who seemed to be a classmate of his sister. They exchanged messages and photos, and Bella promised to send a nude if Hunter did the same. After Hunter sent intimate photos, "Bella" vanished, and a cybercriminal began demanding money.

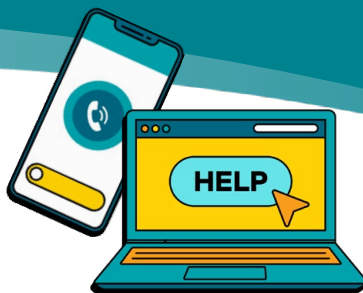[2] cfotech.com.au/story/deepfake-scams-cost-australian-businesses-millions-research-reveals

If this happens to your child, reassure them it's not their fault.

Follow these steps:

✓ Don't pay.

✓ Collect evidence. Take screenshots.

✓ Report it. Notify the platform, eSafety, and ACCCE (if under 18).

✓ Block and secure. Stop contact and tighten account privacy.

Visit eSafety for tips on preventing the spread of or removing shared content.

What to do if your child needs more help

- eSafety Commissioner to report cyberbullying, image-based abuse, and illegal and restricted content
- Australian Cyber Security Centre to report a cybercrime, cyber security incident or vulnerability.
- The Police if your child is in immediate danger or facing online harm.
- Contact your child's school to discuss the issue.

If your child needs to talk to someone about their feelings or worries, they can contact any of these free, private, 24/7 services:

- Kids Helpline on **1800 55 1800**
- 1300 Yarn on **12 92 76**
- Lifeline on **13 11 14**

About Optus Digital Thumbprint

Through our Digital Empowerment strategy and programs, Optus is enabling all Australians to achieve, thrive and belong in a digital world.

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

Trusted eSafety Provider
esafety.gov.au