



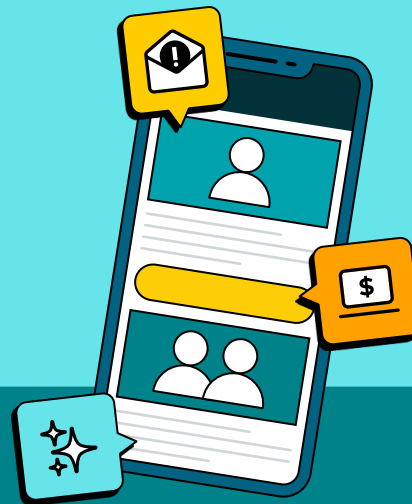
Optus
Digital
Thumbprint

Scams targeting children

A guide for parents and carers



Young people don't often come to mind when thinking about victims of scams, but statistically they're more likely to experience online scams. For children and teenagers online, scams often look like everyday activities. This might include purchasing items that don't exist and never arrive, receiving messages from people they think they can trust, or having valuable character/avatar appearance upgrades ("skins"), rewards or items stolen in their favourite game.



Why young people are being targeted

More connected, more exposed

Young people spend more time online than any previous generation. Research shows younger Australians are increasingly affected by online scams despite being digitally confident.

Life is lived online

As more of life moves online, information such as a name, date of birth, address, school or gaming username may seem harmless to share. However, it can be used to build trust, target victims or make scams appear more convincing. In some cases, sharing personal information can also lead to unwanted contact, identity theft, account hacking or other cybercrime activities.

Brains are still developing

The part of the brain responsible for judgement, impulse control and assessing risk continues developing into early adulthood. This can make young people more likely to respond quickly to exciting, urgent or emotional messages.

Trust looks different online

For many young people, online friendships can feel just as genuine as friendships formed in person. Scammers exploit this trust by pretending to be friends, gamers, influencers, brands or people with shared interests.



Read more about personal information in our [Privacy Guide](#).

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Common scams targeting young people

For young people, scams often look like every day online interactions. They might appear as a message from a friend, a gaming reward, a shopping bargain or even a job opportunity. Many are designed to create excitement, urgency or fear so that young people act quickly without stopping to think.

Scam Type	What does it look like?	What is it trying to do?
 Sextortion (a form of blackmail)	• Requests for private images or videos • Threats to share content with family or friends • Demands for money, gift cards or more images	Scare the victim into sending money, images or personal information.
 Online shopping / Purchase scams	• Heavily discounted products • Fake online stores or social media sellers • Items that never arrive after payment	Steal money, payment details or personal information.
 Employment / Job Scams	• Easy money offers • Mystery shopping opportunities • Paid social media tasks or influencer roles	To collect personal information, banking details or upfront payments.
 Gaming platform scams	• Free in-game rewards or currency, e.g. skins • Account upgrade offers • Rare item or pet trades • Links shared through games or chat platforms	Steal gaming accounts, valuable items, passwords or payment details.
 Child identity theft	• Competitions or giveaways asking for personal details • Fake account verification requests • Requests for identity documents	Impersonate someone, access accounts, or commit fraud.
 Romance / Catfishing scams	• Online friendships that become intense quickly • Requests for photos or personal information • Requests for money, gifts or favours	Gain trust and obtain money, images or personal information.
 AI/ Deepfake-Enabled Scams	• Calls that sound like a family member • Fake videos or images • Messages that appear to come from a trusted person or organisation	Create trust, panic or urgency and convince someone to send money or share information.

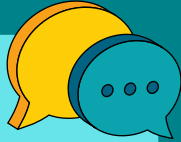
What you can do

Start the conversation early

Research shows that young people are more likely to seek help when they feel they can talk openly with a trusted adult. Asking for help, rather than testing their knowledge, can also make teenagers more willing to engage in the conversation.

For example:

- "Can you help me work out if this message is real?"
- "Something about this feels off. What do you think?"
- "If you got this message, what would you check first?"



Stop, Check, Protect

A simple phrase to practise together is Stop, Check, Protect. It gives your child three clear steps to follow when something feels off.

1. Stop

Don't give money or personal information to anyone if unsure.

2. Check

Ask yourself – could the message or call be fake?

3. Protect

Act quickly - contact the bank if a scammer gets your money and report scams.

Where to report and get support

- [Scamwatch](#) – Report scams and check current scam alerts. Reporting also helps protect others.
- [eSafety Commissioner](#) – Get help with online impersonation, harmful content and account issues. They can also work with platforms to remove content.
- [Kids Helpline](#) on **1800 55 1800**
- [13 Yarn](#) on **13 92 76**
- [Lifeline](#) on **13 11 14**
- [IDCARE](#) – Support if identity or personal information is compromised, with steps to reduce further harm.

About Optus Digital Thumbprint

Through our Sustainability strategy, 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

