

Online safety basics:

Help your children safely navigate their digital world and educate them to avoid harmful online experiences. Explore websites, games, apps and social media together and set some rules. Your support and guidance can give your children the confidence to make sound decisions online — and ask for help when they need it.

Three key strategies:

1. Be engaged, open and supportive

- Get involved. Share online time with your children as part of family life. Play games together. Talk about favourite apps, games or websites.
- Keep lines of communication open. Ask about their online experiences, who they are talking to and whether they are having any issues.
- Reassure your child they can always come to you, no matter what. Let them know you will not cut off internet access if they report feeling uncomfortable or unsafe when online — this is a real concern that may stop your child from communicating with you openly.
- If you notice a change in behaviour or mood, talk to your child about it. If you are concerned, consider seeking professional help — from your GP, a psychologist or school counsellor.

2. Set some rules

- Set age-appropriate rules for devices and online access, with consequences for breaking them.
- Ensure your child's input — this will help them understand risks. As they get older you can review your rules together.
- Consider creating a [family tech agreement](#) (sometimes called a family media plan or family online safety agreement). A [family tech agreement](#) is a set of rules about how devices, like smartphones, tablets, computers, TVs and gaming consoles are used in your home. It is written down and agreed to by all family members and kept in a place where everyone can see it, such as on the fridge.
- Your [family tech agreement](#) could cover the type of websites that can be visited, time spent online and acceptable online behaviour.
- eSafety has created our own version of a [Family Tech Agreement](#), in collaboration with [ABC KIDS](#), especially designed for families with [children under 5](#). You can download this and fill it in with your family. Another example, from [ThinkUKnow](#) Australia, can also be a good starting point for families with older children.
- The consequences for breaking the rules should be clear. Negotiate these with your child when you create your agreement so they mean something to them — [Raising Children Network](#) has some useful tips and advice.
- Consider making some 'rules for parents' too — and stick to them! Model behaviour that you would like to see.

3. Use the available technology

- Get to know the devices you and your children use and set them up for privacy and online safety. Take advantage of parental controls to monitor and control screen time and access to content in ways appropriate to your child's age and experience. See our guide to [taming the technology](#).
- Choose apps and games carefully, taking age ratings and consumer advice into account. Check the App Store or Google Play, and for games, the [Australian Classification Board's online database](#). [NetAware \(UK\)](#) has a comprehensive guide to popular social media apps and games. The [Australian Council on Children and the Media](#) and [Common Sense Media \(US\)](#) both offer information about apps, games and websites searchable by age.

Kids 5-12:

As children start to navigate the online world and interact with others more independently, they are more likely to be exposed to risks of bullying or unwanted contact, accidentally coming across inappropriate content or racking up bills through in-app purchases.

Your guidance can help them be aware of the risks and understand what is expected of them. And let them know you are always there to support them.

For kids aged 5 to 12, it is important to:

- Keep the computer or device in an area of your home that can be supervised. And check in regularly with your child to see what they are viewing.
- Stay engaged with their online activity. If they agree, consider setting up your own accounts with the sites they use most so you can see how they work and understand the risks.
- Explore the online world with them to help establish that this is not just a solitary activity. Play games with them. Do a creative project together.
- Think about social media readiness. Most social media sites require users to be at least 13 years of age before they can register, although some sites are created especially for children under 13. See [are they old enough?](#)
- Encourage respect and empathy. Teach them to avoid sharing or posting things that may upset others. See [good habits start young](#).
- Start building resilience. Teach your child that there are ways they can deal with material that worries or frightens them. This includes immediately telling you or another trusted adult of any concerns or uncomfortable material. See [good habits start young](#).
- Encourage them to learn about online safety by exploring the [kids](#) section of this site.

Review your rules as your child grows older:

- Be clear about how much time they can spend online, the apps they can use, the websites they can visit and what they can share or post online.
- Refer to our advice about [time online](#) and [online gaming](#) if these are of concern.

Technology tips for parents of kids 5 to 12:

- Ensure your own devices are protected by a password or pin, so your child cannot accidentally come across inappropriate content.
- If you are thinking about giving them their own tablet or smartphone, check out are they old enough?
- Use parental control tools appropriate for the age and experience of your child. Be upfront about this and get your child on board. Let them know that these can be reviewed and changed as they get older and they continue to demonstrate responsible behaviour. Consider installing a 'child-friendly' search engine that will allow them to explore a limited number of sites. See [taming the technology](#).
- Check out [Raising Children Network's](#) healthy screen time and quality media choices: 6-11 years.