



The Boomer Challenge

Educator guide

The Boomer Challenge

The Boomer Challenge is a fun, interactive, educational online game for children 8 to 12 years of age.

The game's key message is that in the online world, users should always be sceptical about interactions with others – even if they think they know them.

*It's important to **recognise** the signs that something could be dodgy, **react** by walking away and **report** immediately to a safety helper.*

The Boomer Challenge encourages safer online interactions, normalises risk assessments and empowers online decision-making.

The format allows children to engage in decision-making processes and explore the consequences their choices, providing them with a better understanding of online safety.

This game has been developed for children to use unsupervised.

Why is it called the Boomer Challenge?

The story follows a boy called Millsy and his 18 year old sister Kristy, who are participating in a recorded video challenge where they try to teach their grandparents how to navigate the internet safely.

The use of 'Boomer' reflects the joking way that some children refer to older people, especially their struggles with technology. It also captures their general feeling of knowing more than the oldies about the world, and particularly, the internet.

Millsy finds out that teaching someone to navigate the internet safely is not always as easy as it seems, and that dodgy tricksters have many ways of hiding in plain sight online. Millsy and Kristy need to help their grandparents think critically about online interactions, avoid scams, embarrassing videos and other online problems.

The key messages and teachable moments are transferable lessons, providing knowledge that will help children interact online, in any platform, in a safer way.

Who is The Boomer Challenge for?

It is designed for children 8 to 12 years of age, but older kids and adults also find it entertaining!

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How to play the Boomer Challenge

Children play through the perspective of Millsy, who is trying his hardest to help Grandma and Grandpa learn how to use different platforms on the internet.

The various story paths and decision points encourage children to play and replay to explore alternative courses of action.

Children will watch a 9 minute introduction animation before being presented with four scenarios.

Path 1. Grandma uses email

Path 2. Grandpa on social media

Path 3. Grandpa games

Path 4. Grandma creates an online photo album - available soon.

Within each path there are decisions that will be faced.

At the end of each path, children can choose whether to replay the path, or try another and teach Grandma and Grandpa something new.

TIP: Encourage children to try all choices for each path to ensure they are aware the different things that can happen in the online world.

Aim of the Boomer Challenge

To contribute to a culture where safe online interactions are commonplace, and normalise risk assessment and empowered decision-making online.

- Recognise potentially unsafe, dangerous or risky online situations and behaviours.
- Identify rules for avoiding unsafe, dangerous or risky online situations and behaviours.
- Identify strategies to use when encountering potentially unsafe, dangerous or risky online situations and behaviours.
- Increase awareness of pathways to access reporting and support services.

In the classroom

There is a chance that some of the students in your classroom may have experienced adverse or distressing situations online. For this reason, teachers should be prepared to manage any disclosures and follow the school's child protection policy in cases where a student disclosed abuse.

Ensure you adopt a clear non-victim blaming approach and do not blame characters in the animation for any risky choices they may make. Emphasise that if something happens online that worries a child, it is never their fault, and they should always seek help.

How to make a report

[I think a child is being groomed online - How to make a report.](#)

Looking after yourself and others

It's important to be aware that receiving a disclosure can be stressful for a teacher and other school staff. If you are feeling that your mental health is being affected you may need to seek support from a colleague, your school's Employee Assistance Program or mental health organisations.

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

<https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

<https://childsafety.pmc.gov.au/> - Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people

The Boomer Challenge design challenge

Do you think your class could design a fifth path for The Boomer Challenge?

The Boomer Challenge Design Challenge allows children to explore online safety issues and design a path that Millsy and Kristy could consider teaching Grandma and Grandpa.

What are the risks to children online?

Over confidence – because children easily adapt to technology there is a risk that they could find themselves on a platform that is not age appropriate and could be exposed to harmful content.

Social - the internet has provided a platform for children to connect with other kids and form relationships with people who they may not know in real life. Children do not view these people as a threat and in some instances, they see their online friends as closer to them than their friends or family.

Emotional - negative online information, harmful content and fake news can be distressing and traumatising for children to process. Knowing how to navigate the internet and seek assistance if they see something that upsets them is crucial.

Physical - there is an assumption that children are physically safe while they are interacting online. However, there is a real threat of physical danger associated with sharing photos or personal information online.

Why do children take risks online that they wouldn't take offline?

Capabilities - children lack the awareness of online risks. In real life they are aware that their physical safety can be threatened by people unknown to them. Online, the threat of someone they have met in a game does not necessarily immediately raise red flags. Also, children often lack the necessary skills to deal with people who may be trying to use persuasive, coercive or manipulative tactics on them.

Opportunities - there are more opportunities to interact with a wide variety of people online and this has become a societal norm. The environmental prompts surrounding online behaviours are not apparent and children often take things at face value.

Motivation - often elements of online games or platforms contain highly addictive reward-based elements. These could be lights, colours, sounds, gems or game levels. The part of the brain responsible for reward-based stimuli is distinct from the part of the brain responsible for rational decision making. This leads to children acting more impulsively and taking more risks online, than they would do in real life.

Children often find that cyber-safety lessons are way below their understanding, so they don't engage with them. The lessons paint the internet in a way that does not represent the experiences of children.

Handling difficult situations

Avoid blaming or shaming the child – it is never a child's fault, and they are not responsible if someone tricks them into doing something online. The key to keeping kids safe online is to keep communication open and let them know they can always come to you or another safety helper if something feels wrong or uncomfortable.

Glossary of terms

Sceptical – not easily convinced, having doubts or reservations that something is true.

Social engineering – is how predators use natural human behaviour to trick someone into doing something they wouldn't normally do. They can pretend to be someone a child knows or may try to make friends with them in a game.

Phishing – is an attack that attempts to steal your money or your identity, by getting you to reveal personal information, such as credit card numbers, bank information or passwords.

Screen capped (or screen grab) – to capture a copy of one's computer screen, whether that is a copy of a picture or a video.

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Need support of more information?

- If you believe a child is in danger call **Police 000**
- Resources to teach child safety skills to children and young people are available from the **Daniel Morcombe Foundation website**.