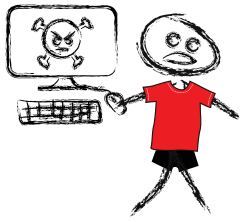


Fact Sheet

Video calling safety



Video calling is fast becoming a popular part of our everyday lives



Apps such as Facetime, Whatsapp, Messenger and Skype are now being used for a range of purposes from socialising with friends and family to engaging in extracurricular activities and online learning for school.

Familiarity using video calling can often mask the hidden dangers that this new medium poses.

Know the dangers

Live stream, video calling platforms and applications, which allow people to meet in a virtual space carry potential risks particularly for their under-age users. Familiarising oneself with the platform's privacy, security features and their functions is a great idea for parents and carers. Knowing their limitations enables parents and carers to acknowledge and reduce the dangers video chatting presents. Loopholes exploited by online predators enable the potential for information and image sharing, porn and content bombing, spam, and cyberbullying.

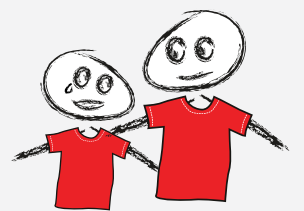
Here are some simple steps that parents and carers can use to make video calling safer for kids.

Age

Many video calling apps have quite low age limits – for example, Facetime (4+), Zoom (4+) and Google Duo (4+) – possibly masking the risks. Skype (12+), Houseparty (12+), Messenger (12+) and WhatsApp (12+) are more restricted. There are apps designed specifically for children such as Jus Talk Kids (3+) and Messenger Kids (4+).

Talk openly

Have a conversation with your child about the reasons why they may be using the video calling platform or application. Are there other options? Who are they trying to connect with? Talk candidly about the risks and benefits of using the platform or application. Explain to them that just as we must learn how to be safe at home and out in public, we must also learn how to be safe when we are online.



Use the safety features

Show your children the safety features of the respective platform or application they are using. Teach your child how to block unwanted callers, messages, and spam. For example, on the Facetime application, you can tap the Info button next to the contact name/number. Then tap Block this Caller and Block Contact to confirm. If they are using applications such as Houseparty, teach them how to keep the chat room locked.

Familiarize yourself with the default settings, parental controls and notifications that relate to each video calling platform and application, adjust the privacy settings accordingly. Make clear agreements with your child (age dependent) about how they will navigate pop up advertisements, requests to join meetings or chats, random hyperlinks and in application purchases prior to allowing children access to video calling devices.

Remind your child to communicate with you regularly about their safety concerns and make sure you allocate regular time to sit with them to reassess safety and access with all the devices in your home.

Think of the call as a public space

Talk to your child about the dangers of information sharing and remind them not to say or do anything that they may later regret. Educate your child about the dangers associated with engaging in seemingly private conversations with close family and friends that may turn out to be public. Some applications and platforms may be susceptible to hacking potentially resulting in content being recorded and shared without the child's knowledge and consent. Conversations may also be overheard or viewed by external parties, such as visiting friends in a participant's household.

Be aware of clothing/appearance

Protect children's privacy by ensuring that they are appropriately dressed and presented. Ask children to throw on a shirt or change their clothing so that modesty is maintained. Avoid identifying details such as children's school or sport uniforms.



Use the device in a shared space within the home

Use a shared space such as the kitchen or the living room so you can keep an ear and eye on the conversation and monitor its content. This also keeps the call public and prevents accidental sharing of private spaces or moments online (e.g. another family member changing in the next room).

Model safe use of video calling apps

Use applications and platforms like Facetime or Zoom with your child, demonstrating safe practices such as: positioning yourself in an open space, making sure that you protect private information (e.g. your full name, address and children's school) and being aware of what you're sharing. Reinforce that they can always talk to you about anything that happens on the app or platform.

Think about what is appropriate to share virtually

In our haste to be innovative, it can be easy to overlook personal safety considerations. Not all activities are suitable for sharing online. For example, discuss with your child why activities such as gymnastics or yoga may not be appropriate for sharing online and perhaps should wait for face to face interactions.

Video calling can be a fantastic solution to isolation and a great way to share time with friends and family. As with all new platforms, it is important to be aware of the risks for young people. Armed with this awareness, parents and carers can plan for safe use of these new tools.

Where to Get Help

- In an emergency, call the Police or triple zero (000)
- If you suspect that a child has experienced abuse or is at risk of harm you should contact the relevant state or territory child protection agency. The Australian Institute of Family Studies has an up to date contact list <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/reporting-abuse-and-neglect>.
- Parentline - 1800 30 1300 provide free telephone counselling and advice to parents and carers. Resources are available at <https://www.parentline.com.au/> to support parents and carers to understand a wide range of issues related to raising children and young people
- Kids Helpline - 1800 55 1800 provide a free, 24 hour counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 on 1800 55 1800. Resources and webchat are available at <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>.

Useful resources

- Keeping Kids Safe Resources – The Daniel Morcombe Foundation provides free downloadable activities to engage children and young people in learning about personal safety at <https://danielmorcombe.com.au/keeping-kids-safe-resources/>.
- eSafety Commissioner.

