



A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Online grooming: How do I help my child?

Talk openly

Have regular conversations with your child. Try to remain non-judgmental.

Share their online world

Reinforce that there are many positives to technology and the online world.

- Be a 'friend' or 'follower' on your child's social media accounts
- Know what apps your child is using
- Make time to play online games with your child.

Recognise the warning signs

There are often warning signs when a child is being groomed. Whilst some of the following can be indicative of 'normal' adolescent development, they can also serve as red flags that something is unsafe in your child's world:

- Your child spends an increased or excessive amount of time online
- You may find sexualised search results which demonstrates that your child has 'googled' what they have been asked
- Your child receives unexplained gifts (often e-vouchers)
- Your child uses sexualised language
- Your child is excessively secretive about their use of technology – including social media
- Your child engages online with people they don't know personally
- Your child displays mood changes (hyperactive, secretive, hostile, withdrawn).

Support your child

If you ever find out that something has gone wrong for your child in the online world, be sure to emphasise that it is not their fault. Whilst it may be extremely difficult to withhold your own emotions, any negative emotion is likely to prompt your child to close-off. Make time to listen openly and supportively.

Collect Evidence

Before blocking anyone, or deleting any material take screenshots in order to collect evidence (note times and dates). However, be aware that if you are in possession of any material involving naked or sexualised images of minors (people under 18) it can be considered a crime – even if you just took a screenshot for the purpose of using it as evidence. You can contact police for assistance with this.

Report any concerns

Call the police immediately (on triple zero – 000) if you think your child is at risk of being abused or their physical safety is at risk. Report online grooming to your local police.

You can also report child online sexual exploitation (including grooming) via the **Report Abuse** button on either the **ACCCE AFP** www.accce.gov.au/report or **ThinkUKnow** www.thinkuknow.org.au/.

You will need the following information:

- platform used to make contact (online game, email, social media platform etc.)
- website address
- internet username (your Internet Service Provider should be able to help you with this)
- as much other detail as possible (including date and time of contact).

If the matter doesn't require a police response, it can generally be reported to the online platform on which the issue occurred. Many platforms have a 'Help' section that explains how to report or make a complaint.

Get help together

Victims of grooming often report feeling ashamed, powerless, betrayed, deceived. When you work together towards a resolution, they can feel begin to feel empowered again and, subsequently, less vulnerable in future.

Seek further support

It is likely that both you and your child will need further support. Role-model that it is valuable to get help.

Spend time together seeking out suitable options for counselling from individuals or organisations such as

Kids Helpline <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>.

Headspace <https://headspace.org.au/>, a school counselor or chaplain etc.

Reach out to organisations such as **Parentline** <https://parentline.com.au/>, in order to support yourself.