

-For youngsters:

Cyberbullying

Spending too much time online

Are you spending too much time online? If you feel like you're always checking your phone or updating your status, you're not alone.

On average young people in Australia make use of 5 different social media services. That can add up to a lot of time spent online or checking your phone. Social media services also send notifications all the time, which are designed to bring you back online and using the service.

You can be notified of new friend requests, follows or even someone commenting with an emoji on one of your posts, so it's easy to see how you can spend an endless amount of time in a social media loop.

While it can be tricky to put technology down completely, given that you might use it every day for school or work, there are ways you can stop yourself from checking it so frequently.

Here are some tips so you can take control of your online experience, rather than letting it control you.

What to do

Turn off notifications for your social media apps

If you find yourself constantly checking your phone when you hear a notification, it might be helpful to turn them off. That way you won't feel as much pressure to check your phone all the time. Go into the settings on your smartphone and look for 'notifications'. You should be able to turn off notifications for individual apps or control how you are notified.

Remember, even though you may feel a sense of FOMO (fear of missing out) by not checking social media all the time, it's easy to catch up on things later on.

Monitor or limit your phone use

If that doesn't do the trick, there are some apps and in-built features in smartphones specifically designed to limit your phone use or monitor the amount of time you spend online. It can be truly eye-opening to learn that you spend over 5 hours a day looking at your phone! So sometimes this information is enough to change your habits.

Many phones have settings that allow you to monitor your usage and set daily usage limits on apps. Activate these on your phone and look out for other apps that can help you be more aware of how you are using your screen time.

When you do check your phone

If you realise you are consuming much more negative, than positive, online content, try to change things up a bit so you reduce the pressure you might feel from social media. Whether it's the accounts you are following, or the people you are connected to on

different social media platforms, alter your feeds so that when you do check it's a more inspiring and positive experience.

Online gaming

Someone is creating drama online

Lies and rumours can spread like wildfire online, and it's not always easy to know the best way to respond.

Often when something happens at school or within your friend group, the drama can spill out onto social media or private messenger apps. Whether you're directly involved or not, it's always best to have a cool head and help diffuse the situation if you can.

What to do

Resist the urge to retaliate

Resist the urge to retaliate. Rather than continuing the cycle of negativity, try intervening with some positive comments or changing the subject. If you feel like you might be tempted to retaliate, turn off your notifications and leave your phone somewhere for a while, so you can concentrate on other things.

Offer a new perspective

If you see a one-sided mean post about someone you know, rather than scrolling by, you could shake it up and offer a new perspective. It could be as simple as offering a different side to the story or saying something really nice about the person they're targeting. Even offering something completely off topic can help to interrupt the stream of abuse.

'One time a girl in our year posted a photo of some text messages from another girl and tried to paint the situation in a certain way and a lot of other people in the year group were commenting on it saying

"wow —can't believe she would say that".

I knew the full story and she had only posted her side of it. I commented on the photo saying, "guys there is way more to this, stop posting mean comments". When people realised that the post wasn't the full story, they were sorry, and my friend that I stuck up for was really grateful.'

DM the person being targeted

Reach out to the person being targeted and let them know you've got their back. Even if they're not your best mate, sending them a message to make sure they're OK can have a huge impact on another person.

Report the post

If the post, messages or photos are on a social media service, you should report it. Reporting is anonymous on most social media services and can be an effective way to put a stop to the drama. For more info, check out the [eSafety Guide](#).

Get outside help

If the drama is getting serious, it might be time to reach out for more help. Speak to a trusted adult, or someone with a bit more authority who would be able to help you out with the situation. Encourage whoever it is targeted at to seek help too. If they are feeling really down, let them know that they can reach out to a [counselling or support service](#) that is right for them.

Pressure from social media

Social media can be a great way to stay in touch with friends, but sometimes it can also cause us to compare our lives to others, or feel like we need to be constantly connected.

It can be easy to fall into the trap of thinking that the posts you see on social media reflect real life, when most of the time they are showing you a lifestyle about as realistic as a movie set.

You might even do it too. Whether it is putting a few filters on your selfie, planning a 'candid' photo or posting about a night out that wasn't actually as fun as you say it was, we all create online personas that show the best parts of our offline lives and erase the times when we feel a little bit down, depressed or just plain flat.

The pressures from social media are very real and they have consequences for all of us. They can affect your mental health and how you feel about yourself. Here are some tips on how to deal with the pressures from social media.

What do to

Check yourself

If you're feeling unsure about posting something, ask yourself why am I doing this? Is it because you are trying to look a certain way online? If what you're posting online is more about keeping up a certain appearance, it's probably best not to post it. Being yourself online is just as important as being yourself offline. Stick to posting things that reflect who you really are, and make you feel good about yourself.

Social media is not real life

Think critically about what you see online — a lot of posts are not 100% real. Behind every staged post is someone taking the same photo 30 times with different angles or carefully placing things to make it look natural. Remember, celebrities put filters on their photos or stage things to make it appear as if their life is way more interesting than it really is. And celebrities have bad days too — even though this may not be apparent from their social media feeds.

Unfollow accounts that make you feel bad

Go through the accounts you follow and ask yourself whether they are making you feel positive or negative. Then unfollow accounts that make you feel bad about yourself and follow the accounts that make you feel good. Try to keep your feed full of posts that are inspiring or reflect things that you are genuinely interested in, rather than posts that make you feel angry or bad about yourself.

Turn off your notifications and have a phone-free day

If you feel like you are spending too much time scrolling through your feed and it is contributing to the pressure you feel, try switching off. If you feel like you're getting caught in a social media loop, it can be good to break it up and log off for a while. Leave your phone at home and get out there.

Talk to someone

The pressures from social media can make you feel isolated and like everyone else is having a fantastic time, even though this may not be the case. If you feel like you want to talk to someone, or you are getting depressed, reach out to one of these online and phone counselling services for help and support.

Banter vs bullying

Banter is typically playful teasing between friends, whether it's an inside joke between school mates or a meme you're sharing in a group chat. But sometimes it can go too far.

Banter is meant to be light-hearted and friendly, but sometimes it can be taken too far, or escalate into bullying behaviour. You might not even realise you're doing it.

The way we talk online can also make it more difficult to know where to draw the line between banter and bullying.

It can be easy to misinterpret a comment or post, when you can't see someone's face or hear the tone of the person who posted it. In the same way, you might not have intended to hurt someone's feelings, but what you thought was friendly banter, could be considered bullying to someone else. Here is how you can help keep it friendly.

What to do

Don't get too personal

Set some limits. Picking on someone's appearance or aspects of their identity, like their gender, race, sexuality or religion, should not be material for funny banter. They might make fun of these things themselves, but it's a good idea to avoid these topics altogether. Also, if this is someone you know really well, you probably already know some things that your friend is insecure about. If you are aware it is a sensitive subject, it's best to not go there!

Saying 'I was only joking' after the fact, doesn't help

Even if you really just mean it as a joke, it's best to apologise if you made someone feel upset. Try not to argue about how you intended the joke to be taken. Doing this can

often inflame the situation. Put yourself in their shoes for a moment and remember, the best way to fix the situation is to apologise.

Don't be a bystander

If you feel like someone is taking it too far in a group chat, maybe they're just unaware of how they are making the other person feel. Gently point out to them that what they are saying can be taken the wrong way — you can do this by commenting on a post or by sending them a direct message. When they realise how they are making the other person feel, they'll most likely let up. And if they don't, report it or tell an adult you trust.

If you see that someone is clearly not taking someone else's banter as a joke, reach out to them and ask them if they are OK. Let them know that they can get help and support.

Receiving unwanted nudes

Receiving unwanted nudes

It's not OK to send nudes, sexual images or sexual videos to someone who didn't ask for them.

Our statistics show that young women are nearly three times more likely than young men to receive a nude image they didn't ask for.

What to do

Tell them it's not cool

If you know the person and you are comfortable with responding to them, let them know that sending you a nude is not cool.

You could even try responding with a gif like this:

Report and block

If a person sends you things you don't like online, you can report it in-app or through the social media service, before deleting the content. You can also block them in-app or block their number on your device.

Delete

If you have received a nude you didn't ask for, delete it.

Get help and support

If the content is really concerning you and you're feeling a little out of your depth, talk to a trusted adult or one of these counselling and support services.

Consent and sharing photos

Do you have consent or permission to share a photo or video of someone?

These days it's routine to take your phone out and start snapping away no matter where you are and what's happening — almost every event gets captured and recorded.

It can be cool to have all these photos and videos to remember these moments by, but if you are going to share them on social media, make sure the people who are featured in the photos or videos are OK with it too.

When it comes to getting consent before uploading or sharing photos or video, here is what you need to know.

What to do

If you take a photo or video with someone in it, ask before sharing it

It's that simple! If you take a photo of someone, ask before you post it or share it with other people. If they say they'd rather their photo didn't appear on public social media accounts, then respect their decision.

If you've uploaded something and a person asks you to take it down, do it!

If you upload content that someone asks you to take down because they are in it, then take it down. If you respect the choices and decisions your mates make about their personal privacy, then they will usually respect your choices and decisions too.

Don't post anything you wouldn't want people to see in 5 years' time

Lastly, follow your instincts. If you don't feel good about posting a photo or video of someone because you think it could have long term consequences for them, don't post it. Unfortunately, once you post something, you lose control of the content and that could be unfair and even devastating for people who may not have wanted the image to be shared. It could even mean that you or your friends miss out on jobs or other opportunities in the future. Find out more about [your digital reputation](#).

Don't forward on or share something that could be embarrassing

If someone sends you a photo or video that you know would be embarrassing for the person in it, or they would not like other people to see it, don't forward it on to other people. Break the chain and tell the person who originally sent it to you to stop forwarding it on too. This is really important if the images that were sent to you are nudes. If you know the person who is being targeted, reach out to them. Let them know [you have their back](#) and make sure they are OK.

Speak up

If you are out and about and notice a camera and you don't want your photo to be taken speak up — it is OK to not want your image to be captured.

Put your phone down, not everything needs to be captured

It might be funny in the moment but try and put yourself in the other person's shoes. Whether it's a video of them falling over, or something else which might make them feel embarrassed, put the phone down. Things that might seem funny to you may not

amusing to the other person. You don't want to upload something that could hurt someone's feelings, make them feel embarrassed or affect their future opportunities.

I'm being pressured to send nudes

It's not OK if someone is pressuring you to send nudes, but you can help to change the culture.

Being pressured to send nudes is not cool. It might leave you feeling uncomfortable or even unsafe. Whether it's a boyfriend, girlfriend, friend or stranger, even if they say sending a nude will show how much you love them, it's important you only do things you want to do and feel good about.

It's time to change the culture around sending nudes. Here are some ways you can get the upper hand if you get the 'send nudes?' message.

What to do

Ask them to stop

Sometimes in relationships people do things without thinking about the other person. This isn't cool. If someone is pressuring you and you feel safe to do so, ask them to stop. It might not always work, but sometimes just letting them know they're upsetting you will make them reassess their actions.

Send something else

It is always OK to say no. But you might want to get creative in the way you send the message. Why not send something else, like a meme or clever one-liner? Instead, you could send noods 🍷.

Report and block

If asking them to change their behaviour doesn't work, don't continue communicating with them. Follow these steps:

1. Take screenshots of the requests (this will help if you need to take further action at any stage, so think of it as 'insurance').
2. Report the person to the social media service or app they used to contact you.
3. Block them so they can't contact you through that social media service or app again.
4. If they contacted you via text message, block their phone number from your device.

The [eSafety Guide](#) has online safety advice, tips on how to block accounts and reporting links.

Get support

If they're not getting the message, talk to a trusted adult. If you want more support, there are [professional counselling services](#) like [Kids Helpline](#) where you can speak to someone confidentially online or over the phone.

Find out more about image-based abuse

Image-based abuse is when someone shares or threatens to share your nudes online without your consent. Find out more about [image-based abuse](#) and how to [take action](#) if your nudes have been shared or if someone is threatening to share them.

Someone is threatening to share my nudes

Is someone threatening to share a nude image or video of you?

Image-based abuse

If someone shares or threatens to share a nude image or video of you when you don't want them to, this is called image-based abuse. Maybe they are being mean, or they want to hurt you for breaking up with them. Whatever the reason, it is never OK. See [My nudes have been shared](#) for more information and help.

Common types of image-based abuse

One type of image-based abuse is [sextortion](#). This is when the person who threatens to share a nude of you is demanding more nudes or money, or is trying to make you stay in a relationship with them. It is a form of blackmail.

Here are some examples of sextortion:

- Someone you used to date threatens to share your nude images with other people or post them online unless you get back together with them.
- You accept a friend request from someone and things get flirty. They threaten to share nudes that you've sent them unless you send them money or more nudes.
- You receive an email in which someone claims they have hacked into your accounts or devices and have nudes of you. The person threatens to send the nudes to all your contacts unless you pay them money. This is a scam and they are trying to panic or scare you into doing what they say.

What to do

Remember, it is never OK

If someone threatens to share a nude image or video of you, it is against the law. If it is someone you know, tell them it is not OK, if you feel safe doing that.

If it is someone you don't know, don't respond.

Don't give into their threats

If they are demanding more nudes or money don't give in to them, even if they get very aggressive with their threats. It is never a good idea to give them what they want because they will probably just keep asking for more. It is important you stop all contact with them right away.

Stay calm

If someone shares a nude image or video of you, or threatens to do it, try to stay calm.

Talk to an adult you trust, such as a parent, a support service like [Kids Helpline](#) or [another counselling service](#).

Screenshot evidence

Take screenshots of the threats and accounts involved because this evidence will help if you decide to make a report to eSafety or the police. For more information read our advice on [collecting evidence](#).

Report and block

If someone has threatened to share your nudes, you can [make an image-based abuse report to eSafety](#). You can make a report no matter how old you are – and if you prefer you can get a friend or trusted adult to help you fill out the report form. Our team is here to help.

Threatening to post or share nude images or videos without someone's consent is against the guidelines of most social media services. So, if you prefer to report to the social media service yourself you can find reporting links and other useful info in the [eSafety Guide](#).

Then you can block their account to stop them contacting you. See how to do this in the [eSafety Guide](#).

How to avoid sextortion

Remember live streaming can be recorded

Remember, live streaming can be recorded at the other end. Don't fall into the trap of thinking that it is less risky than sending nudes.

Look out for scams

Be wary of people who you have only met online and who ask you for nudes or "Sexy Skypes". Scammers can be very convincing and sometimes use hi-tech tricks to make you think they are someone they are not.

If you get a message or email from someone you don't know who claims to have hacked your device or account and threatens to release private images, be aware it may be a scam. They might even use one of your current or former passwords to trick you into thinking it's real.

Don't respond to these scams. You can check [Scamwatch](#) or [Stay Smart Online](#) to find out more about current scams. You can also read our [blog on sextortion scams](#).

Review your privacy settings

Review your privacy settings so you are in control of who can see your online information.

Use strong passwords and change them regularly to help protect your personal information. Use 2-factor authentication wherever possible to secure your accounts.

For more info on how to protect your personal information in individual social media services, apps and games, see the [eSafety Guide](#).

Trolling

Trolling is when someone makes a deliberately provocative comment or post and waits for people to take the bait.

Online 'trolls' are not always bad — they can be mischievous and they can prompt people to talk about contentious subjects. For example, online activists have used trolling as a way to call out people who were being homophobic.

Trolling is not when someone makes a personal attack — that's 'flaming' or online hate — but the term 'trolling' often gets misused in the media to mean someone who is engaged in online hate. The problem with this is that by calling people who dish out online hate 'trolls', we diminish the very real suffering that online haters and abusers inflict on their targets.

That said, 'trolls', when used correctly to describe online tricksters or provocateurs, can still be really annoying. Trolls often post many of their provocative messages or comments anonymously, which makes it difficult to identify who the person actually is. This anonymity can make people feel more powerful and willing to say more provocative things than they would IRL (in real life). Here are some tips for how to deal with online trolls.

What to do

Don't feed the trolls

Resist the urge to respond. As tempting as it will be, by replying, you will just be giving the troll what they want. Not responding is the best response.

Block and report

If it spills over into online hate or cyberbullying, your best course of action is to block the abuser and report the abuse. Most social media sites have rules against abusive online behaviour and tools that allow you to report any comments or accounts. For more information about a specific site or service, see the eSafety Guide.

Report to eSafety

If it's getting serious, and you are under 18, you can report it to eSafety. We can help take any abusive content down and point you in the right direction if you need other help. If you are over 18 read our advice on how to deal with cyber abuse.

Talk to someone or get help

Talk to a trusted adult and get support from friends or your parent or carer. There are also many online counselling services with trained professionals who are ready to hear you out.

Keeping your online account secure

Keeping your online accounts secure and your privacy settings up to date might not be high on your list of priorities, but it should be.

As we increasingly live our lives online, it is important to take online privacy and security seriously.

While it might not seem like a big deal at the time – you might think ‘who cares if a stranger knows which suburb I live in? — it is good practice to keep your personal information private.

Making it easy for someone to piece together bits of information about you — like which school you go to, where you live and your birthday — makes you a softer target for online scammers and hackers.

‘One of my friends downloaded this app that was supposed to get her more Instagram followers and when she put her personal account details into it, the app hacked her account and deleted all her photos’.

Here are some tips so you can keep your accounts secure and stay in control of your online privacy. You can also read more about [how to protect your identity](#).

What to do

Do a privacy check up

Do a privacy check-up by going through the settings for all your social media accounts.

It can be a good way to fill some time when you’re bored catching the bus, or waiting somewhere, and it shouldn’t take too long! Your social media accounts may still use the default settings, so it’s best to double check, and ensure you are aware of the amount of personal information you are putting out there.

Set strong passwords and update your old ones

Do you use the same password on more than one account? Do you use the same password to log into your social media accounts and online banking? Have you been using the same password for years? Then it’s time to update your passwords so they are all unique and more secure.

Security experts now recommend using a ‘pass phrase’ rather than simply a password. Find out more about [how to set strong passwords](#).

Don’t share your passwords

This one seems obvious. But almost [1 in 5 teenagers](#) have shared the password to their social media accounts with a friend, family member, boyfriend or girlfriend. You may think sharing your password with a partner or friend is a way of saying ‘I have nothing to hide’ — but it is never a good idea to share your passwords. Sharing your passwords puts you in a vulnerable position and puts your personal information and data at risk.

Keep your apps and software up to date

New app and software updates are designed to keep your data secure. Make sure you download and install new operating systems and software on your phone, tablet or computer as soon as they become available. Install virus protection software on your

computer and keep it up to date. This will help to avoid computer viruses, which could destroy your data, make your computer unusable or steal your personal information.

Don't add people on social media that you haven't met offline

When you get a friend or follow request from someone you don't know, check their profile. See if you have any mutual friends. If you're feeling unsure —delete the request! Just like you'd find it weird if a stranger stopped you on the street, don't let them follow your online profile.

When websites or apps ask for your personal information, double check they are legit. Some websites and apps are built by scammers and are designed to collect people's personal information, so that they can hack your accounts or steal your money. If it looks dodgy, don't hand over any personal information. Here are some quick tips for identifying dodgy sites and apps:

- Check that the URL for a website is the main URL you normally use to access that site.
- Be wary of any emails from people you don't know. If in doubt don't click on links or open attachments in emails.
- Check that the branding is accurate — that it appears the same across all platforms — and the logo is not blurred.
- Are there typos on the website or in emails asking you to login and update your details? If so, then it's likely to be a scam.
- Check your app store for reviews of apps before you download them. If there are lots of users and good reviews, it's unlikely to be a scam. If there aren't any reviews, do some more online research — scams usually get identified fairly quickly and people often post online about them.
- Is an app asking you to input lots of personal information or provide your login details for any social media accounts? Then, it's likely to be a scam.
- Check out [Scamwatch](#) and [Stay Smart Online](#).

Be aware of the information that advertisers can access

Companies can collect a lot of information about us through the information that we put online, to target their advertising. If this makes you feel uncomfortable, change your privacy settings and read more about [protecting your identity](#).

Protecting your identity

Online services are learning more and more about us from our personal information and the data they collect from us online.

Our personal information is any information that can be used to identify us online. It is used with our permission by many social media services and businesses as we connect with friends or buy things online. However, this is not always the case and some personal information can be misused by criminals or used inappropriately by marketers.

Online businesses and marketers collect a wide range of data about what we're buying online, the pages we like or follow on social media sites, the media channels we use,

the celebrities, movies and music we like, our education level and our friends on social media — the list doesn't stop there!

The information that is collected about us can be used to ensure we are given recommendations that we like, but it can also be used for fraud and identity theft.

What is my personal information?

Your personal information may include your:

- full name
- address
- phone numbers
- school
- date of birth
- email address
- usernames and passwords
- bank details

How to protect your personal information

If you want to manage how online services can find out about you, here are some ways you can protect your personal information.

Set strong passwords

Select passwords carefully and don't share them with anyone. Security experts now recommend that you use a 'pass phrase' rather than a password. It's also a good idea to use different passwords for all your online accounts. Read more about [how to set strong passwords](#).

Delete cookies

Cookies are small text files storing information about your browsing activity, allowing websites to recognise you and save your settings. Although there are other ways you can be tracked online, deleting your cookies will limit some access. To delete cookies, go to the settings within your browser and look for a section that allows you to 'manage cookies'.

Log out of social media sites and email while you browse the web

Another simple strategy is to log out of your social media sites and email while you are doing other things online. That means actually logging out, not just closing the tab. Cookies can't persist when you have logged out, but they are able to be used when you're still logged in.

Use private browsing or 'incognito' mode

Most browsers give you an option to browse the web privately or use 'incognito' mode. This means that the history of any sites you visit and any cookies from sites you go to won't be stored.

Bonus tip — ever noticed how prices seem to go up on flights and hotels the second time you visit a site? This is because the site uses cookies to set the pricing. If you use private browsing or 'incognito' mode companies won't be able to use their algorithms to artificially inflate prices.

Avoid using social media accounts to sign in

If you can avoid using your social media accounts to sign into other apps or accounts this will reduce the information the new app or account has access to. When you use your social media account to sign into other apps or online accounts you are often agreeing that this new account is allowed to have access to all the information you share in your primary account.

Change your smartphone settings

Smartphones work differently to computers, which makes it a little easier to control access to your online data. On an iPhone you can go to Settings > Privacy and scroll down to Advertising. Turn 'Limit ad tracking' to On. For an Android phone, go to the Google settings app and tap the ads link and select 'Opt out of interest-based ads'. Although this may not limit the amount of ads you see, it will make them less targeted — which may or may not suit you.

Give the least amount of personal information as possible

When signing up for things or registering an account, if the information is mandatory, usually the category will have an asterisk. The categories without an asterisk can be left blank. Don't pass on your personal information unnecessarily.

Do a digital check-up

The big social media sites that we trust with our information offer privacy controls. So make sure you use them. Every once in a while, check your settings and see if you're OK with how your data is being used or how much information you're sharing with potential advertisers. If you're not happy, change it up! For more info about privacy settings see the [eSafety Guide](#).

Catfishing

Catfishing is when someone pretends to be someone they're not by using social media to create a false identity, usually to defraud or scam someone else.

They often make up life stories, use other people's photos and even develop extensive fake life experiences, jobs or friends. Sometimes they trick someone into believing they are in an online romance and use this as a means to ask for money, gifts or nudes.

What to do

Trust your instincts

If it sounds too good to be true, chances are you're probably right. Always be on your guard if someone randomly makes contact out of the blue — just like you would be in real life if someone stopped you on the street. Trust your instincts — if their story isn't matching up or is inconsistent, you're right to be suspicious of them.

Do they seem to know a lot about you?

If they seem to know a lot about you and appear to share many of the same interests as you, this is a warning sign. It could be an amazing coincidence, but it could also be the result of extensive online research about you.

Check your privacy settings and make sure you are comfortable with the amount of personal information you are putting out there. Read our article about how to manage [your digital reputation](#) or find out more about privacy settings in the [eSafety Guide](#).

Check them out

Verify their picture using a [Google reverse image search](#). If the photo is connected to lots of different names or is literally the picture of an actor or celebrity, things might be a bit fishy.

Check them out on other social media sites. If they have a low friend count this is a giveaway. You can bet it's a fake if they've barely posted anything or don't have any tagged photos.

Do they want nudes only?

Be wary of people who only want you to send pictures of yourself, especially nude ones. Definitely refrain from telling them anything too personal until you are 100% sure they are who they say they are. If they are [pressuring you to send photos](#), block them and check out our advice.

Report fake accounts

Social media platforms have tools that allow you to report fake accounts. The [eSafety Guide](#) has reporting links for social media, games and apps.

If you are worried about something you sent them, or they have access to intimate images, see our advice on [someone is threatening to share my nudes](#) for more help.

I have been called a bully

If you've been called a bully, it might be because something you've done has hurt someone else's feelings.

When you're online, it can be more difficult to realise what you're doing is upsetting someone, until it already has. If someone has called you out for your behaviour, even if you thought you were just making a joke, it is probably a good idea to stop and ask yourself why they might have said that.

While you might have meant a comment in a certain way, another person may see it differently. But there are some things you can do to turn the situation around, if someone has called you a bully.

What to do

Say you're sorry

Say you're sorry for making them feel upset, and show you really mean it. Remember, saying "sorry but..." is not a real apology. It's best not to make people feel bad for feeling upset.

If they are upset because you posted a photo — delete it

If they are upset because of a photo or video you uploaded of them, and they ask you to delete it, listen to their request and take it down. If other people have shared it, ask them to take it down too. In future, make sure you get consent from a person before posting something about them, or with them in it.

Try to put yourself in their shoes

If you are having trouble understanding why they are upset, put yourself in their shoes and think about what made them feel that way. You might have made fun of something they are insecure about or said something insensitively. Whatever it is, understanding why will help you avoid a similar situation in the future. It might also be useful to read about the difference between bullying and banter.

Be mindful of the wider context

Try being more proactively mindful and aware of people's different backgrounds. Some things you think are OK to say, coming from your background, might not be OK for others.

Don't be a bystander

If you see someone else taking a joke too far and making someone upset, don't be a bystander. Stepping up and asking the person being targeted if they're OK, can go a long way.

Get support

It can be confronting and upsetting to be called a bully, especially if you didn't mean to hurt someone. Reach out to a trusted adult or talk to a counsellor if you are worried or upset.

Violent or inappropriate content

Just like in your offline life, when you're online you might come across something you'd rather not see. It might be content that is upsetting, disturbing or offensive.

What to do

It's also easy to encounter things you don't want to see on social media or in private chats. Someone you know might send you an image or a link to content that you just don't want to see.

Report offensive or illegal content

The content might be promoting a crime, terrorism or child sexual abuse. If someone sends you a link to material like this or you see something online you think might be illegal, you can report it to eSafety.

If you come across other content you think is offensive or illegal you can report it to the website, social media service, app or game it was posted on. You can find direct reporting links in the eSafety Guide.

Block, delete and unfollow

If someone repeatedly sends you content you don't want to see, block, unfollow or delete them. For more information on how to block and unfollow people in specific social media services, apps and games, see the [eSafety Guide](#).

Check your privacy settings

It's a good idea to check your privacy settings to help prevent people sending you content you don't want to see. Find out more about privacy settings in specific social media services, games and apps in the [eSafety Guide](#).

Get help and support

If you do see something online that is distressing, leave the page immediately and talk about it with an adult or someone who can support you. There are also many [professional online and phone counselling services](#) that can provide you with confidential support.

Unwanted contact signs to look out for

Unwanted contact online is any communication that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe. It can be with a stranger or someone you know.

Our research shows that one in four young people are being contacted by strangers online. Contact from a random stranger can be risky. But even online contact from someone you know can make you feel that something is not quite right.

Sometimes a person who contacts you online may want to harm you.

Signs to look out for

Some people who contact you genuinely just want to be friends or chat. The problem is that some others, both men and women, target young people online to scam you, to trick you into giving them nude or sexual pictures or videos, or to harm you in some other way.

The person contacting you online could be someone who is older, but it could also be someone close to your age. It might be a stranger, or it might be someone you know. It could start innocently, with someone being very friendly and helpful to make you trust them, before things get uncomfortable or risky.

Here are some warning signs

- **You feel that something is not right** — trust your instincts.
- **Things don't add up** — their online profile doesn't match what you see and hear when you talk or chat with them.
- **They tell you their webcam is broken** — sometimes a person who wants to harm you pretends to be your own age and says their webcam is broken so you can't see what they really look like.
- **They contact you frequently and in different ways** — for example, you meet them on Instagram, then they switch platforms and start direct messaging you.

- **They ask you who else uses your computer or tablet** — or even which room of your house you are in.
- **They ask you for favours and do things in return** — people who want to harm you may even offer you money or followers, but then won't deliver what they've promised.
- **They say they like your appearance or body** — or ask very personal things like 'have you ever been kissed'?
- **They insist on meeting** — they may keep saying they want to see you in person and try to make you feel guilty or threaten you if you don't agree.
- **They want to keep your relationship secret** — people who want to harm you often try to keep their friendship with you extremely private from the beginning.

How to protect yourself from unwanted contact

Make your accounts private

By adjusting your privacy settings, you can stay in control of who sees what you post online and who can contact you directly.

For example, you can update your settings to only accept messages from people on your 'friends' list.

It's also a good idea to check your location sharing options to make sure your location is only available to you or to specific friends.

If you want to know how to check what is public, see our advice on managing [your digital reputation](#).

You could even sit down for 30 minutes and check **all** the privacy settings in your social media apps – it will be time well spent!

For more info on privacy settings see the [eSafety Guide](#).

Delete contacts you don't talk to

Go through all the people who are your online friends or who follow you on social media and check that you actually know them. If you don't, it's probably a good idea to delete them.

Bonus tip — when you get a notification that it's someone's birthday and you don't know them well enough to say HBD on their profile, think about deleting them from your account.

Delete requests from strangers

When you get a friend or follow request from someone you don't know, check if you have mutual friends. Remember, it's easy for a person online to pretend to be someone they are not. If you're unsure, delete the request

How to deal with unwanted contact

If contact with a stranger, or with someone you know, makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, stop responding to the other person straight away.

In situations like this, it's really important to talk to a trusted adult about what's been happening.

Screenshot evidence

It's best to take screenshots of anything that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Report and block

Once you have all your screenshots, you can report the other person directly to the platform and then block their account to prevent them sending you further messages. For more info see the [eSafety Guide](#). It's also a good idea to talk to a trusted adult about it.

Report to eSafety

If the contact continues, get help. You might be able to [make a cyberbullying report to us](#), if you are under 18. If you are over 18, read our advice on [adult cyber abuse](#).

Report to police

If you feel you are in immediate danger contact your local police, or in an emergency call triple 000.

You can also report to the Australian Federal Police's Online Child Protection Unit by clicking on the Report Abuse button on the [ThinkUKnow](#) website.

Get help and support

- [Kids Helpline](#) — counselling and online support for kids and teenagers
- [ehespace](#) — online chat and support for young people (12 to 25)
- [1800RESPECT](#) — counselling and support for sexual abuse and domestic and family violence

Online hate

Online hate can be defined as any hateful posts about a person or group based on their race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability or gender.

The difference between online hate and bullying is that online hate usually targets someone of a certain group or uses aspects of their identity or background to criticise, abuse or belittle them.

Over 50% of young people have seen or heard hateful comments about a cultural or religious group online.

Online hate can also be 'intersectional' or experienced as several different forms of discrimination at once. For example, people might post abusive comments criticising a particular person for being a lesbian and a woman. Or they might personally attack someone because of their race or religion. This kind of behaviour is completely unacceptable, but sadly it happens every day.

What to do - if you experience online hate

Report to social media and block

If offensive or hateful content is posted online about you, report it to the website, social media service, game or app it was posted on so that it can be removed. Learn more about how to report and block content in the [eSafety Guide](#).

Report to eSafety

If the online hate is part of cyberbullying, and you are under 18, you can [report it to eSafety](#). Our team of expert investigators are there to help and assist you.

Call it out

If you feel like it is safe to do so, call it out. Sometimes people don't realise what they are saying is hateful or discriminatory, and a gentle comment can help to change the language they are using. But if they respond with more hate, it is best to not respond. Instead, report or block them.

Get help and support

Experiencing online hate can be incredibly distressing. It might make you feel unsafe, angry or depressed. It is important to know that you are not alone. Get help and support from [a professional counselling and support service](#) that is right for you.

What to do - if you witness online hate

Report and block

If you see something on social media that is offensive or hateful targeting a group of people, or that uses aspects of someone's identity or background to abuse them, report it. Don't keep scrolling, if you see this kind of content make sure you bring it to the attention of the website, social media service, game or app it was posted on so that it can be removed. Learn more about how to report and block content in the [eSafety Guide](#).

Stand up to it

When hate is met with more hate or fear, it can get worse. So if you feel like you're safe to do so, step up and change the narrative.

Respond with something nice and compassionate. Even just having someone's back online — or being prepared and willing to support and defend them — can have a huge impact on the person and those around them.

My nudes have been shared

Has someone shared a nude image of you without your consent? This is called image-based abuse and it's never OK.

If this has happened to you, you're not alone and there is a lot of support out there. Here are some tips for how to take action and get help.

What to do

Stay calm

Finding out that your nude has been shared online can be very upsetting, but try to stay calm and remember that you're not alone. It's normal to feel a range of emotions such as anger, frustration and embarrassment. Talk to an adult you trust, such as a parent, a support service like [Kids Helpline](#) or [another counselling service](#) and take these steps to get the image or video removed:

Screenshot evidence

If your nudes have been shared, your immediate reaction might be to delete the message or post, but it can be really helpful to have a record of what's happened, especially if you want to [report it to eSafety](#), the social media service or the police.

Take screenshots of the account usernames, messages and posts involved, including URLs and keep these in a safe place. Be careful about screenshotting nude images, even if it's a nude selfie. Creating, possessing or sharing nude images of people under 18 may be a crime. For more information read our advice on [collecting evidence](#).

Report and block

If your nudes have been shared, or someone has threatened to share your nudes, you can [make an image-based abuse report to eSafety](#). You can make a report no matter how old you are – and if you prefer you can get a friend or trusted adult to help you fill out the report form. Our team is here to help.

The posting or sharing of nude images or videos without someone's consent is against the guidelines of most social media services. So, if you prefer to report to the social media service yourself you can find reporting links and other useful info in the [eSafety Guide](#).

If you are concerned about your physical safety, contact your local police – or call Triple Zero (000) if it's an emergency.

When you have taken your screenshots and reported what has happened, you can then block the other person's account to stop them contacting you. See how to do this in the [eSafety Guide](#).

Find out more about [image-based abuse](#)

Find out more about [image-based abuse](#), how to [take action](#) and [get help and support](#).

Be an upstander – not a bystander

If you see bullying behaviour online don't just let it slide.

Depending on your style and what you feel confident doing, helping your friend could be as easy as sending a direct message (DM) to make sure they're OK. If it feels safe and right, you might even step up and call out the bad stuff online. There are a number of ways you can take action and go from being a bystander to an upstander.

What to do

DM your friend

Message your friend to make sure they're ok and remind them how awesome they are. Even a simple message can go a long way and make your friend feel like they have support.

“Hey are you OK? Ignore those guys — they couldn't be more wrong!”

Call it out

If you feel confident and safe, stand up to the person doing the bullying, and make it clear that what they're doing is wrong. It can be tricky going about this without getting too involved, but sometimes just commenting *Thumbs down emoji*, or your negative emoji of choice, or NOT COOL on the mean post can get your point across.

Get extra help

If your friend seems like they're really down — maybe they're not turning up to school or they seem really withdrawn or less talkative — it might be time to get some extra help. You could talk to a trusted adult or teacher. You could also refer them to a [counselling or support service](#) to talk to a counsellor anonymously online.

Help your friend to report cyberbullying

Those reporting tools are there for a reason! Do your bit to make the internet a more positive place and report posts online that are intentionally trying to hurt someone. First report the content to the social media site or app it was posted on (reporting is anonymous on most social media sites), and encourage your friend to report it as well, to help get it taken down faster. You can find links and tips in the [eSafety Guide](#).

If the content is serious and has not been removed after 48 hours and your friend is under 18, encourage them to make a cyberbullying [report to eSafety](#). If they are 18 and over, show them this info on [adult cyber abuse](#).

BONUS TIP: If you're a legend of a friend, you could even sit with them and help fill out the [report form](#)!

Your digital reputation

Our online profiles have become a digital resume — anyone can google your name or check out your social media accounts, including potential employers, universities and others.

This means it's really important that you know what your online reputation looks like and how to fix it if you need to. Here's some quick things you can do right now to check out your social media self and change it if you need to.

What to do

Google yourself

Google yourself and see what comes up. Put your name in quotations and add the city you live. For example, 'Tom Smith' + Sydney. Check things out from the perspective of a potential employer and ask yourself, 'do I want these things to remain public?'

Check your privacy settings

If you find a few random photos or posts that are publicly available and you didn't think they were, it's a good time to change your privacy settings. Check out the [eSafety Guide](#) to find out more about the privacy settings for particular social media platforms and how to change them.

Say no to posts or photos

You may have heard the saying ‘if it isn’t on social media it didn’t happen’ but we know that this is not true. Opt out of photos or ignore tag requests if you want to protect your digital reputation.

Get posts/photos/videos taken down

If the posts are from someone else and you’re tagged in them — try to un-tag yourself or ask the person who posted them to take them down.

Think before you post, like or follow something

Make sure that the pages, groups, photos, tweets or videos you like, follow subscribe to or comment on, are true reflections of you and actually things you want to be associated with. Remember, a potential employer may not know that you’ve liked a page or uploaded a photo as a joke or understand its wider context.

As the saying goes, if in doubt, don’t post it!

Helping adults get online

Whether the adults in your life are completely tech savvy, or don’t know the first thing about the internet, showing them what you do online can benefit you all.

Helping your parent or carer understand what you do online and how it all works, might make them feel less worried and even bring you closer together.

It also means that if things do go wrong, you can more easily talk to them about what is happening and get help and support.

So instead of rolling your eyes the next time an adult in your life doesn’t understand a meme or how to send private messages on Instagram, why not sit down and show them?

Here are some suggestions for how you can help the adults in your life understand the internet, games and apps — and have better conversations about your online life.

What to do

Keep it simple

If the adults in your life are not tech savvy, start with the basics and don’t get too complicated too quickly. When they get the hang of how commenting on a photo works or what a GIF is, then you can move on to more complicated stuff like showing them how face recognition on Snapchat filters works.

Get them started on social media

If your parents or carers aren’t online already, get them started with their own social media accounts. They will quickly realise how much fun it can be and how more connected they can be — and they’ll be more confident in supporting you too if things go wrong.

Explain the importance of privacy settings

Even if your parents are reasonably tech savvy, you can show off your knowledge of privacy settings. Walking through your social media privacy settings will hopefully make your parents or carers more comfortable about what you are doing online. It also gives you the opportunity to talk about how much personal information you are sharing, and even adjust your settings if you need to.

Start the chat

It's never too late or too early to talk about your online life with your parent or carer, or the important adults in your life. By showing them what you do online, you might be able to lessen their fears about, for example, cyberbullying or sending nudes.

It might be hard to have the chat, at times, but it will help to establish trust between you and your parent or carer. It also means that the lines of communication stay open, so if anything does go wrong you can always reach out for help.

Helpful links for the adults in your life

Be Connected

If your parents or carers want to learn the basics and beyond, show them [Be Connected](#), which has lots of great tips for people who are just starting out.

eSafety Guide

The [eSafety Guide](#) has lots of information on privacy settings and useful links to report abusive content to social media services, games and apps. If the adults in your life want to get the low down on an app, this is where to send them.

Parents

Show them the section for [parents and carers](#) on this website, which covers the big issues like cyberbullying, online gaming and even sending nudes from a parent's perspective.