How can you help protect your children online?

CHILDREN UNDER 8

- Check out good sites for younger children – you should be responsible for selecting the sites that children in this age group can visit and you can bookmark these sites to encourage children to visit them.
- Very close supervision is strongly recommended.
- Consider using 'safe zone' websites which are designed specifically for children, particularly when they start school and can do more on their own.
- Limit email correspondence to a list of friends and family members you have approved.
- Use filters to limit accidental access to unsuitable material.

CHILDREN AGES 8 – 12

- Be actively involved in your child's internet use.
- Emphasise safe online behaviour and discuss why it is necessary.
- Investigate chat rooms or online clubs your child wants to join to make sure they are legitimate.
- Consider using filters to block access to instant messaging (IM) and newsgroups.
- Discuss use of good cyber manners (netiquette), just as you do for the real world.
- Place the computer in a public area of the home to supervise childrens' use.
- Use family-friendly search engines designed for children.

CHILDREN AGES 13-17

- Stay in touch with what your children are doing online – while it may become less feasible to actively supervise their access, continue to discuss internet issues and share internet experiences.
- Keep the computer in a public area of the home.
- Reinforce safety messages and cyber rules – young teens in particular should be reminded about the need to protect private information, including anything that might provide clues to their identity.
- Ensure teens understand that posting to newsgroups makes their email address public.

Inappropriate Material

There are steps you can take to help protect your family from distressing content:

- Teach children not to open emails or files from unknown sources – spam emails can contain links to explicit material and some viruses and spyware can change your internet settings to direct you to inappropriate sites.
- Encourage young people – especially young children – to come to you if they encounter something disturbing or traumatic online.
- Download a free internet content filter to help block, monitor and screen inappropriate websites on your home computer.

Remember that an increasing number of mobile phones also provide access to the internet. Unfortunately, internet content filter technology for mobile phones is still developing.

Cyber Bullying

Young people can be harassed and bullied online. Online or cyber bullying is carried out through an internet service such as email, a chat room, discussion group, social networking site, or instant messaging. It can also include bullying through mobile phone technologies such as SMS. This is a serious problem, but parents can help to stop this kind of harassment:

- Talk to your children about how they behave online.
- Hurtful comments and nasty rumours spread through text message or chat programs are just as damaging as those made in real life.
- Tell your children not to reply to bullying messages.
- Change their contact details and get a new user name for the internet, a new email account and a new mobile phone number which they only give out to their closest friends.
- Remind your children to keep their user name and passwords secret so they do not fall into the hands of someone who could misuse them.
- Keep a record of any worrying emails or online messages (including time and date) to help you (or the police) find out who is sending the messages.
- Check the Terms of Use Policy on websites – in many cases, reporting bullying or threatening behaviour can result in a perpetrator's account being deleted.

If messages are threatening or serious get in touch with the police. You should also contact your phone or internet service provider and report what is happening as they can help block messages or calls from certain senders.

Securing Your Computer

It's not just parents and carers with children who need to worry about online safety. Keeping your computer secure is an important issue for everyone.

If you don't protect your computer properly, you are putting yourself and possibly your family and friends at risk.

Take some time to protect your computer from harmful emails and viruses and from unauthorized people getting access to your internet connection and your information by following these steps:

- Set and protect passwords for your computer and online transactions.
- Use and update anti-virus software.
- Use and update anti-spyware software.
- Consider installing and using a firewall.
- Learn about the safety settings for your internet browser and set them so they provide you with protection online.
- Learn about managing and blocking unwanted emails (spam).
- Turn off your internet connection when you are not using it.

There are more smart practices you can follow to make banking, buying, and selling things on the internet as safe as possible.

To Report Prohibited or Inappropriate Internet Content

You can report online material you think should be prohibited to the cyberReport Team of the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner at **www.esafety.gov.au or ring 1800 880 176.**

Alternatively, you can anonymously report to **Crime Stoppers on toll free 1800 333 000.**

To Report Illegal Activities

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) Online Child Sex Exploitation Team is responsible for the investigation of Australian websites that exploit children, including child pornography, abuse and grooming. The AFP will refer any sites not in Australia to overseas law enforcement agencies. The AFP is a member of the Virtual Global Taskforce which is made up of police forces from around the world working together to fight online child abuse. You can report any concerns about suspicious or inappropriate behaviour online to the AFP at **www.afp.gov.au/ online_forms/ocset_form**.

If you know of a **child who is in immediate danger or risk, call 000 or your local Police.** If you would prefer to make an anonymous report, call **Crime Stoppers on toll free 1800 33 000.**

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CHILDREN AND THE INTERNET - BEING SAFE

KEEP YOUR **KIDS** **SAFE** Online

Young people have access to a virtually limitless world. Protect your children online.