

For First Nations  
young people  
and those who  
care for them

# LEAVING DEADLY DIGITAL FOOTPRINTS!

How to keep safe and well online!

eSafety acknowledges all First Nations people for their continuing care of everything Country encompasses – land, waters and community. We pay our respects to First Nations people, and to Elders past and present.

## About Leaving Deadly Digital Footprints!

This guide has been created with First Nations kids and young people, their families and carers, with support from the community of Gimuy (Cairns, Queensland).

First Nations people are some of the deadliest innovators and storytellers in the world, with the internet creating another space to share our stories.

Sharing strengthens our identity, culture, and connections with each other – but not when it hurts us or our mob.

**Leaving Deadly Digital Footprints!** outlines our top 10 key topics and tips about online safety, and a few other surprises.

Parents and carers can use the information in this guide to yarn together with young people about staying safe online. Some sections are just for young people and others have tips and advice for parents and carers. The symbols and headings will help you to know which sections relate to you and which ones to read together.

We hope this book answers some of your burning questions and gets mob talking about becoming deadly online explorers, gamers and digital creators!

Let's work together to keep our mob safe and in control, so we can grow as digital leaders!

## Thank you

The illustrations in this guide are by Gunggari artist Desirai Saunders, working with Saltwater People. Supporting artwork by Amy Allerton, a Gumbaynggirr, Bundjalung and Gamilaroi artist.

We thank the CoLAB participants, as well as facilitators Bernard Lee Singleton and Lia Pa'apa'a. We also thank Deadly Inspiring Youth Doing Good (DIYDG) for their valued contribution.

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Parents &amp; carers

## Why is online safety important for mob?

Our mob has the right to be free from abuse, free from racism and free from violence.

Online safety can help young people to learn, play and connect online without being hurt or abused. It means they can celebrate culture, learn cool new things, and hang out with friends – all in the comfort of their home. As our young people get older, independence is an important step and this includes managing their own online safety.

Yarning about online safety early can help build trust and confidence for everyone. Young people might see upsetting content, be contacted by strangers or people they know who aren't allowed to talk to them, share photos, videos or personal information, or experience bullying. It's important they know they can come to you if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable. We'll yarn more about that in chapter 3.

A simple way to avoid harm is for families and carers to provide supervision and agree on basic rules to keep young people safe online. Remember to share these rules with everyone who helps grow up your child – aunties, uncles, grannies, grandparents, tiddas, balas or cousins.

Learn more about creating your own **deadly house rules** on [page 8](#).



### Access

We know many of our mob haven't always had good access to technology and the internet. More deadly, future-thinking community organisations, schools and governments can help us get online and stay safe! This will also help us close the digital gap!<sup>1</sup>

- [Learn more](#) about [First Nations digital inclusion](#) and the work being done to close the digital gap
- [Find out more](#) about [how to be safe online](#)

<sup>1</sup> [Closing the Gap Target 17](#): 'By 2026, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have equal levels of digital inclusion'.





Parents &amp; carers

## What can go wrong?

As our young people grow, they have more independence and start to explore the world in different ways. This means we have to talk about things that might make us feel shame, but not talking about these things can put kids and young people at serious risk. Silence only protects the abuser.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids are nearly three times more likely to have experienced online hate speech than the Australian national average.<sup>2</sup>

They're vulnerable to online harm and abuse, including racism, violence and grooming by sexual predators. Grooming can lead to young people having sexual contact with someone online, or even meeting up in person, without their family or carer knowing.

You wouldn't invite a stranger into your home or bedroom, right? But that's what's really happening if someone you don't know contacts and connects with you or your child online. An eSafety study showed that six out of ten children have been in contact with someone they first met online, and it can be dangerous.

Being online sometimes creates different risks. Young people might:

- see photos or videos that contain pornography or other explicit material
- be contacted by people who might trick them, so they can hurt them or groom them
- be tricked into sexting or sending nude photos online causing biggest mob shame – even though it's not their fault!
- be threatened by someone wanting to share photos that were meant to be private
- be scammed to buy things or share personal info
- be racially targeted or bullied
- become addicted to gaming and unable to stop.



## How can you help?

Understanding how our young people are spending their time online is one of the best ways to keep them safe. You can have this yarn by asking them questions like these:

- What's your favourite app or online game to use?
- Who do you most enjoy connecting with?
- Can you teach me how to play your favourite online game?
- Can we talk about consent together and what it means?

Remember, as parents and carers, it's important to show the same respect, good behaviour and habits we want to see from our young people!

Keep the yarn open so they feel safe to share anytime.

If you struggle to talk about these things, perhaps someone you know can have these yarns alongside you or instead of you? The best way to keep young people safe from abuse is to talk about this stuff early and often. There's no shame in safety!

- **Read Chapter 3** to learn about trolls, bullies, scammers and creeps!
- **Read more** about the [online experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children](#) and their parents and caregivers

<sup>2</sup> eSafety Commissioner (2022). [Cool, beautiful, strange and scary: The online experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their parents and caregivers](#). Page 10.



# Trolls, bullies, scammers and creeps!

As our young people start to navigate the online world, their experiences change and evolve. Here are some things you can yarn about together to make their experience a safe one and help them know if someone is being a troll, bully, scammer or creep.

## What does a bully or creep look like?

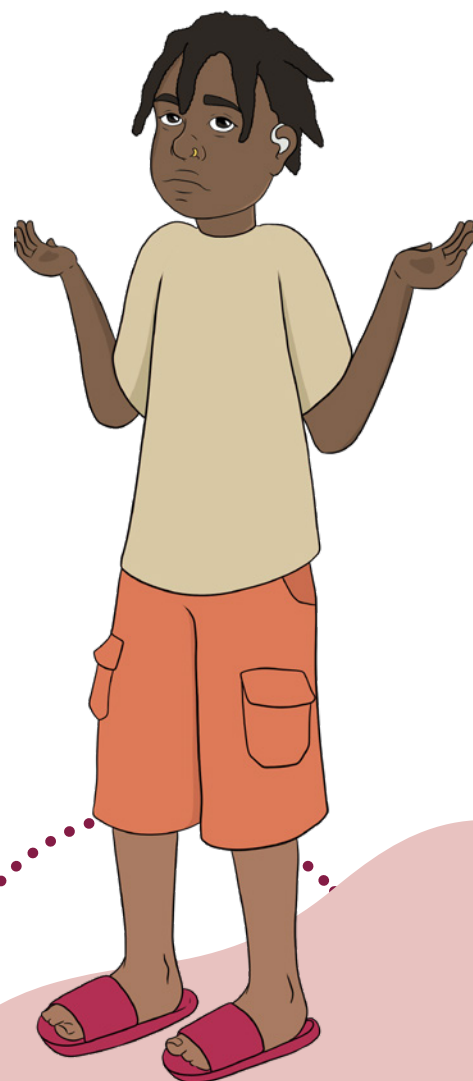
As well as all the fun stuff we get to do online, there are also lots of gammon people who don't want the best for us. Sometimes, it's hard to know if someone is a bully or a creep because:

- they might be someone we know – even family!
- they look cool or like a family member or friend
- they are another teenager or young adult
- they might be someone who's meant to help you, like a teacher or sports coach, or even your boss at work
- they might be pretending to be a kid, or someone they're not.

## What are some red flags or warning signs?

The person online might:

- ask you to share private information, like where you go to school or where you live
- ask you to break rules
- try to make you feel extra good, by praising you to get your trust
- say things that make you feel bad about yourself
- ask you to say or do things that aren't safe or don't feel good – like sending nudes
- send you messages, images or videos of things that they shouldn't.



### Yarn together

What else might a troll, bully, scammer, or creep do to trick you online?



Young people

## How can trolls, bullies, scammers and creeps make us feel?

When we feel unsafe, our bodies can give us special warning signs! Our hearts might pound, and we might feel tense or tight. We might get a scary or bad feeling. Our hands might get sweaty or shaky, our tummy might hurt or we might feel sick. Some people may not feel any signs at all, but if your body is giving you clues, it's important to listen to them.

If something you see or hear when you're online makes you feel funny in your tummy, or you have other warning signs, you should always ask for help. You won't be in trouble because asking for help is the right thing to do.

**Have you seen anyone being bullied online? How do you think that made them feel? How did you feel? Has anything like this ever happened to you?**

**Do kids at your school talk about watching online porn?**

**Have you ever felt uncomfortable about someone contacting you online?**

**Is cyberbullying a problem at your school?**

**What do your friends think about sending nudes? Do you agree with them?**

**Have you ever been sent a nude? How did you feel? What did you do?**

**Has anyone ever asked you to send a nude? How did that make you feel?**



### Who should I tell?

If you start to see or feel warning signs – talk with someone you trust. This could be a family member, a friend, a teacher, or even someone from your local health service. It's also important to consider reporting abuse to the police or eSafety, if it's serious.



Young people

## Deadly tech house rules: setting boundaries for online safety

**Be safe.  
Be curious.  
Be kind.  
Be secure.**



### Advice for young people - deadly digital creators

#### ✓ Explore together

Ask someone older you trust to check out new games or apps with you.

#### ✓ Stay close by

When you use a device by yourself, make sure an adult is close so you can get help if you need it. Don't use your device alone in your bedroom.

#### ✓ Ask before you download/ install/buy

Check in with an adult in the house before you buy anything.

#### ✓ Your stuff is private!

Keep your accounts private. Don't tell people things like your address, what school you go to, your birthday, or passwords. Yarn with an adult about the kind of things that are OK for you to share online.

#### ✓ Think before you share

Remember that once something is posted online, it's there for everyone to see.

#### ✓ Online bullies

If you're sent a mean message or see something cruel, ignore it and tell an adult you trust.

#### ✓ Messages from strangers

If someone you don't know sends a message, or you get a message that makes you feel uncomfortable – tell an adult you trust.

#### ✓ Sexting and nudes

We know growing up means new feelings and relationships, but don't let people pressure you into sending or saying things that you don't feel good about or you might regret later.

#### ✓ Who are you?

Remember that some people are gammon and pretend to be someone they're not. Don't accept requests or follows from people you don't know.

#### ✓ Which way?

Someone you met online wants to catch up offline? No way! Keep your online friends online.



Parents &amp; carers

# Deadly tech house rules: setting boundaries for online safety

## Advice for parents and carers

- ✓ **Build trust**  
Teach young people to ask for help to build trust together.
- ✓ **Keep them close**  
Keep device use in communal areas and have a doris from time to time (even if they say they're fine).
- ✓ **Ask questions**  
Stay engaged with their online activity and be interested in what they're doing.
- ✓ **Explore together**  
Explore together online and play games with them.
- ✓ **Be kind. Be sure.**  
Encourage respect and empathy. Talk about consent.
- ✓ **A resilient mob**  
Start building resilience. How can they deal with things that worry them? Who can they tell when they're worried?
- ✓ **Are they ready?**  
Did you know that kids have to be a certain age to register and use most social media platforms?
- ✓ **Hard yarns. Open arms.**  
Be open to yarns and avoid judgement or anger if a young person opens up to you.
- ✓ **Think twice. Send once.**  
Teach them to avoid sharing or posting things that may upset others or they might regret sending later.
- ✓ **Enough now**  
Help them to know when it's time to log off and 'touch grass.'
- ✓ **Follow the footprints**  
Do you know what your child's digital footprint looks like? What they've seen online? Read more about [Children's Online Lives](#).



**Family rules help everyone in your family get along better. Good family rules are positive and easy to understand.**

### Resources

- **Read more** about [online safety](#) with your family
- **Read more** about [navigating online milestones](#) for your child
- **Learn more** about [children's lives online](#)
- **Read more** about [helping young people achieve a healthy balance](#) in their online and offline activities



Families

# Deadly tech house rules: setting boundaries for online safety

## Advice for families

### ✓ Create your own 'deadly tech house rules' (or 'family tech agreement')

This is a set of rules about how devices like smartphones, tablets, computers, TVs and gaming consoles are used in your home. Make time to sit together and agree on things like:

- where devices can be used
- what games and apps are safe and OK
- how much time can be spent online
- whether homework needs to be completed first
- what to do if they see, hear or read something online that makes them feel bad.

### ○○○ Resources

→ **Complete** the '[Circle of friends' activity](#) and help kids learn about personal boundaries



**Use the template on the next page to create your own deadly tech house rules!**

Cut the page out and put it somewhere everyone can see it.







# Our deadly tech house rules

Name/s:

Date:

**DEVICES**

How will I look after my device?

Which rooms are best for online time?

Where will I keep my device at night?

**DAYS AND TIMES**

How many hours a day should I be online for?

School days:

Weekends:

Holidays:

When I can't be online:

**GAMES AND PLATFORMS**

What games can I play?

What games are off-limits?

Who are my online friends?

**OFFLINE PLAY**

Ideas for other things to do when I need a break from online:

**HELP**

Write a list of things that might make you feel no good when you're online:

List the people from your 'Circle of friends' activity here:

Signed by:







Families

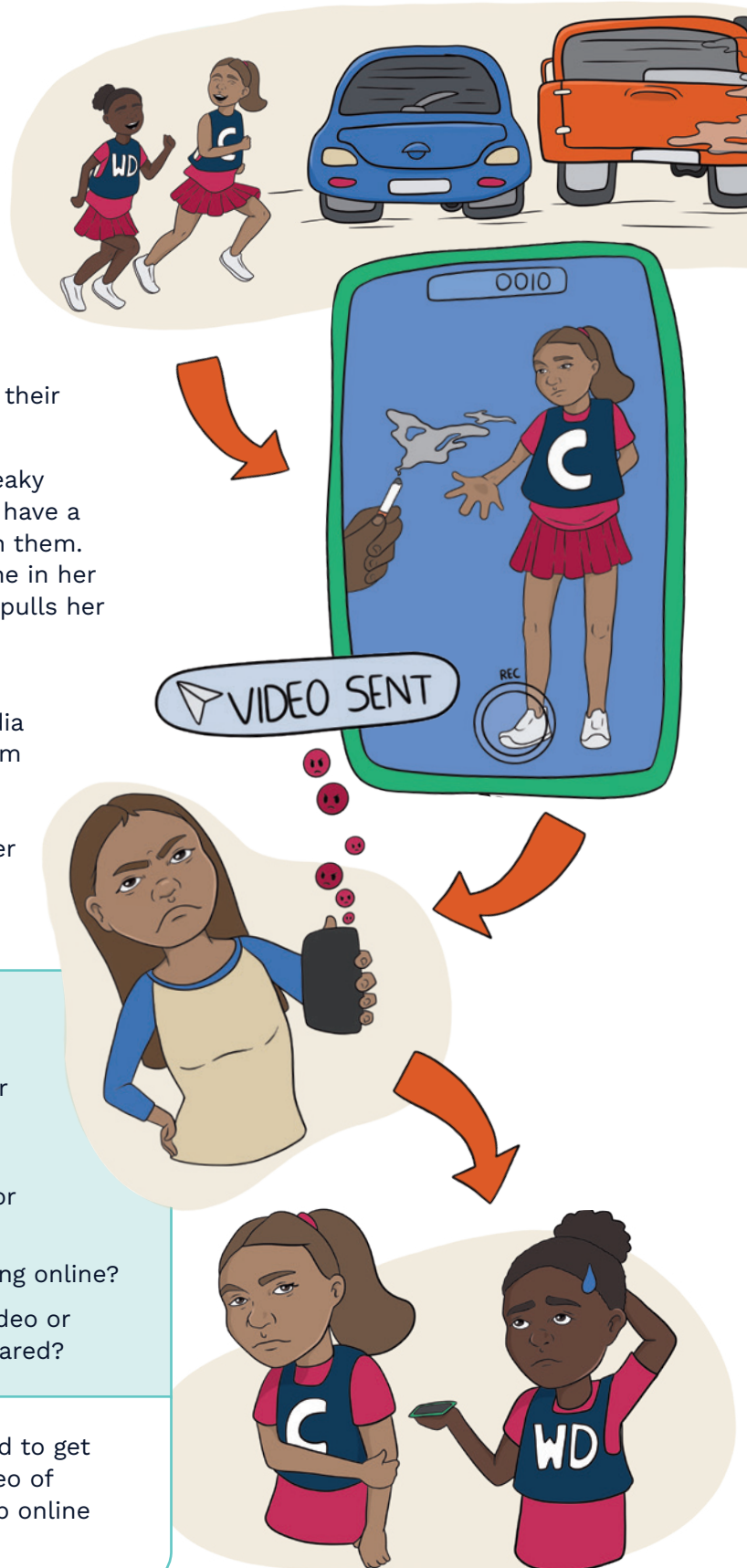
## Case study:

# Think before you share

Shanice and Keisa have just finished playing their netball game and decide to stick around to watch Shanice's older cousin Maggie play. She's a deadly shooter and is someone they all look up to. Shanice lives with Maggie too, which is pretty cool. They race out to grab some chairs from Keisa's mum's car when they bump into girls from their class in the car park.

The girls are hiding behind some cars having a sneaky durry and laughing. They tell Shanice and Keisa to have a drag to make sure they won't run back and dob on them. Shanice knows she shouldn't, especially cos no one in her family smokes, but feels pressured to do it. Keisa pulls her phone out and films it.

Later that night, Shanice's cousin comes into her room really mad. She's seen a video on social media of Shanice smoking. Everyone has. Her netball team is mad too because she's in her uniform in the video. Shanice is shame, but mad that her friend would share the video. Keisa didn't mean to get her friend in trouble and tries to delete the video but it's too late.



## Answer these questions:

- Do you need permission to share a photo or video of someone?
- How can people use social media to pressure us? What are the consequences for you, your mob and your friends?
- What should you do before you post anything online?
- How would you feel if someone posted a video or photo of you online that you didn't want shared?

→ **Read more about consent** and why you need to get permission before you share a photo or video of someone else, so that together we can keep online spaces safer for all our mob



Young people

## Who we are online

Lots of young people like us use an 'avatar' or a digital character when we're online. This keeps things fun and helps us understand ourselves in different ways. An online identity can be a good thing. It can make us feel pretty deadly and help us use our imagination. It can also be a clever way to keep our personal details private so we're safer. But remember, having a secret online identity doesn't mean it's OK to bully or hurt someone if they can't tell who we are.

Adults can also use avatars, digital characters and even fake online identities. They might use an old photo or someone else's picture or name, to pretend to be someone they're not. This can be because they want to look and sound a certain way so people think they're deadly, or sometimes, so they can trick or hurt you. They might want to trick you into meeting them or to get information, photos or videos from you.

### Things young people shouldn't share online:

- Our full name and birthday.
- Our contact details – like our home address or school, email or phone number, or someone else's contact details.
- Bank or card details.
- Any photos or videos that can show where we live or go to school.
- Sexual content that someone didn't ask for. Remember – sending sexual content is always a risk, even if someone has asked for it. Once you've shared a nude photo or video, it's hard to get it back.

If anyone asks for a photo or personal details, we should tell someone we trust straight away! They can find out more about the person asking for these things, check our privacy settings, and report it to the right people if it's not good.

#### Remember:

Once something is posted online, it's there for everyone to see. Sharing harmful things can upset people and cause trouble.

Before you share, ask yourself these questions:

- Why do I want to share this online?
- Am I being respectful, or will it stir up trouble?
- Is the other person OK if I share a video or photo of them online?





Young people

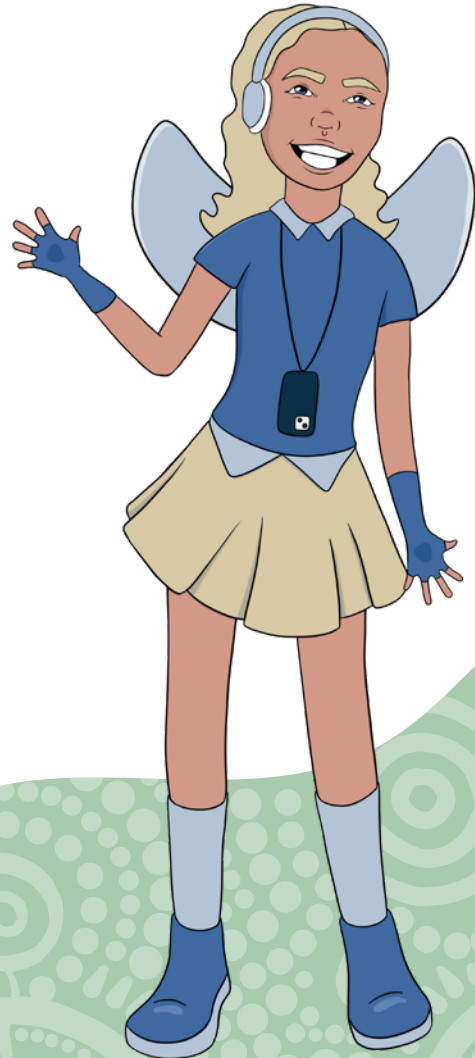
## Our brain online

Having deadly mates and spending time with family helps us become deadly adults.

Young people still need lots of beauty sleep and healthy food to fuel their growing bodies. A healthy diet includes what we feed our brains. Watching positive stuff and being careful with how long we spend online helps shape teens into deadly young adults.

Scientists are learning that too much screen time leads to changes in the brain, similar to brain changes we see with using drugs, alcohol and gambling.<sup>4</sup> We also know that some young people might use activities like gaming to distract them from their worries, which can set up poor coping skills and might put them at risk of developing addictions.

Blue light from our screens messes with our brain's body clock and young people's sleep cycles. This is why we should turn screens off a few hours before bed, so we don't lose sleep. This is another good reason to keep screens out of the bedroom!



### Resources

→ [Read more](#) about [how young people's brains develop](#)

<sup>4</sup> <https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10065366/#:~:text=Many%20studies%20have%20shown%20that,other%20psychological%20and%20social%20problems.>





Young people

## Thriving online

Young people and adults of all ages actively engage online, but it's not always a good experience. There are things we can all do to help make everyone's online experience a deadly one.

### Parents and carers

Encourage routines that promote health and balance, like creating device-free times and places in your home. Think about your own online behaviour:

- Are you showing positive online use?
- Could you put your phone down a bit more?
- Could you spend more time with the family without being distracted by going online?

Keep track of how much time young people spend gaming and watch for any changes in their behaviour. This could be at school, with friends or with family. They might get obsessed with a certain game or become withdrawn. If you notice changes that worry you, managing screen time might be enough to help, or you might want to speak with a health professional.

Find out more in the chapter **'Asking for help.'**



### Young people

Be a good friend and check in with your mates if something is wrong. Be confident to have hard yarns with an adult you trust. Read safety information with trusted adults who can help you solve problems. Join information and training sessions at school or the local youth centres to find out more about the digital world!

And remember to touch grass – especially if you spend a lot of time gaming!

### GAMING – know who's playing

Online multiplayer games are great fun, and players might end up gaming with people they don't know from all over the world. But this could create opportunities for cyberbullying and grooming. It's important young people know who to tell if someone talks to them in an aggressive or sexual way that makes them feel yuck. This behaviour should be reported straight away.

Here are some things families can yarn about together to make sure gaming doesn't go too far:

**Be prepared:** Play games in communal spaces and get parents and carers to check that parental controls are on.

**Have good habits:** Agree on acceptable behaviour, appropriate language, and remember to be kind. Choose fun screen names (not your real name), agree on how long games can be played, take breaks and don't click on strange links.

**Stay involved:** Share experiences. Talk about the game and who you play with and play together with other people in your house!

#### Resources

→ [Learn more](#) about [being safe and having fun with games](#)





Parents &amp; carers

## Quick yarn – what we’ve learnt so far

We’ve yarned about a lot so far! It’s really important to remember that there’s loads to know and technology is always changing, so you shouldn’t feel bad if you don’t always have the answers.

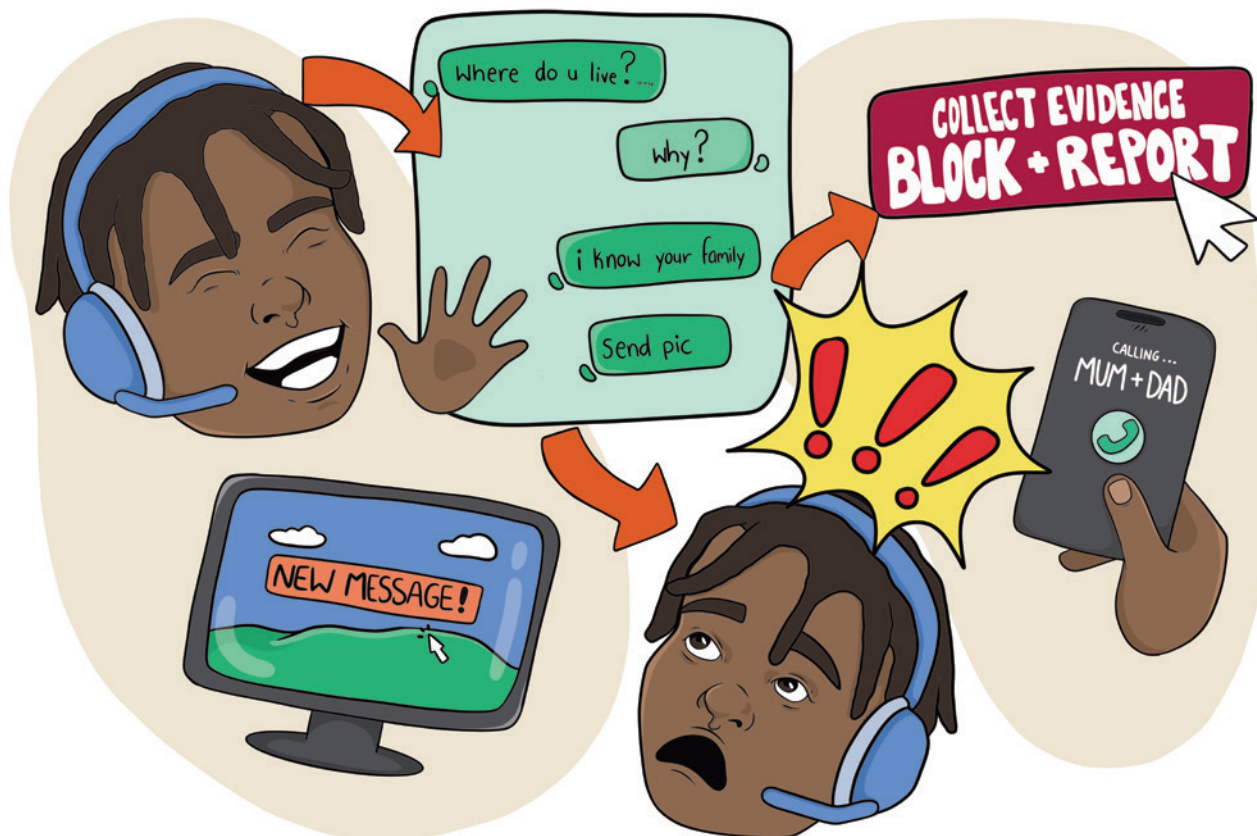
**Here’s a reminder about some things we’ve talked about to make sure your house is full of deadly and safe digital storytellers and leaders:**



- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Turn your privacy settings on and check them often.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Turn on parental controls for household devices.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure you’ve done the ‘Circle of friends’ activity.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Create and agree on ‘deadly tech house rules.’   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be OK having hard yarns – practice with a friend or relative.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure everyone gets offline regularly and takes a break.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Set strong passwords, or ‘passphrases,’ that are hard to guess.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Think of fun ways your young people can share their stories and culture online.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk with young people about what info we shouldn’t share online.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Know what games young people are playing and who they’re playing with.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure games, stories, learning activities and apps are positive and not harmful – are they age-appropriate? | <input type="checkbox"/> Trust your gut – if something doesn’t feel right, talk with someone you can trust.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Don’t be shame to reach out for help – do you know who to ask?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Visit <a href="https://esafety.gov.au/parents">eSafety.gov.au/parents</a> for more advice to help keep young people safe online. |



Families

**Case study:****I know your family. It's OK.**

Jeff is a 12-year old from Yarrabah. He starts playing online with some of his friends, but their parents call them away and they have to leave. This means Jeff is left to play alone. Someone starts messaging. He messages back. The person starts asking some weird questions. The person asks, 'Where do you live?' Then they say, 'I know your family,' and ask for a photo.

Jeff is very stressed and scared for his safety – he feels anxious. Jeff wonders if this person is from overseas or could live in the neighbourhood.

How would he know? What can Jeff do to stay safe?

**What would you do?**

If a person gets creepy online, start by telling someone who can support you.

If you are in danger of being harmed, they can help you to follow these steps:

1. Collect evidence of the harmful content or the abuse.
2. Depending on the type of abuse, report it to either the service or platform, or eSafety.
3. Stop contact with the person.
4. Get more help.

**For more information** about the steps to follow when you're dealing with online abuse, visit [eSafety.gov.au/report](https://www.esafety.gov.au/report)

# Getting help – having a yarn



Parents & carers

## Something is up. What do I do now?

If you need help but are unsure what to do, talk about it with someone you know or trust. You can also speak with someone at Kids Helpline by calling **1800 551 800**.

If you need to have a hard yarn with a young person in your house, these tips can help you get ready:

- **Plan** – work out what you want to say and how. Organise to go somewhere private, where you can't be interrupted.
- **Listen** – don't judge. Make sure you let them know you're there to help. Listen to understand.
- **Ask questions** – ask how they're feeling and what they know. Do your best not to lecture.
- **Get help** – talk with someone like a friend, relative or the child's teacher. If the situation is serious, you can make a report directly to eSafety ([eSafety.gov.au/report](https://esafety.gov.au/report))

The [eSafety Guide](#) provides useful tips and advice about how to protect personal information and report harmful content on common social media platforms, games, apps and sites.



Young people

## Having hard yarns with someone you trust can be tough.

If you are feeling sad, it's important to talk with someone. Talk with a trusted adult, like your parents, aunty or uncle, grandparents, older cousin or teacher. You can start by talking about these kinds of things:

- **Your feelings:** How are you feeling right now?
- **What happened?** Can you remember what made you feel the way you do? Who made you feel that way?

## Need to talk?

**Free 24 hour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders crisis support line**

☎ 13YARN

**Kids Helpline** (5-25 years)

☎ 1800 55 1800

**Headspace** (12-25 years)

☎ 1800 650 890

If it's an emergency, call Triple Zero (000). You can also get support from Lifeline **13 11 14**.

### ○○○ Resources

- **Parents, carers and community organisations** might like to use [eSafety's flow chart](#) that shows how to report online harm
- **Young people** can read [eSafety's step-by-step guide](#) on what to do if someone is being a bully online
- **Not sure if a game is suitable?** [Find out about safety ratings](#)



Families

## Related Resources

**Leaving Deadly Digital Footprints!** is part of a series of resources that support parents and carers to talk with kids and young people about being safe and having fun online.

On the eSafety website, you can find these resources:

- **Yarning cards** featuring questions that parents and carers can work through together with young people. It's a great way to start an online safety yarn!
- **Videos** presenting examples of good ways you can approach and address online safety concerns.
- **Fact sheets** that provide quick summaries of the guides.

There is also another guide, **Safer Together!**, which is designed for children from 5- to 12-years-old to work through with their parents and carers.

You can view and download the full range of resources on the [eSafety website](#).





Families

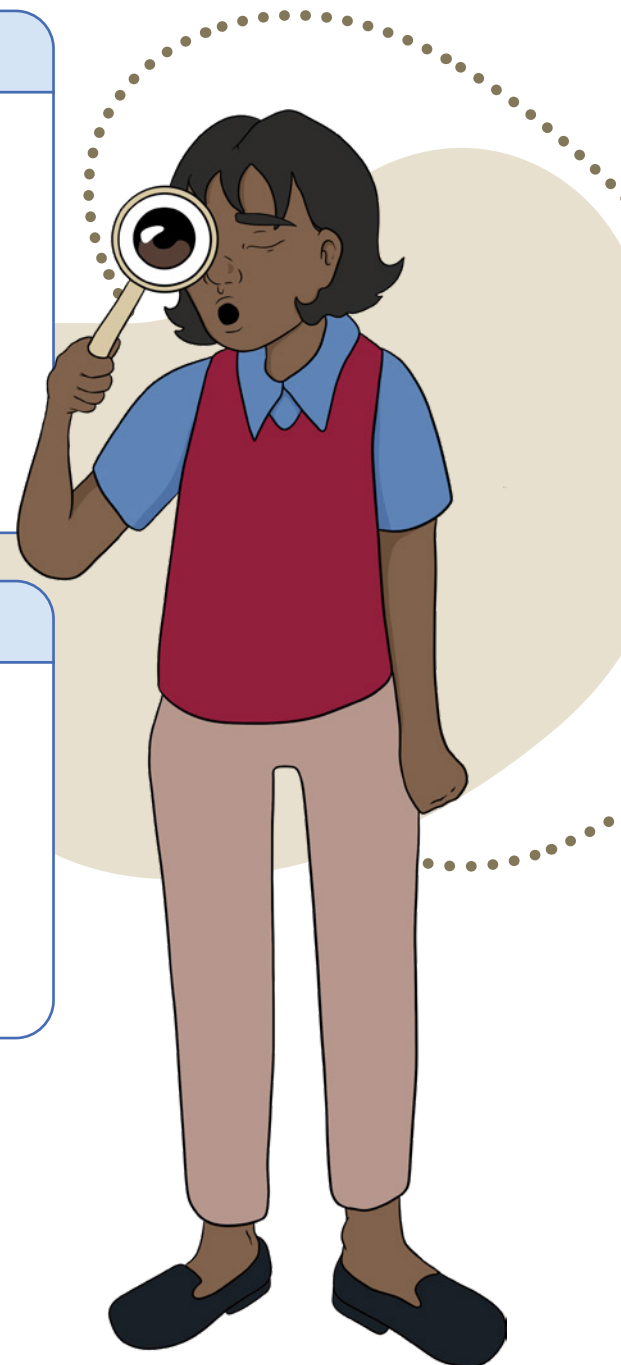
## Want to learn more?

### ○○○ Resources for families

- [eSafety's online safety support for First Nations people](#)
- Research about [parents' awareness of kids' online behaviour](#)
- [Online safety guides](#) and educational videos produced by the Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service
- Support for Stolen Generation survivors and their families: [healingfoundation.org.au](https://healingfoundation.org.au)
- Information about [leadership in social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention](#)

### ○○○ Resources for community organisations

- Research about the [online experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children](#) and their parents and caregivers, including parents' awareness of kids' online behaviour
- [Online safety guides](#) and educational videos produced by the Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service
- Support for Stolen Generation survivors and their families: [healingfoundation.org.au](https://healingfoundation.org.au)



# Glossary

## Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is when someone uses the internet to be mean to a child or young person, so they feel bad or upset.

## Digital device

A digital device includes all devices that have access to the internet, such as computers and laptops, smartphones and tablets.

## Doris

Doris means 'to stickybeak' or 'go look.' For example, someone might say, 'What's going on over there?' or 'Wanna go have a doris?'

## Gammon (Gammin)

Joking or fake, as in, 'that's gammon,' or 'you're gammon,' or 'I'm just gammon.' It can be used to describe someone who is a joker or faker, or to let everyone else know they're just kidding.

## Grooming

Grooming is when a sexual predator builds an emotional connection or relationship with a child or young person so they can sexually abuse them. Grooming can lead to children or young people having sexual contact with someone online, or even meeting up in person, without their family or carer knowing.

## Internet

The internet is a global computer network that allows information and data to be shared across the world. Sometimes it's called the 'web' or 'world wide web.'

## Online safety

Online safety is a term for the things we can do to stay safe and healthy when we're on the internet. This might include how we can reduce the risk of seeing harmful content, being contacted by someone we don't want, being tricked into sending nude photos or videos, or having our personal information stolen.

## Parental controls

Parental controls are software tools that allow you to monitor and limit what your child sees and does online.

## Sexting

Sexting means sending a sexual message, photo or video by text, a private messaging app, an online chat or social media. The sexual photos or videos are sometimes known as 'nudes' or 'naked selfies.'

## Social media

Social media services are digital platforms, like websites and apps, that let people create a profile then share ideas, information, and content like photos and videos online, or comment on content shared by other people.

## Touching grass

Telling another person to 'touch grass' is a way of letting someone know they have been spending too much time online and need to take a break – go outside or do something different.





