For First Nations kids, their families, carers and support networks.

SAFER TOGETHER!

Keeping kids safe online

Australian Government

eSafety Commissioner

eSafety.gov.au

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 Safer Together!

Safer Together! has been created alongside First Nations kids and young people, and their families and carers, with support from the community of Gimuy (Cairns).

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

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

Safer Together! outlines our top 10 most useful online safety topics and tips and some other fun things. Parents and carers can use the information in this guide to yarn together with kids about staying safe online. Some sections are just for kids, 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 you can read together.

We hope **Safer Together!** answers some of those tricky questions about online safety and gets mob talking about becoming deadly online explorers, gamers and digital creators!

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

Thank you

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Important stuff!

How to stay safe

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Why is online safety important for mob?

Online safety can help our kids and young people to learn, play and connect online without being hurt or abused. Being safe means we can celebrate our culture, learn cool new things and hang out with our friends, all in the comfort of our home.

As our kids get older, independence is an important step. They start to explore the world in many different ways, and this includes managing their own online activity.

Yarning about online safety early can help build trust and confidence for everyone.

It's important that kids know they can come to you if they feel unsafe or uncomfortable online, especially if they:

- see upsetting content
- are contacted by strangers, or unsafe people they know
- share photos, videos or personal information that should be kept private
- are bullied online.

A simple way to help avoid harm is for families and carers to supervise and agree on simple rules to help keep kids safe online. You can 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![1]

→ **Learn more** about **First Nations digital inclusion** and the work being done to close the digital gap

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[1] **Closing the Gap Target 17**: 'By 2026, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have equal levels of digital inclusion'.

SAFER TOGETHER!

Families

What can go wrong?

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

Our kids are vulnerable to online harm and abuse, including racism, violence, and grooming by sexual predators. Grooming can lead to kids 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 happening when someone you don't know 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.[3]

As our kids grow, they gain more independence and start to explore the world in other 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.

Here are some of the risks that our kids might face:

- Seeing photos or videos that are very scary or rude.
- Being contacted by people who might trick or hurt them.
- Being tricked into sexting or sending nude photos or videos online.
- Being scammed to buy gammon stuff or share personal info.
- Being racially targeted or bullied.
- Getting addicted to gaming.

Resources

→ **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

→ **For more information** on how to keep safe visit **eSafety.gov.au**

How can you help?

Playing and learning with your kids online is one of the best ways to keep your young ones safe, and you might have some fun too!

Start yarning and asking things like:

- What's your favourite game or character?
- Can you show me how to play?

You could also let them know what you like to do online.

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

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

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[2] 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.

[3] eSafety Commissioner (2022). **Mind the Gap: Parental awareness of children's exposure to risks online.** Page 40.

Families

Trolls, bullies, scammers and creeps!

As kids start to navigate the online world, you can yarn with them about how to be safe and avoid trolls, bullies, scammers and creeps. It's OK for them to have fun, but they need to know there are also lots of yucky people online who might want to hurt them.

You can read this section together with your kids and help them to learn about what to look out for, and some of the warning signs.

What does a bully or creep look like?

Sometimes, it's hard to know if someone is a bully or a creep because:

- they might be someone you know

- they look cool or like a family member or friend

- they are a teenager or young adult

- they might be someone who's meant to help you like a teacher, sports coach or tutor

- they might be pretending to be a kid or someone they're not

- they might be 'grooming' you to make you feel really good, so they can trick you.

What are some red flags or warning signs?

The person online might:

- ask you to share private information, like where you live or go to school

- ask you to break rules

- offer to give you things to trick you into trusting them

- put you down and say things that make you feel bad

- ask you to say or do things that aren't safe or don't feel good – like sending photos or videos.
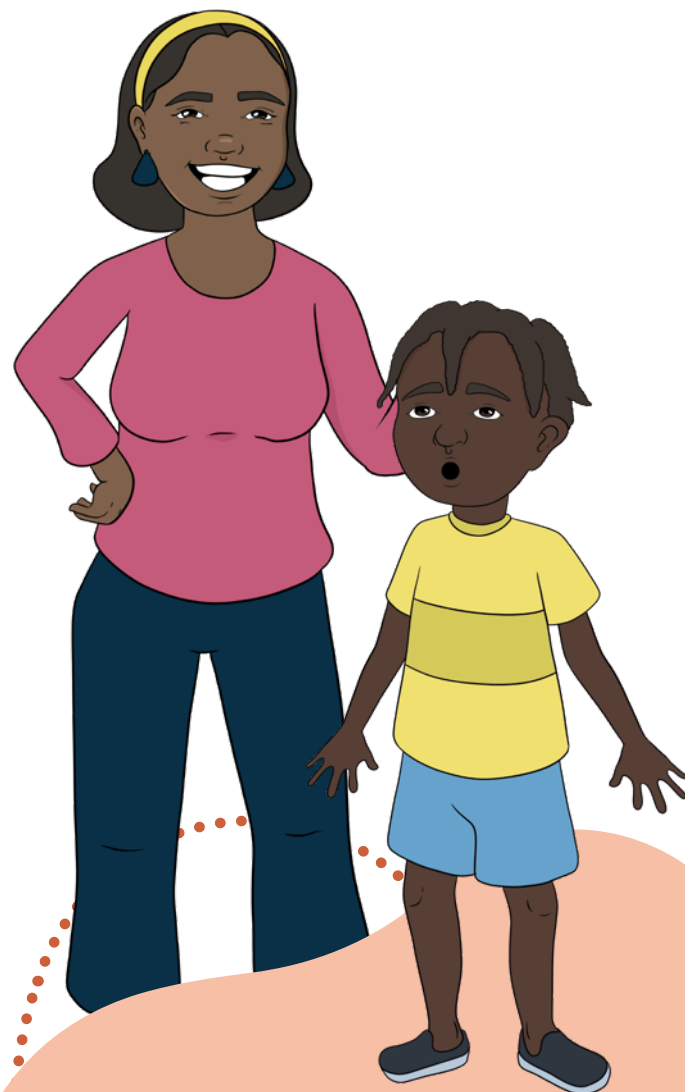
Yarn together

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

Kids

How can trolls, bullies, scammers and creeps make kids 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.

If something you see or hear online makes you feel funny in your tummy, or you have any 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?

Is online bullying a problem at your school?

Do kids at your school talk about seeing scary stuff online?

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

Have you ever felt uncomfortable about someone contacting you online?

Has anyone 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, you can talk with someone you trust. They could be a family member, a friend, a teacher, or even someone from your local health service. You might also think about making a formal report, if the situation is serious.

Kids

Deadly tech house rules: setting boundaries for online safety

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

Advice for kids - be an eSafe kid!

✓ **Ask before you download/install/buy**
Check in with a trusted adult in the house before you buy anything online.

✓ **Your stuff is private!**
Don't tell people your address, what school you go to, when your birthday is, or your passwords.

✓ **Who else can see your stuff?**
Talk to a trusted adult about what photos and info are OK to share online.

✓ **Online bullies**
People can be mean! If you get a mean message, ignore it and tell an adult you trust.

✓ **Messages from strangers**
If someone you don't know sends a message, or you get one that makes you feel yuck – don't reply. Tell an adult you trust.

✓ **Who are you?**
Remember – some people are gammon and pretend to be other people. 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.

○○○ **Resources**

→ **Complete** the **'Circle of friends' activity** and help kids learn about personal boundaries

→ **Read more** about **online safety** with your family

SAFER TOGETHER!

Parents & carers

Deadly tech house rules:
setting boundaries for online safety

Advice for parents and carers

✓ **Build trust**

Teach kids to ask for help to build trust together.

✓ **Check the controls**

Use parental controls to check and change what can be seen online.

✓ **Be respectful. Be kind**.

Encourage respect and explain why it's important to think about other people's feelings.

✓ **Enough now**

Help them to know when it's time to 'touch grass' and log off.

✓ **A resilient mob**

Start building their resilience. How can kids 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?

✓ **Keep them close**

Only let kids use devices in a shared space (not bedrooms) and check in often.

✓ **Privacy matters**

Teach them to avoid sharing or posting things that could give away personal information that could make it easier to harm them.

✓ **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.**

○○○ Resources

→ **Need more help** thinking about **what to include in your 'Deadly tech house rules'** (or 'family tech agreement')?

→ **Read more** about **navigating online milestones** for your child

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

Families

Deadly tech house rules: setting boundaries for online safety

Advice for families

✓ **Explore together**

Encourage kids to play new games with help from someone they trust.

✓ **Stay close by**

When kids use a device alone, make sure a parent or carer is close, so they can get help. Talk together as a family about why kids shouldn't use devices alone in their bedroom.

✓ **Circle of friends**

Complete the 'Circle of friends: personal boundaries' activity together from Raising Children Network.

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

This is a set of rules about how to use devices in your home like smartphones, tablets, computers, TVs and gaming consoles.

Make time to sit together and agree on:

- where devices can be used in the house
- what games and apps are OK to use
- when devices can be used
- how much time can be spent online.

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 our device?

Which room can I use it in?

Where will I keep it at night?

DAYS AND TIMES

How many hours a day can I be online?

School days:

Weekends:

Holidays:

When can't I go online?

GAMES AND PLATFORMS

What games can I play?

What am I not allowed to play?

Who can I be friends with?

OFFLINE PLAY

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

HELP

When to ask for help:

Who to ask for help:

**Signed by:**

SAFER TOGETHER!

Families

Case study:
Bud and his cuz play online games

Bud is in Year 4 and living with his grandparents. Since moving in, he's started playing online games with his older cousin Jarren who lives down the street.

While they're playing one night, Jarren starts acting up and calling Bud names and sending nasty messages. Bud hasn't spent much time online before, and the game is new for him. He gets really upset, throws his controller down and goes to his room. His nana is sad for Bud and doesn't understand what made him so upset.

The next day the whole family gets together for a feed at Bud's aunty's house. Jarren asks Bud why he got so upset and tells him that it was just a game. He says he always plays like that and if Bud wants to keep playing with him, he'd better get used to it.

Bud doesn't like how he feels after playing with Jarren, and he doesn't want to play games that way. He just wants to have fun and needs to get some help.
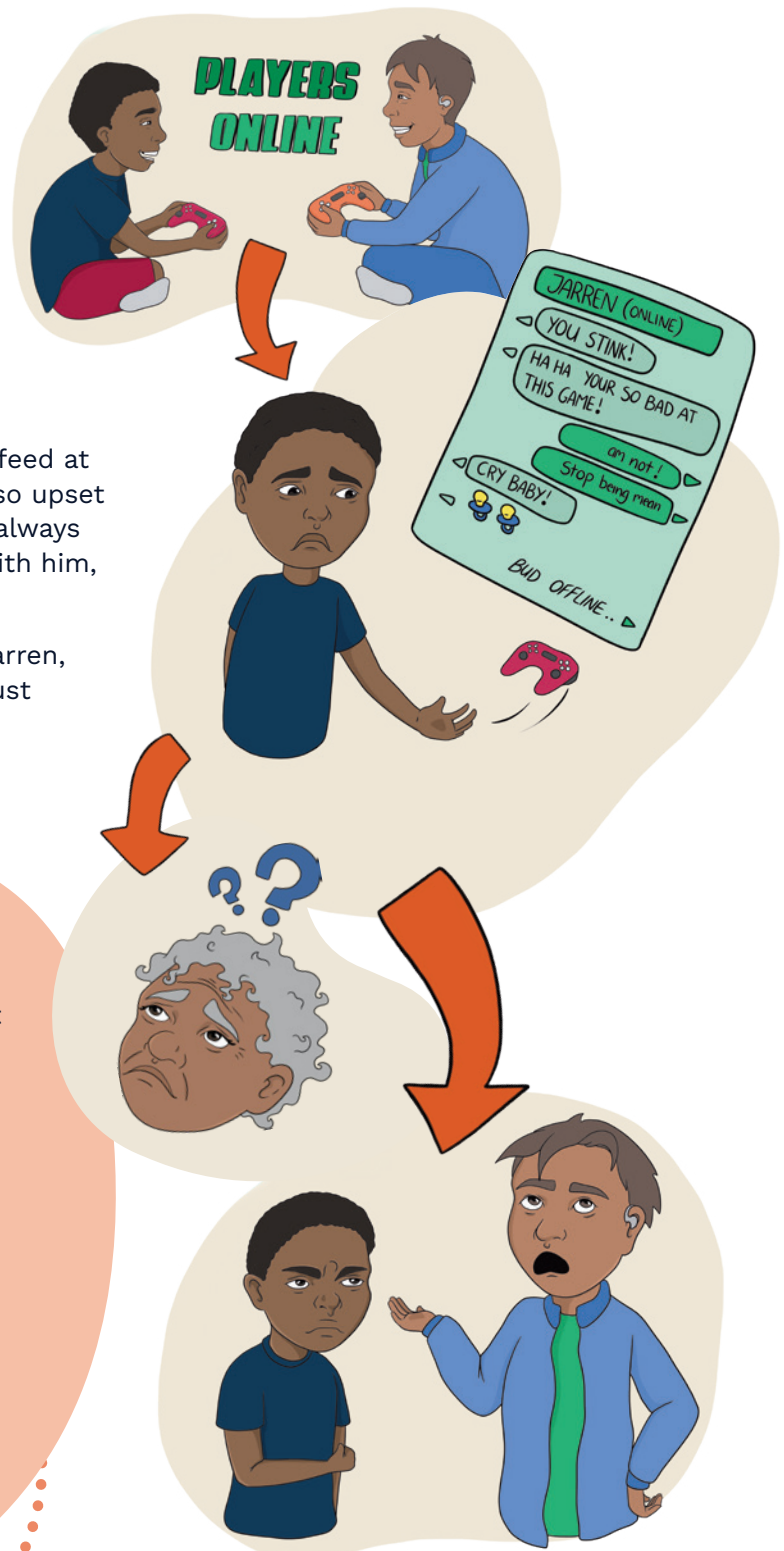
Yarn together

Sit and yarn with your child about Bud's story. You can ask them these questions:

How do you think you would feel if you needed help like Bud?

These are some of the things you might feel:

- My tummy feels funny.
- I be mad or angry one.
- My heart beats real fast.
- I get a scary or bad feeling.

Who could help you? Use the 'Circle of friends' activity to help you make a list.

Kids

Who we are online

Lots of kids like us use an 'avatar' or digital character when we're online. It can make us feel pretty deadly and help us have fun, use our imagination and understand ourselves in different ways. It can also be a clever way to keep our personal details private so we're safer. But having a secret online identity doesn't mean it's OK to bully or hurt someone.

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 look or sound younger or pretend to be someone they're not. This can be because they want people to think they're deadly, but they might be faking it, to trick or hurt someone. They might want to trick you into meeting them or to get information or photos from you.

Things kids shouldn't share online:

- Our full name and birthday.
- Our contact details – like our home address or school, email or phone number.
- Someone else's contact details.
- Bank or card details.
- Any photos or videos that might show where we live or go to school.

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 to share these rules with everyone who helps grow you up – aunties, uncles, grannies, grandparents, tiddas, balas and cousins.

Parents & carers

Our brain and wellbeing online

We can help kids build deadly brains with good rest, good food and enough sleep. Good friends and family time also helps their brains to grow healthy and strong.

Making sure online games, stories, activities and apps are positive and not harmful will also help to shape kids into deadly adults!

Online gaming is a good example of an activity that can be great for kids – teaching them how to make quick decisions, play better with friends and be super creative. But, just like every online activity, they need to do it safely. The downside might be that kids start using games to distract them from their problems, which can set up poor coping skills. Gaming could also put them at risk of developing addictions. For example, scientists are learning that too much gaming can lead to changes in the brain, similar to the changes we see with using drugs, alcohol and gambling.[4]

Spending too much time online (like playing games, watching videos or chatting with people) can also make it hard to focus, might make kids grouchy or make them feel no good about their body.

It's also important to know that blue light from devices and screens can mess with the brain's body clock and sleep cycles. This is why we should turn screens off a few hours before bed, so the light doesn't mess with our sleep. Another good reason to keep screens out of the bedroom!

Parents and carers can help kids to look after their online wellbeing by setting rules around screen time and swapping device time with other fun things to keep them active and busy. Playing ball, drawing characters, laughing with friends and making a comic book are easy ways to fill in time.

Yarn together

Yarn with your child about what they can do to look after their wellbeing and stay deadly and strong online.

Keep track of how much time kids spend online and watch for any changes in their behaviour. This could be at school, with friends or with family. You might notice that they become obsessed with a certain game or become withdrawn or closed off.

If you see changes that worry you, managing screen time might be enough to help, or you might want to yarn with a health professional. See our advice about who you can ask for help in the next section.

→ **Read more** about **kids' development phases**

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

Parents & carers

Ways that kids can stay healthy and safe when they're online

Being online is an important part of life that comes with risks, but lots of benefits for our kids too.

As parents and carers, we can help children to develop skills, knowledge and habits to reduce the risks and enjoy all the great things they can do online.

There are some easy ways you can help them do this. You can suggest they:

- ✓ **move and stretch regularly** so they change their posture often and take breaks

- ✓ **avoid repetitive movements** over a long period of time

- ✓ **prop-up their device** on a cushion or table to avoid muscle tiredness

- ✓ **create some distance** between the device and their eyes

- ✓ **choose games or apps** that encourage them to move in different ways

- ✓ **only use screens in a safe environment** – don't walk across roads looking at screens!

- ✓ **select content that promotes good health** and helps them to make sure they're eating well, getting enough sleep and having positive social support

- ✓ **use screens to create** or extend an interest in offline activities that involve moving their whole body and improving their fine motor skills, like learning how to kick a footy straighter.

○○○ Resources

→ **Learn more** about **being safe and having fun with games**

→ **Read more** about **how our kids' brains develop in early childhood**
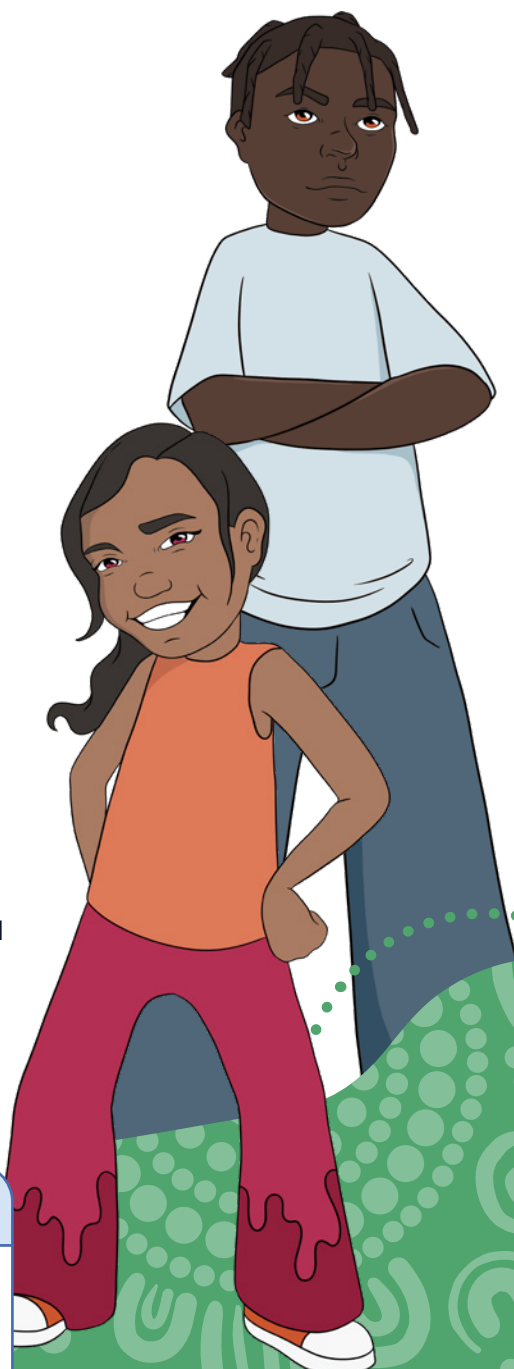
This list was adapted from the article written by Professor Leon Straker and Dr Juliana Zabatiero, who lead the Healthy Digital Child team at the School of Allied Health, Curtin University. **abc.net.au/education/how-screens-affect-physical-health-and-development-of-children/103215644**

Parents & 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:

- ☐ Turn your privacy settings on and check them often.

- ☐ Make sure you've done the 'Circle of friends' activity.

- ☐ Be OK having hard yarns – practice with a friend or relative.

- ☐ Set strong passwords, or 'passphrases,' that are hard to guess.

- ☐ Talk with young people about what info we shouldn't share online.

- ☐ Make sure games, stories, learning activities and apps are positive and not harmful – are they age-appropriate?

- ☐ Don't be shame to reach out for help – do you know who to ask?

- ☐ Turn on parental controls for household devices.

- ☐ Create and agree on 'deadly tech house rules.'

- ☐ Make sure everyone gets offline regularly and takes a break.

- ☐ Think of fun ways your kids can share their stories and culture online.

- ☐ Know what games kids are playing and who they're playing with.

- ☐ Trust your gut – if something doesn't feel right, talk with someone you can trust.

- ☐ Visit **eSafety.gov.au/parents** for more advice to help keep kids safe online.

Kids

Case study:

Super Shannan – Deadly and Brave

Shannan scored this Christmas. All her family got her a game pass for her favourite game. Her dad doesn't know how to play it, but it makes him happy watching her play on the couch in the evenings.

Shannan's still learning the game, but it doesn't matter if she stuffs up – no one she's playing with knows her. It's just a kids' game anyway! Shannan is playing one night after dinner when a new player joins the game. They're writing a lot of cuss words in the chats and then they start being real mean to the other players for no reason. Shannan doesn't think this person is very nice, and something about the words they keep using makes her think they aren't a kid.

Her dad can see that Shannan's posture has dropped, and her face looks sad. He goes to walk over to her when BAM – there is a bright flash and suddenly Shannan's game avatar (SO) appears, standing by Shannan.

SO and Shannan turn and look at each other. They both nod and have a big grin on their faces. Shannan closes her eyes, takes a few deep breaths and says, 'I AM DEADLY. I AM BRAVE!' She knows what she has to do! Shannan tells her dad and he helps her to collect evidence of what's happened and then report the player. SO reminds her there is another important thing to do and Shannan blocks the nasty player after they've reported them. She starts to feel better and is proud of herself. Together they close the game, put the device down, and go outside to stare at the beautiful night sky and tell stories. She'll play her game another time.

**Remember, if someone is mean online:
Be brave.
Take a few breaths.
Ask for help if you need it.**
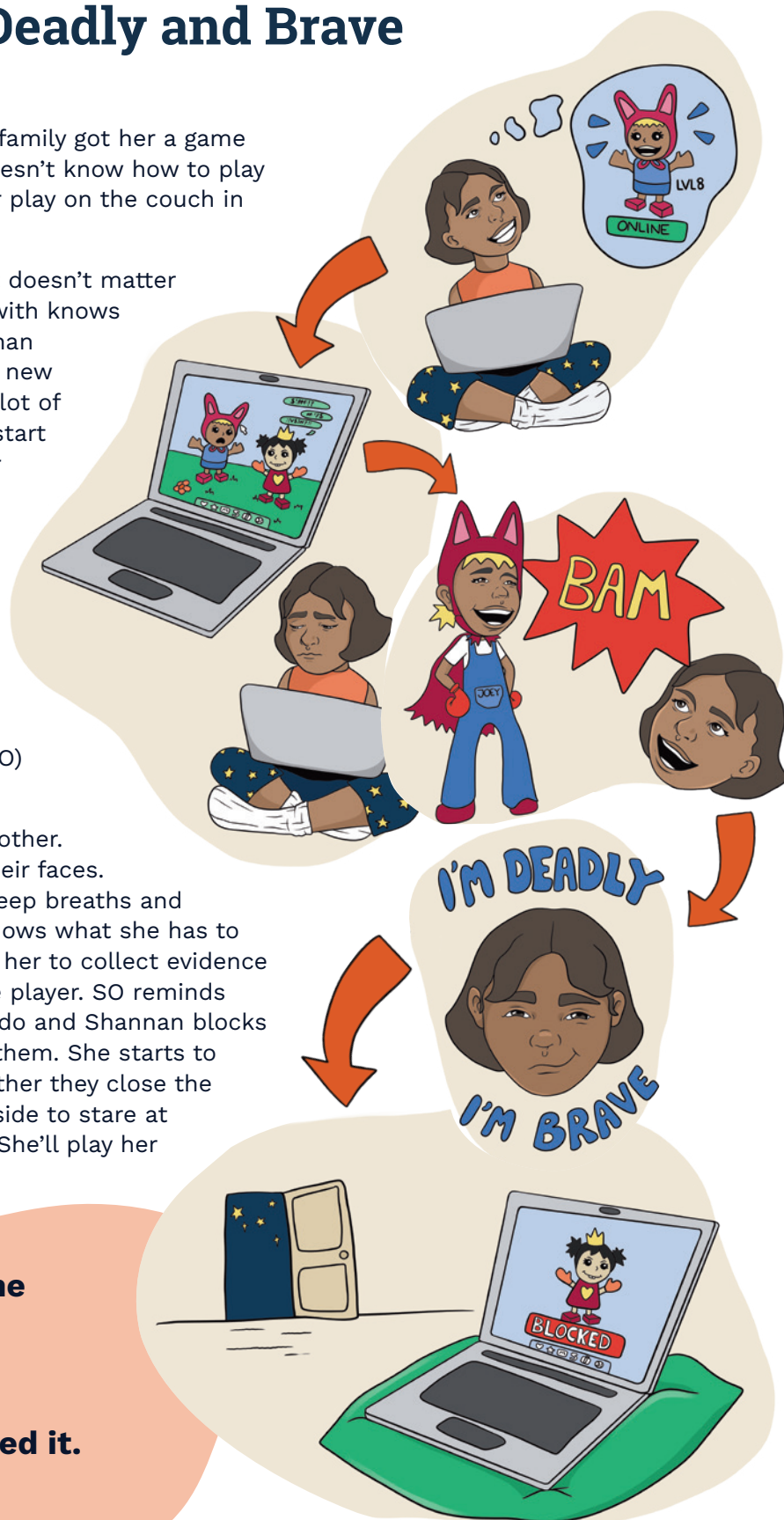
Who can I ask for help?

(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 and 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**)

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.

(Kids)

Having hard yarns with someone you trust can be tough.

If you are feeling sad, scared or unsure about something you've seen or heard online, it's important to talk with someone like a trusted adult, 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

→ **Kids** can find out more about **what to do if someone is being mean to them online**

→ Not sure if a game is suitable? **Find out about safety ratings**
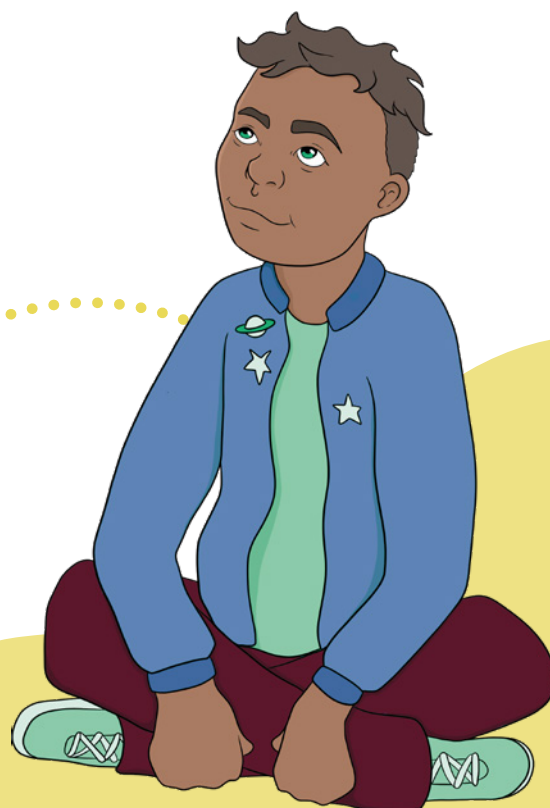
Families

Related Resources

Safer Together! 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 kids. 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, **Leaving Deadly Digital Footprints!**, which is designed for young people from 13- to 16-years-old to work through with their parents and carers.

You can view and download the full range of resources on the **eSafety website**.

SAFER TOGETHER!

Families

Want to learn more?

○○○ Resources for families

→ **eSafety's online safety support for First Nations people**

→ 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**

→ 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**

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.

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 deadly 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.