

# Online grooming



This factsheet explains online grooming and includes tips for parents and carers about how to help their children avoid unwanted contact.

## What is online grooming?

Online grooming is when an adult makes online contact with someone under the age of 16 with the intention of establishing a sexual relationship. The offence occurs in the communication phase so no physical contact need ever occur for police to step in and investigate these offenders.

Offenders may create several online identities with some pretending to be another young person in order to build and maintain trust with a young person, while others are upfront about their age or intentions and manipulate the young person into thinking their relationship is okay.

## Where can it happen?

Online grooming can take place on instant messaging apps, social media, gaming sites, emails and in chat rooms. It's important to know that all websites, apps, games or pages have the potential to be misused or cause harm.

Many parents and carers may not be aware that chat functions appear on several popular online games, applications and social networking platforms.

Anonymous chat can provide a platform for online child sex offenders to target young people. There have been many instances where online predators have used 'in game' chat as a gateway to access children.

**Tip:** If you are unsure about the features in the games or apps your child is using, do some research, download it yourself and review, or better yet, sit down with your child and ask them to show you how it works.



# Who is your child talking to? Be aware of the connections your children are making; not everyone online is who they say they are.



## HOW TO HELP MINIMISE UNWANTED CONTACT

- > Your child should not use their full name online; they should use a nickname or their first name only
- > They should not disclose their address or phone number to anyone online
- > They should not post or share photos of themselves that show their identity or location (such as a school logo on a shirt)
- > Keep communication open and encourage your child to talk to a trusted adult if they feel they cannot discuss something with you
- > Your child should never agree to meet someone they have met online unless they have your permission and are accompanied by yourself or a trusted adult
- > If something feels wrong then it probably is; your child should trust their instincts
- > Check your child's security settings on their online networking sites and have them set to protect their privacy as much as possible, review settings regularly, particularly after updates or changes to the site
- > Consider whether having the 'chat' function enabled on apps and games is necessary

Reassure your child that they can talk to you and you will support them even if they have shared something online that they are concerned about.



## WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU SUSPECT ONLINE GROOMING?

If you are concerned your child, or a child you know, is possibly at risk of online child sexual exploitation, report it to police.

Online child sexual exploitation can be reported to ThinkUKnow [thinkuknow.org.au/report](http://thinkuknow.org.au/report)

If a child is in immediate danger please contact 000.

## CONSIDER SEEKING ADVICE FROM SUPPORT SERVICES:



**Lifeline**  
13 11 14



**Kids Helpline**  
1800 55 1800



**Youth Beyond Blue**  
[www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com)



**ReachOut**  
[www.au.reachout.com](http://www.au.reachout.com)



**Bravehearts**  
[www.bravehearts.org.au](http://www.bravehearts.org.au)



**The Carly Ryan Foundation**  
[www.carlyryanfoundation.com](http://www.carlyryanfoundation.com)

ThinkUKnow and the Carly Ryan Foundation have developed a **Family Online Safety Contract** to help parents and carers start cyber safety discussions with their children. This is a resource for parents, carers and their children to refer to when agreeing on appropriate online behaviours and expectations held by both the parents and their children. A copy is available at [www.thinkuknow.org.au](http://www.thinkuknow.org.au)