

## Fact sheet for parents

# UNWANTED CONTACT

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Socialising online can be a great way for children to build friendships, but it can also put them at risk.

### What is unwanted contact?

Unwanted contact is any type of online communication your child finds unpleasant or confronting, or leads them into a situation where they might do something they regret. Unwanted contact is not limited to 'strangers' - it can happen even if your child initially welcomed the contact. It can also be online 'friends' your child has not met face-to-face, or from someone they actually know.

At worst, it can involve 'grooming' a child - building a relationship with a child online in order to abuse them sexually. This abuse can happen in a physical meeting, but it increasingly occurs online when young people are tricked or persuaded into sexual activity on webcams or into sending sexual images.

### How do I protect my child from unwanted contact?

- **Make their accounts private** - encourage them to make their social media accounts private or to adjust their settings to control who can look at their photos and posts.
- **Delete requests from strangers** - suggest they delete friend requests from people they don't know and contacts on their friends list they don't talk to.

- **Stay involved in their digital world** - ask them about the sites, apps and online chat services they are using, and explore them together.
- **Build an open trusting relationship** - keep communication open and calm so they know they can come to you when someone is asking them to do something that does not feel right.

### What are the warning signs?

Encourage your child to be wary of an online 'friend' who:

- asks a lot of questions about personal information soon after meeting
- asks for favours and does things in return - abusers often use promises, gifts and favours to gain trust
- wants to keep their relationship secret
- contacts them frequently and in different ways, like texting, through online chat on social media sites
- asks things like who else uses their computer or which room it's in
- compliments them on their appearance or asks things like, 'have you ever been kissed'?
- insists on meeting face to face.

Many of these warning signs can apply to people the child knows in real life as well as to strangers.

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### What to do if my child experiences unwanted contact?

Your child may not tell you if an online 'friendship' has become compromising or difficult because they are embarrassed or ashamed, or afraid it might make things worse.

Be alert to worrying changes in your child's behaviour or mood. Watch for signs of withdrawal, anxiety, sadness or changed interactions with family or friends.

Stay calm and reassure your child they are not in trouble.

- Explain that even adults get tricked into doing things they regret.
- Talk to them without being judgemental or angry.
- Do not cut off your child's internet access, as they may see this as punishment and not open up to you in future.

### Collect evidence

- Before you or your child block someone or delete posts or other material, take screenshots and collect evidence, including dates and times.

### Report

- Help your child block the person who has made them uncomfortable and report the unwanted contact to the social media platform. The [eSafety Guide](#) has links to report abusive content and online safety centres.
- Grooming and procuring of children over the internet are crimes investigated by the police. If you have encountered this kind of activity online, contact your local police station.
- You can make a confidential report online at Crime Stoppers or call **1800 333 000**.

### Where do I find more information?

- Information and tips to keep your child safer online: [esafety.gov.au/parents](https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents)
- Protect your child's privacy: [esafety.gov.au/parents/skills-advice/privacy-child](https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/skills-advice/privacy-child)
- Find reporting links for social media services, games and apps: [esafety.gov.au/esafety-guide](https://www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-guide)
- Protect your child from unwanted contact: [esafety.gov.au/parents/big-issues/unwanted-contact](https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/big-issues/unwanted-contact)

Any piece of information, anything you have seen or heard, may be crucial in preventing or solving a crime.  
We don't want to know who you are; we just want to know what you know.

Call or click Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 / [crimestoppers.com.au](https://www.crimestoppers.com.au)