



Fact sheet 3:

Tips to be smart online – keeping you and your friends safe from unwanted contact.

What is unwanted contact?

You or your friends may have already experienced unwanted contact online – contact that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe. It could be from a random stranger or even someone you know.

Did you know that one in four young people are contacted by strangers online? You already know contact from a random stranger can be risky but even online contact from someone you know might not feel right.

These tips can help you and your friends protect yourselves from unwanted contact online.

- **Take control of your private information** - make sure you are in control of who sees your posts and who can contact you. You can update your privacy settings to only accept messages from people on your 'friends' list and make sure only your close friends can see your location.
- **Delete contacts you don't talk to** - tidy up your 'friends' list by deleting those you don't actually know. Birthday notifications can help — if you don't know them well enough to say HBD, think about deleting them.
- **Delete requests from randoms** - when you get a friend or follow request from someone you don't know, check if you have mutual friends. Remember, it's easy for people to pretend they're someone they are not online. If you're unsure, delete the request.

What to look for

There are people who genuinely want to be friends with you or chat. Then there are the ones who aren't genuine but they are masters at scams. They can trick you into giving them private information, sending nude or sexual pictures or videos, or harm you in some other way.

They could be the same age as you or a lot older; they could be a stranger or someone you know. It may not be innocent and fun at first and they start by being friendly and helpful, but this can turn into something risky or uncomfortable. Be smarter than they are and look for these warning signs.

Know the signs

- **You feel that something is not right** - trust your instincts.
- **Things don't add up** - their online profile doesn't match what you see and hear when you talk or chat with them.
- **They tell you their webcam is broken** - sometimes a person who wants to harm you pretends to be your age and says their webcam is broken so you can't see what they really look like.
- **They contact you frequently and in different ways** - for example, you meet them on Instagram, then they switch platforms and start direct messaging you.
- **They ask you who else uses your computer or tablet** - or even which room of your house you are in.
- **They ask you for favours and do things in return** - they may even offer you money or followers, but then won't deliver what they've promised.
- **They say they like your appearance or body** - or ask very personal things like 'have you ever been kissed'?
- **They insist on meeting** - and try to make you feel guilty or threaten you if you don't agree.
- **They want to keep your relationship secret** - people who want to harm you often try to keep their friendship with you extremely private from the beginning.

What to do if things aren't right

If contact with a stranger, or with someone you know, makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, stop responding to them straight away.

In situations like this, it is really important to talk to a trusted adult about what's been happening. While it might be difficult to talk about, by telling someone you can help stop this from happening to you, your friends and others.

- **Screenshot evidence** - of anything that makes you feel uncomfortable.
- **Report and block** - once you have all your screenshots, report the person directly to the platform and then block their account.
- **Report to eSafety** - if the contact continues, get help. You might be able to make a cyberbullying report if you are under 18. If you are over 18, read eSafety's advice on adult cyber abuse. Visit www.esafety.gov.au/report
- **Report to police** - you can make a confidential report about actual or suspected criminal information to Crime Stoppers on **1800 333 000** or at www.crimestoppers.com.au. If you feel you are in immediate danger contact your local police, or in an emergency call Triple Zero (000).
- **Get help and support** - contact Kids Helpline (counselling and online support for kids and teenagers) or Headspace (online chat and support for young people aged 12 to 25).