

## Social media and relationships



### Meeting people online

When your child gets older, they might want to meet new people.

They might want to make new friends outside of their family.

Some people do activities to meet new people, like sport or drama classes.

Some people might meet new people online through games and groups.

Some people are not interested in meeting new people at all.

All of these are OK.



Your child might use a tablet, phone or computer.

These can help them to learn important skills like:

- how to use a computer and the internet
- learning and working with other people
- making new relationships
- being creative
- communicating

Sometimes parents worry about their children's safety when using the internet.

Using the internet is OK if you do it safely. You can learn more about teaching your child to keep safe online [here](#).



Using the internet or being online is important for a lot of young people.

It helps them to connect with other young people.

It also helps them to find out more about themselves and the things they like.



### What is on this page?

This page is about meeting people online.

It has easy read information on:

- good things about meeting people online
- risks of meeting people online
- what to learn before meeting people online

- where to meet people online
- things to teach your child about relationships and social media



## What is positive about social media?

Some people with intellectual disability and autism might prefer to meet new people online.

They can:

- meet a bigger group of people who like lots of different things
- find people who have similar life experiences
- communicate in a way that is easier for them.

For example, writing rather than talking to somebody face to face

- choose who they want to talk to
- choose if they want to meet a person in real life



## What are the risks of meeting people online?

Meeting new people always has risks, whether it is online or in person.

There are some risks of meeting people online that are different to meeting people in person.

These are:

- having your personal information shared without your permission
- not always knowing who you are talking to
- finding fake people and other scams



- not being able to tell how someone feels or if they are making a joke
- cyber bullying and online harassment
- the cost to sign up for things like XBOX live or some dating websites



## Things to do before meeting people online

Before you teach your child about meeting new people online, it is important to teach your child about healthy relationships.

Your child should have lots of opportunities to practice social skills and friendships in person.

You can learn more about making new relationships [here](#).



You will also need to remind your child about public and private.

Public and private can be confusing when using the internet.

Your child might only go online in a private place, like their bedroom.

This does not mean that the things they do online are private.

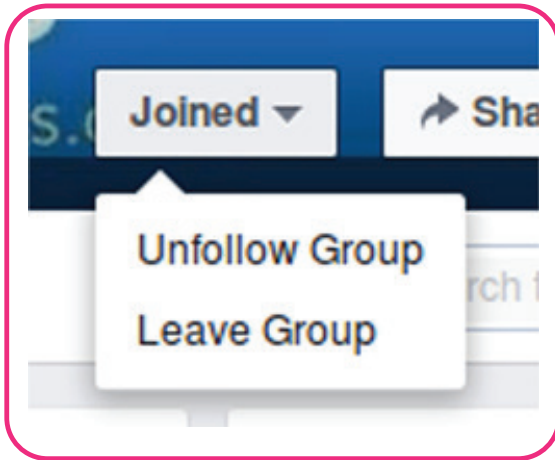
It is important to teach your child that all the things they do on the internet are public.

This is because we cannot control who sees our information or how it is used once it is online.

This is important if your child has a computer or tablet that they borrow from school or a support service.







Go to the [keeping safe online](#) page for more information about using the internet safely.

It is important to talk to your child about what to do if they are upset by something that happens online.

You can help them to report, unfollow or block people who make them feel bad.



### Where can you meet new people?

There are lots of different places to meet people online.

Your child might want to connect with people they already know from school or activities, or they might want to make new friends.





They might meet people online in spaces like:

- social media like Instagram, Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter and TikTok
- forums like Reddit or Livejournal
- streaming or video channels like Youtube or Twitch
- gaming servers like Discord
- games with online communication like Roblox, Minecraft, Xbox or Nintendo

It's a good idea to teach yourself about your child's favourite places to meet people online and how they work.



If your child does not know where to meet new people online, you can write a list of things they like.

You can search the internet together to find places where people meet to talk about those interests or play games.



For example, if your child likes to play games with other people, they might use Nintendo or Xbox online.

You can look at the [eSafety guide](#) to learn about different apps and social media that your child might use.

## Things to try

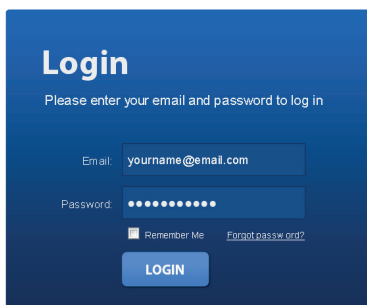
You can try these things to help your child to meet people online safely.

- Help your child set up their online accounts and keep their passwords safe
- Do not look through your child's social media without telling them first.

If you are worried, make sure you talk to your child and explain why you want to look at their account

- Make a family agreement about being online.

You can learn about family agreements on [staying safe](#) online





- Talk to your child about the interesting things they have seen on their social media.

You can ask them about any funny videos they saw or things they have read.

This is a good way to understand what your child is interested in.

It also helps keep them safe

- Make a list or poster of rules and reminders for your child to remember when being online.

This could include things like:

- how to block people
- what is good online behaviour
- what is bad online behaviour is





## Resources you can use

<https://www.secca.org.au/resources/cyber-safety>



<https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/big-issues/gaming>

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-issues/esafety-guide>

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/big-issues/sending-nudes-sexting>

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/big-issues/unwanted-contact>



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<https://www.scamwatch.gov.au/types-of-scams/dating-romance>



All About  
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[https://www.fpnsw.org.au/sites/default/files/assets/FactSheet\\_Online-Dating\\_20180220.pdf](https://www.fpnsw.org.au/sites/default/files/assets/FactSheet_Online-Dating_20180220.pdf)

**BODY  
TALK**

<https://bodytalk.org.au/relationships/technological-relationships/>



## What to read next

- [Keeping safe](#)
- [Consent in relationships](#)
- [Cyber safety](#)

For more information go to the  
Planet Puberty website

[www.planetpuberty.org.au](http://www.planetpuberty.org.au)