



PARENTS AND CARERS GUIDE

# ThinkUKnow

Parents and carers guide to  
online child sexual exploitation

*8th Edition*

## ThinkUKnow Australia

ThinkUKnow Australia is an evidence-based education program led by the [Australian Federal Police](#) (AFP), delivered nationally in partnership with police and industry partners to prevent online child sexual exploitation.

We incorporate up-to-date research, real case studies, and examples from reports made to the AFP-led [Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation](#) (ACCCE).

The program is pro-technology and addresses topics including self-generated child abuse material, online grooming, sexual extortion, and importantly encourages help seeking behaviour.

The program is a [partnership](#) with the AFP, Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Datacom and Microsoft Australia, and in collaboration with all State and Territory police and Neighbourhood Watch Australasia.

## Contact us

You can find more information at [thinkuknow.org.au](http://thinkuknow.org.au)

To book a free ThinkUKnow presentation visit [thinkuknow.org.au/request-presentation](http://thinkuknow.org.au/request-presentation)

## Social media

[facebook.com/ThinkUKnowAustralia](https://facebook.com/ThinkUKnowAustralia)

[instagram.com/ThinkUKnowAustralia](https://instagram.com/ThinkUKnowAustralia)

ThinkUKnow is a free program, delivered by volunteers from:



**AFP**



Commonwealth Bank

**DATACOM**



**Microsoft**

In collaboration with:





## **PREVENTING ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

As parents and carers, it is important that you feel informed and empowered to support your child to be safe online, and to prevent online child sexual exploitation.

This guide covers off on the key themes of online child sexual exploitation offering actionable advice on how to respond and where to seek help and support for you and your child.

Themes covered include:

- self-generated child abuse material
- online grooming
- sextortion

This guide also includes a section on taking action, providing you with advice on the tools you can use when faced with online challenges, how to report to police and ways to support your child when they need it most.

Remember that just because things can go wrong online, it doesn't mean they will. However, it is important to know what you can do if your child ever needs your help and support.

Keep this guide to refer to as it may assist you in identifying when and where you need to go for help in the future.

# SELF-GENERATED CHILD ABUSE MATERIAL

**Self-generated child abuse material means nude or sexual images or videos created by anyone under the age of 18.**

**Under Commonwealth law, content depicting a person under the age of 18 in a nude or sexualised manner is considered to be child abuse material, even if it has been self-generated.**

There are a variety of reasons why children and young people might create and share self-generated child abuse material. It is recommended to focus on the intent behind the production or distribution of this type of material to determine the most effective approach, ensuring that a child or young person's safety and wellbeing is prioritised.

## **Self-generated material – no criminal intent**

Self-generated child abuse material with no criminal intent is material that has been shared within online interactions between peers of a similar age with no elements of manipulation or coercion and no adult involvement. Examples of this would include, sharing with a romantic partner or peer or exploring their sexuality online with no intent to cause harm to themselves or others. While considered risky, it is also in line with expected sexual behaviours for young people and aligned to their sexual development through adolescence.

While the content itself is, by definition, child abuse material, the intent behind its creation and distribution involved no elements of abuse or exploitation. In most cases, if police were made aware of a child or young person engaging in these behaviours and determined there was no adult involvement or intent to cause harm, they would likely opt for an educative approach to remedy the behaviour and ensure the future safety and wellbeing of all involved.

## **How you can support your child**



Initiate conversations around the role of technology within their friendships and relationships and explore some of the legalities around the production and sharing of any self-generated material. This includes their responsibilities as the recipient of self-generated material from a peer. If the material involves another person under the age of 18, it is child abuse material and cannot be shared further. This keeps the child or young person pictured and the recipient safe.

Children and young people need to be provided with the opportunity to consider these scenarios before an incident to ensure they are making informed decisions that keep them and their peers safe from harm. Provide the children and young people in your care with the opportunities to explore these themes in a safe environment where they can ask questions and consider the legal and ethical implications of creating and sharing child abuse material.

Removing access to their devices can deter your child from coming to you for help, making them more vulnerable or at risk of exploitation.

## Self-generated child abuse material – criminal intent

Alternatively, online offenders may deceive, threaten, or coerce children and young people into creating self-generated child abuse material. These offenders manipulate their victims to produce such material, intending to abuse, harm, or embarrass them for their own gain. Examples of this would be incidents of online grooming, sextortion or the sharing of images with the intention of causing harm to others.

In these instances, police would likely choose to investigate the matter to ensure the safety of the victim and the wider community.



## How you can support your child



If your child comes to you with a concern or after an incident involving self-generated child abuse material with criminal intent, try to remain calm and ensure their safety and wellbeing is the priority. It can be hard for children and young people to come forward for help in these scenarios as they often feel embarrassed or scared, or that they will be in trouble themselves, especially if the offender has manipulated them into thinking this.

Try to encourage open lines of communication, have frequent and open conversations around the ethical use of technology and how they can align that with their own personal boundaries. If they feel unsure or unsafe, ensure they know who or where to go for help and support.

If they have shared self-generated child abuse material as a result of being coerced or manipulated online, assist them in making a [report to the ACCCE](#).

Children and young people are never to blame for their abuse. They are a victim – it is the offender that has done the wrong thing. By seeking help, they have not only taken steps towards keeping themselves safe, but potentially ensured the safety of others.

For more details on how to report, see page 9 of this resource.

# ONLINE GROOMING

**Online grooming is when an adult makes online contact with someone under the age of 16 with the intention of enabling their sexual abuse.**

The offence occurs in the communication phase, no physical contact needs to take place for police to intervene and investigate. Online grooming encompasses a range of behaviours including:

- asking for images or videos of a nude or sexualised nature
- engaging in sexualised chat
- or an adult sharing nude or sexualised images or videos of any kind.

Common tactics used by offenders include establishing communication over an online game or app and fostering a sense of familiarity with the child or young person, pretending to be someone of a similar age to the child, and appearing like they live locally or have mutual friends or interests. Offenders use details accessible to them via a child or young person's publicly available information and uses this to initiate contact and establish a faux relationship or friendship.

Some characteristics of the chats would include, giving compliments, flattery or offering the child or young person something they value in exchange for sending self-generated child abuse material, this could include in-game currency, money, gifts or likes and followers. Offenders will often suggest the conversation continues on another platform with encryption capabilities which protects them.

## How you can support your child



Encourage your child to make informed decisions about their use of technology, and consider what information they are sharing via usernames or public social media accounts.

Encourage your child to use critical thinking skills, like questioning behaviours or 'friend' requests from other users online.

Discuss with your child the themes of appropriate and inappropriate conversations to equip them with skills to help identify potentially unsafe situations or people online.

Ensure they are clear about their personal boundaries and their right to be safe always. Assist them in questioning the intentions of others and being clear about their own boundaries so if they ever feel like these are not being respected, they know where to go for help and support, noting this may not always be to you. Work with them to determine a range of people and places they know where they can seek help if they need it.

If your child or a child you know is being groomed online, it is important to act quickly to safeguard them from further harm. Remember the child or young person is a victim and the offender is solely responsible for the abuse. Provide reassurance and support and report immediately to the [ACCCE](#) and seek out [additional support](#) for you and your child.

If you believe a child is in immediate danger, phone triple zero (000)

For more details on how to report, see page 9 of this resource.

# SEXTORTION

**Sextortion is when a child or young person has been coerced into sending self-generated child abuse material of themselves to someone online who then starts making demands.**

These demands are typically for either more self-generated child abuse material or money. If their demands aren't met, the offender threatens to share the images or videos to the child or young person's family, friends, school or community.

A child or young person might be targeted through online games, social media, image or video sharing apps or instant messaging, by people known or unknown to them.

Offenders can be manipulative and make the child or young person feel there is no way out of the situation to enable further abuse.

## Do's and Don'ts

- ✓ **Do stop the chat**
- ✓ **Do take screenshots of the text and profile**
- ✓ **Do block the account and report it to the platform**
- ✓ **Do report to the ACCCE**
- ✓ **Do get support**
- ✗ **Don't send more images**
- ✗ **Don't pay**
- ✗ **Don't respond to demands**
- ✗ **Don't enter into further communication**
- ✗ **Don't think you're alone**

## How you can support your child



If your child is or has been a victim, reassure them it is not their fault and that there is help available. Be mindful of your response to a disclosure and reassure them they have done nothing wrong and they will be supported.

Sextortion can happen quickly, and the opportunity to intervene and provide support may be missed. Have conversations around safe online interactions openly and often and ensure your child knows where to find help if they ever find themselves in an exploitative situation like sextortion or feel unsafe in any interaction online.

Continue to revisit conversations around personal boundaries so they feel clear around their right to be safe online. Even when communicating with someone they believe they know.

Encourage critical thinking around online interactions with others as offenders often utilise similar tactics to those listed in the online grooming section, unsolicited friend requests from unknown people, sexualised conversations and suggestions to move to another app.

If your child has been a victim of sextortion, we recommend the Do's and Don'ts on the left.

If your child has been the victim of sextortion, report immediately to the [ACCCE](#) and seek out [additional support](#) for you and your child.



## **TAKING ACTION**

**Being aware of the information your child could be sharing online is an important consideration for reducing online child sexual exploitation.**

- When your child is signing up to an app, game or site, ensure usernames don't contain any personal information, such as age or location, or other identifying features.
- Supervision is essential. This means knowing what your child is doing online, who they are interacting with and what platforms, apps or games they are using.
- Offenders can target children and young people via the messaging function on popular games and apps. You can switch off this function in most online games or platforms. If you choose to leave it on, make sure your child knows what they should or shouldn't share online and how to block and report if the conversation becomes uncomfortable or unsafe.
- Questioning unsolicited friend requests or contact from people they don't know in-person, even if they appear to have mutual friends or interests, as we know this is a tactic used by offenders.
- Strong privacy settings are always the best option, but if your child is going to operate public social media accounts, they need to be mindful of the content they are sharing, including:
  - Not posting any personal information, this also includes information within images and videos
  - Blocking and reporting inappropriate contact.
- Be mindful of what information can be gathered about your child from your own social media accounts by applying the same advice to your own behaviours.

# SUPPORT AND REPORT

If your child or a child you know is a victim of online child sexual exploitation, you can support them by:

- reminding them they have done nothing wrong, and there is always help available
- reassure and support them through the hard times
- remember a child or young person is never to blame, it is the offender that has done the wrong thing. Punishing a child or young person may prevent them from coming forward for help if it happens again
- be open and ready when they need to talk
- draw on your support network so they know they can speak to someone for advice or support, including you, another trusted person and support services.

Children and young people may sometimes prefer speaking to someone they don't know. Assist them in identifying other people they can go to for help and support. You can find a list of support services and agencies on the [ThinkUKnow website](#).

## How to make a report

If your child experiences inappropriate contact or is the victim of online child sexual exploitation, it is essential you know what to do and how to get help.

If you believe a child is in immediate danger, contact Triple Zero (000).

For non-emergency situations that still require a timely response, contact your local police station (131 444).

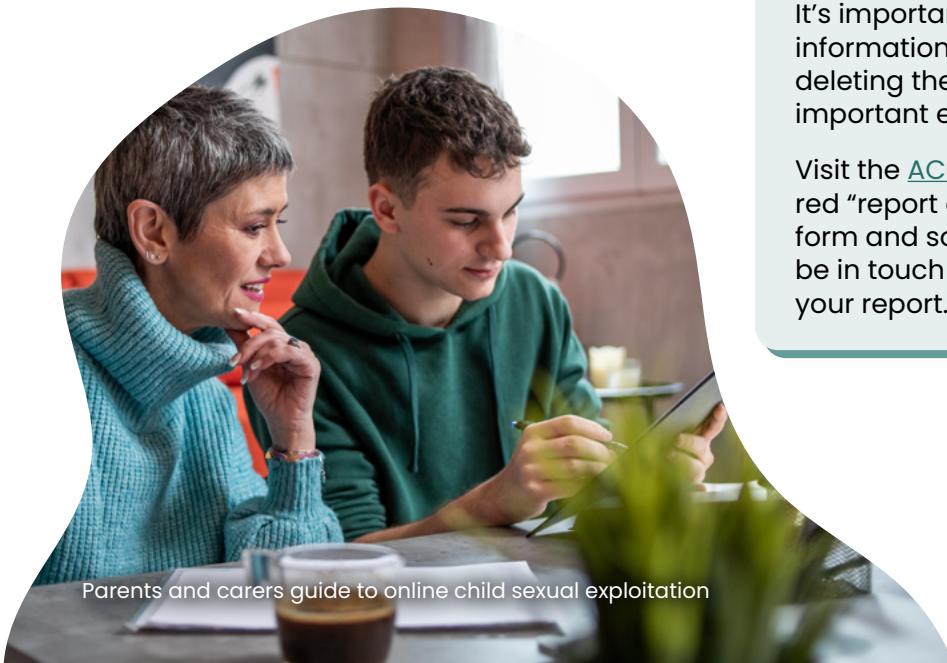
If you are concerned about the possibility that your child, or a child you know of, is at risk, it's important you act on it.

When making a report, it is helpful to collect evidence before the content is removed to show police exactly what happened. This includes:

- Screenshots/photos of the conversation. **Remember to not screenshot, save, share or distribute any nude or sexualised images of the child as this is an offence.**
- Record of offender details (including account profile, profile usernames and URL of profile)
- Webpage addresses (URLs)
- Dates and times
- Any other information you have about the interaction or offender.

It's important to capture this information before blocking or deleting the user or you may lose important evidence.

Visit the [ACCCE website](#) and click the red "report abuse" button, fill out the form and someone from the AFP will be in touch with you to go through your report.



# RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO YOU

The ThinkUKnow website has a suite of resources that can provide you with additional information about online child sexual exploitation.

Our resources section has been broken up into, 'For parents and carers' and 'For educators'. These sections include:

## For parents and carers

- Fact sheets
- At home learning activities
- Parent and carer social media starter kit
- Online blackmail and sexual extortion kit
- Gaming, devices and what you need to know guide
- Children's picture book *Jack Changes the Game* and additional learning activities
- Culturally and linguistically diverse resources

## For educators

- Fact sheets
- Classroom resources
- Links to the Australian Curriculum
- Children's picture book *Jack Changes the Game* and additional learning activities

There is also a '[Find Advice](#)' section on the website which contains information on a multitude of topics relating to online child sexual exploitation that are age segmented dependent on what children and young people in that age bracket may be doing online.

The ACCCE has a website with the following information:

- [Sextortion information page](#)
- [Reporting page](#)
- [Research](#)

For more resources about online safety, visit the [eSafety Commissioner](#).





## Contact us:

You can find more information at

[thinkuknow.org.au](https://thinkuknow.org.au)

Alternatively, you can scan the QR code below:



For enquiries, questions or support:

[www.thinkuknow.org.au/about/contact-us](https://www.thinkuknow.org.au/about/contact-us)

## Follow us on our socials for updates, tips and resources:

[facebook.com/ThinkUKnowAustralia](https://facebook.com/ThinkUKnowAustralia)

[instagram.com/ThinkUKnowAustralia](https://instagram.com/ThinkUKnowAustralia)



[thinkuknow.org.au](http://thinkuknow.org.au)