

# What to Do When Others Are Behaving Badly Online

Cyberbullying, inappropriate content/images, predatory behaviour

We can never control the actions or reactions of others. We can, however, educate and put strategies in place to reduce the likelihood or to effectively address the issues that may be thrown at our children and family online.

There are many and varied ways activity can be deemed as bad behaviour as it applies to your child. Each instance will involve differing circumstances and must be treated on a case-by-case basis when addressing the issue as a parent or carer.

People can behave badly by:

- Sending or communicating inappropriate messages directly, including threats, abuse, and bad language.
- Posting or commenting in an inappropriate way.
- Exposing your child to inappropriate images, websites, or videos.
- Directing your child to inappropriate images, websites, or videos.

The desired outcome is to ensure **this behaviour is not normalised**. Behaviour learned online is generally transferred to the physical world.

Below are strategies that may apply to your individual case.

Proactive strategy	Examples of how to do this
Have privacy settings in place if available.	Google 'software name privacy settings' to learn how to do this on individual software.  <b>Make sure your accounts are secure.</b> Be careful about what you post as this can be a way to find out about your child, see photos of them, learn where they go to school, what sport they play, etc. Sometimes the original information can come from the parent's accounts.
Discourage or restrict the use of websites where bad behaviour	Google 'website name/app review' to get an indication of the nature of the product; e.g.,

<p>is encouraged or tolerated.</p>	<p>'Ask.FM review' will give you information about this site—CommonSense.org media does particularly useful reviews. Do this example to see just how dangerous Ask.FM can be.</p>
<p>Regularly check activity if possible.</p>	<p>Friend your child in programs that allow this.</p> <p>Check search history to see where they are visiting.</p> <p>Have access to your child's passwords to see what they are doing, but never embarrass them online; maintain your trust by being discrete.</p>
<p>Let others know that you are aware of what is happening online.</p>	<p>Sometimes the fact that you are a 'friend' or connection will make those with bad intentions leave your child alone.</p> <p>Don't overreact or get involved in negative talk on behalf of your child. Just be a presence.</p>
<p>Talk to your child about what is and isn't acceptable behaviour online.</p>	<p>Be open to discussions about issues such as sexting, cyberbullying, grooming, pornography, illegal downloads, etc.</p> <p>Have rules that promote healthy use of technology in your home</p> <p>At this age, this includes discussing physical world consequences for poor cyber world behaviour—criminal or civil litigation, employability and career choices, and digital footprint.</p>
<p>Encourage your child to tell you about poor behaviour if it becomes an issue for them.</p>	<p>Take action or support their actions to resolve. Maintain trust while empowering your child to resolve the situation.</p>
<p>Discourage applications/software programs that allow anonymity.</p>	<p>If your child does not know the person in the physical world, they should remain sceptical and avoid contact. Such sites are frequented by much older people.</p>

#### ACTION ONCE YOU ARE AWARE OF AN ISSUE

You will find a fact sheet in this toolbox on how to address cyberbullying.

Some of the advice is true for all sorts of poor behaviour:

- Block people or sites.
- Delete the problem person from friends/contact lists.
- Press the 'report abuse' button on the software or website.
- Contact the police for advice—particularly regarding images or grooming suspicions.
- Delete or save then remove inappropriate content from view.
- Start new accounts with new names (and no photos if possible).
- Contact and advise school (if applicable).
- Speak with the parents of the child involved (if applicable).
- Don't overreact—set the tone for a useful solution to the situation (regardless of how you may be feeling).
- Resist getting involved online—don't interact with the offending party or other parties involved.

Want to talk to someone to seek advice or guidance?

<https://esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/get-help>

#### POINTS FOR PARENTS/CARERS TO REMEMBER

- Keep communicating with your teen.
- Have a conversation with your child specifically about the inappropriate behaviour. Don't avoid it because it's uncomfortable (e.g., pornography, inappropriate images, illegal products/purchases).
- No site or contact is essential to your child. Online sites and contact can be sacrificed.
- **Report issues to the police whenever you feel there is a real threat towards a person or property.**
- If nothing is said or done, the bad behaviour will continue and quite often increase in intensity. (Some forms of cyberbullying can be ignored, but the rest of these examples require mature action, if only to remove your child from the threat—block, delete, change profile/name/phone.)

Be prepared that your child may become involved in poor online behaviour. It must be acknowledged so it can be addressed and lessons learned. Support them to avoid it or resolve it.