LEARNING ABOUT SAFER GAMING AND SMART USERNAMES

YEAR 3–4 AND 5–6 (AGES 8–12)

THINK U KNOW

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The content within this activity pack discusses online child sexual exploitation and online grooming.

The activity itself is age appropriate, however some of the contextual information in this section may raise concerns for some readers.

If you need help or support please refer to the end of this activity pack.

How to use this home learning activity

This home learning activity provides background information for parents/carers to assist them to guide their child through learning about basic privacy principles and the importance of keeping personal information private, particularly with online gaming.

The audio case studies included in this pack are designed for parents to listen to with their children, with discussion points and a conversation guide provided to assist with learning. The activity includes discussion questions for 8 – 10 year old and 11 – 12 year old audiences. Parents/carers should choose which discussion points are most appropriate for their child.

There is also an activity for parents/carers to help their child to create a smart username, an important prevention tool for young people engaging in online games.

What parents/carers need to know

Gaming can be a lot of fun and has many benefits for children and young people. It can help develop problem solving skills, and can encourage teamwork and creativity and creative thinking.

Research suggests that for young people aged 8-11 years-old, playing both interactive and educational games are very popular activities[1].

Research from the eSafety Commissioner also shows that half of 8-17 year olds play online games with people they have not met in person[2].
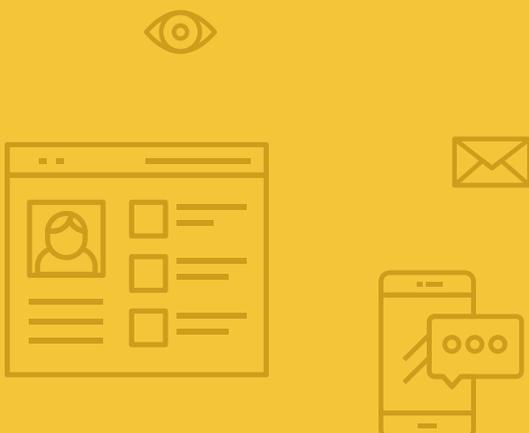
The age of the average gamer in Australia is 34 years old[3], so it is important to remember that young people who are playing multiplayer games with people they don't know could in fact be playing with people a lot older than they are.

It is important for children to learn about what suspicious behaviour looks like. For example, this might be when someone they don't know online asks them lots of strange personal questions or to send photos or videos. The best thing they can do in these situations is to block the person and tell a trusted adult straight away.

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1   https://www.accce.gov.au/news-and-media/understanding-online-child-exploitation
2   https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-the-office/research-library/youth-online-gaming
3   https://igea.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/DA20-Report-FINAL-Aug19.pdf

CO-VIEWING ACTIVITY

Audio case studies

Many parents/carers may be unaware that the games their children play have a chat or direct message function, allowing them to potentially communicate with any other player in that game. This can be an avenue for someone to make contact and is a common method for online child sex offenders to target children.

The following case studies refer to incidents involving young people who were contacted by unknown users while playing games online.
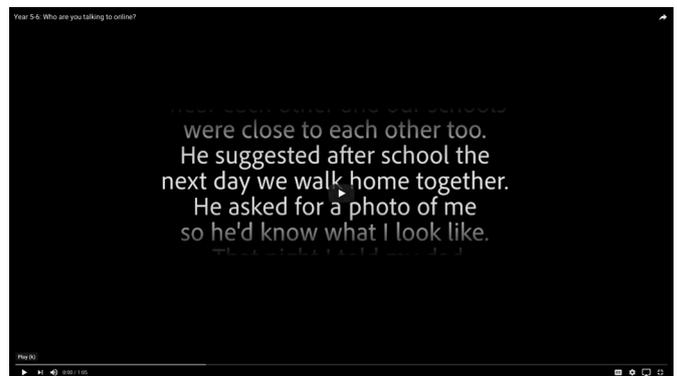
These case studies are taken from real police reports made to the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation.
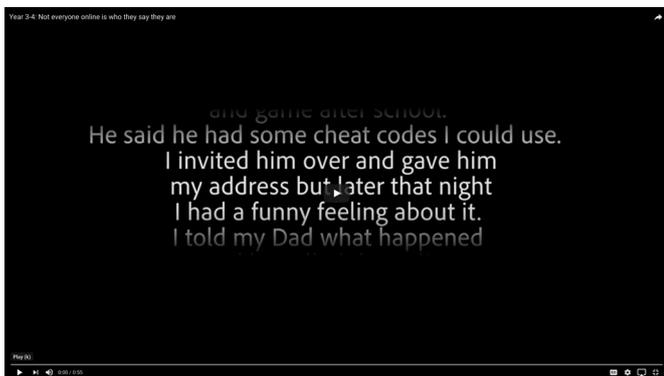
**Year 3–4
(Ages 8–10)**

Click on the link to watch the case study

https://youtu.be/b8Z7seCYaaU

**Year 5–6
(Ages 10–12)**

Click on the link to watch the case study

https://youtu.be/wPQvhBeOgpQ

Discussion points

Following the case study, use the below discussion points to start open communication with your child about recognising suspicious behaviour while online gaming. Parents/carers should choose which discussion points and prompts are most appropriate for their child.

- **How did the interaction start?**

  Suggested answer: It started with someone trying to chat while playing a game, but then the other person started asking for personal information.

- **What are some examples of personal information you should never share with anyone online?**

  Suggested answer: Your name, age, home address and school.

- **What would you do if someone started chatting to you online/what would you do if you were in a similar situation?**

  Suggested answer: Keep the conversation about the game; stop playing the game and tell a trusted adult.

- **How do you know someone online is who they say they are?**

  Suggested answer: You can't and it is also important to remember that not everyone online is your friend. When playing online, you can't see the other person, so it can be easy for them to pretend to be someone else. That's why it is best to play with people you know offline, like school friends or family members.

  For older children consider adding: There are also people, including adults, who may use apps and games in the wrong way, they might do things like set up fake accounts and try to trick other young people into being their friend.

- **Who can you talk to if something makes you scared or uncomfortable online?**

  Suggested answer: Help your child identify five trusted adults they can talk to if they feel unsafe. This could include parents, an adult relative, a teacher or the police.

SMART USERNAMES

When signing up for games, young people may be asked to create a username.

A profile or username can say a lot about you, including your name, age or where you live. This is information you should always keep private, you don't always know who might be able to see it. We can keep this information private by creating smart usernames.

A smart username is a username that gives out no personal details about you. It might be a nickname or a made up name for yourself.

What information can you guess from this username?

USERNAME Jack13SYD
PASSWORD ●●●●●●●●●

Suggested answers: The user may be named Jack, the user may be 13 years old and the user may be from Sydney. This is not a smart username because it gives away too much information.

**What information can you guess from this username?**

USERNAME SPAGHETTI_WIZARD
PASSWORD ●●●●●●●●●

Suggested answer: Not a lot! This is an example of a smart username.

USERNAME
PASSWORD

Creating a smart username

Now we are going to come up with our own smart username.

First, think of a few of your favourite things. Maybe a favourite sport, or food, or colour. Now, put two of these things together. Now you have a smart username that means something to you, but doesn't give away personal information.
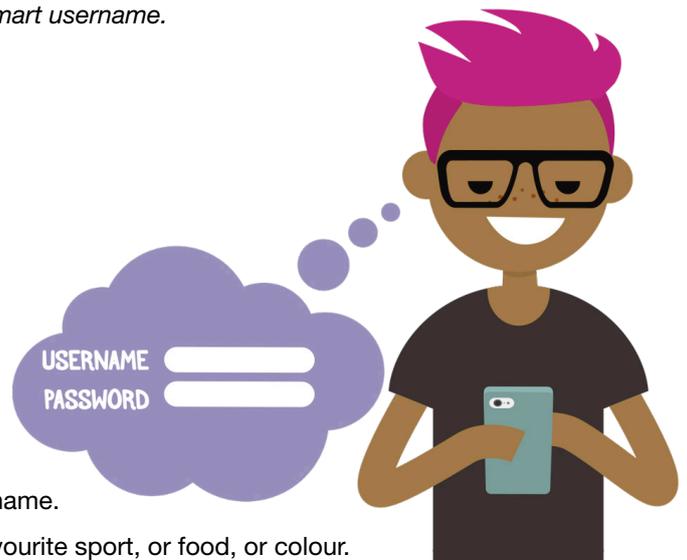
TOP TIPS AND GETTING HELP

HERE ARE SOME PREVENTION TIPS YOU CAN DISCUSS WITH YOUR CHILD TO HELP THEM HAVE SAFER GAMING EXPERIENCES:

**Year 3–4
(Ages 8–10)**

- Play single player mode

- Turn off chat and direct message functions

- If someone starts asking strange questions, always tell a trusted adult

- Remember, you always have the right to feel safe and it is always okay to say no.

**Year 5–6
(Ages 10–12)**

- Only play online in closed groups with friends – avoid public servers

- If you do play with people you don't know, keep the chat about the game only

- If you hear things that upset you or that are confusing, always tell a trusted adult

- Remember, you always have the right to feel safe and it is always okay to say no.

Most importantly, make children feel comfortable to approach you or another trusted adult if something isn't right and help them deal with the issue, rather than the technology. Children may be reluctant to report issues online if they believe they will be punished or have their devices taken away.

GETTING HELP

- **Kids Helpline** is a free and confidential 24-hour online and phone counselling service for young people aged 5-25 years and even parents. You can call them, or chat to them online.

- Grooming, sextortion and online child sexual exploitation can be reported to the **Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation**.

- The **ThinkUKnow** website has online resources and information on how to report and get help if things go wrong online.

- The **eSafety Commissioner** can help with removing content and has advice on what to do if you are a victim of image based abuse.

If a child is in immediate danger, please call Triple Zero (000).

Our partners