

# Key messages for parents

This document contains Netsafe's key messages for parents and whanau. You can use these key messages as the basis of communications with parents or whanau. This could include newsletters or parent presentations.

## The importance of online safety for young people

Technology is always changing, but good old-fashioned parenting hasn't. Parents might not always understand the online world for young people, but we have important experience and skills that our young people/ children need to be taught.

- Technology is a wonderful thing. It offers our young people a world of positive opportunities to create, learn and share with the world.
- With these new opportunities, come new challenges – challenges that other generations haven't had to navigate.
- Growing up with tech means that young people are often more tech savvy than adults, but it doesn't mean they're emotionally or socially mature enough to deal with complex situations when they happen.
- Young people may not have the experience or skills to cope with the content they could be exposed to online, or other situations they might come across in online spaces co-shared with adults, teens and other younger children.
- Navigating the online world should not be a 'figure it out as you go' experience for young people.
- Parents need to consciously and purposefully teaching young people the attitudes, values, skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to confidently and effectively manage themselves in the online world.
- When we give young people devices, they need to be taught how to use them safely and appropriately, just like when we teach them to drive. As their skills and competencies develop, our support and guidance lessens.
- When a young person goes somewhere offline, we ask 'where did you go?', 'who did you hang out with?' and 'what did they do?'. It's OK and important that we start asking the same questions when our young people go online.
- How we support children and teens changes according to age and stage. For young children, we might implement rules and technical options to filter content and screen-time. As they grow into young adults and have more freedom with devices, our support leans more toward

growing their resilience and developing the confidence and capability to look after themselves online.

- If something does go wrong and an issue crops up, count to ten before you react. Focus on fixing the issue, and making your child feel comfortable coming to you with issues in future.

## How to talk to kids about online safety

It's important to have regular and open conversations with your children about online habits early. Showing an interest in what they're doing helps you understand what their online world looks like, and makes it easier to have difficult conversations later.

**Understand what they do online:** Talk often about the sites/apps they use.

Ask them:

- What's involved?
- Who do they interact with?
- What information do they share?

If you don't understand the tech they're using, try it. Explore the sites and tech your child uses to improve your knowledge, and take the time to read terms and conditions involved.

**Set expectations together:** Talk about the expectations you both have about their online behaviours. For example, how long they should spend online, what sites are safe and what is appropriate content to view. Talk about how they should treat others online. Chat about how they can keep themselves safe and how they can protect their identity and content. When setting these expectations, it's important that parents, as role-models, set a good example with their own online habits. The expectations you set may be different to other families' expectations and that's ok – they will reflect what is important in your family and your expectations around the use of digital devices will reflect this.

**Make a plan:** Chat about the types of challenges they might face and the options they have to deal with them. Talk about the different options they have to solve issues on apps/websites, such as blocking people, reporting content and other safety tools. Let them know they can come to you for help, or if they feel more comfortable getting help from Netsafe we are available seven days a week for free advice. If they're a bit older, it can be easier to ask about the advice they would give to a friend facing a problem, or talking about topics that have come up in the media recently.

## After more information?

- Check out some of the [great information for young people](#) and [parents](#) on the [Netsafe website](#).
- Netsafe's [Staying Safe Online Guide](#) – all you need to know about the apps and platforms young people like to use

**All New Zealand internet users, including young people, can request support from Netsafe.**

**You can ring us, email us or make a report online.**

- go to our website at [netsafe.org.nz](https://netsafe.org.nz)
- email [help@netsafe.org.nz](mailto:help@netsafe.org.nz)
- free-phone us on 0508 NETSAFE.