Online Safety Parent Toolkit

Netsafe's guide to help parents and whānau keep their child safe online

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netsafe.org.nz

Young people are growing up with greater access to digital technology than any other generation. They understand and adapt quickly to the opportunities. And sometimes face challenges too.

This is why every parent needs to understand online risks and how to support their child to have a better online experience.

While there might be a gap between what your child knows and how much you know about digital technology, you don't have to be a tech expert to help. Right and wrong are the same online as they are offline. You can offer life skills, maturity and experience your child hasn't developed yet especially when it comes to safety and security behaviours.

So, how do you get started?

Netsafe has put this guide together to help parents and whānau talk about online safety.

Seven ideas to help you get started

The following tips have been developed with parents in mind. They are designed to enhance your digital parenting knowledge and reinforce key elements of online safety.

1 UNDERSTAND

Read about the potential online risks, challenges and sometimes illegal behaviour young people face to understand what may happen.

2 LEARN

Ask your child about what they do, who they talk to and how they use devices to learn about their activities. Check in regularly to see what has changed.

3 EXPLORE

Take the time yourself to explore the sites, apps and technologies your child uses to improve your knowledge and understand their experience.

4 AGREE

Create a family code with your child to agree on what they can do online including sites to visit, appropriate behaviours, privacy settings and limitations.

5 TEACH

Recognise each child has unique needs, but some online safety concepts are universal. Start by teaching yours the **5 tips to help your child thrive.**

6 MODEL

Be a good example to your child. Make sure you role model the sort of behaviours you want to see your child use online and offline.

7 PLAN

Make a plan so everybody knows what to do if something goes wrong and where you will be able to get advice and support in challenging times.

Online safety advice for parents and whānau

There are a variety of things you can do to help you and the family have a safer online experience. Our advice better equips you to talk with your child and have ongoing online safety conversations.

Understanding online challenges

Learn about the online risks and challenges your child may face.

Young people find the internet an easier place to explore their identity, to challenge adult norms and boundaries, experiment with relationships and practice a range of behaviours. But many of the consequences and implications of these things are amplified online.

Netsafe's research has identified that nearly 19 percent of New Zealand teens have experienced an unwanted digital communication that had a negative impact on their daily activities.

The same research identified that most teens response to unwanted contact was to block the person, ignore the situation or report the problem to an adult. While the challenges young people face varies depending on their age and what they do online, there are some key challenges every parent should know about.

The five challenges we have shared in detail are:
1. Online bullying
2. Unwanted contact
3. Social media
4. Sexting
5. Inappropriate content

Online bullying

According to Netsafe research, one in five young people in New Zealand is bullied online every year. It happens when someone or a group of people does something online that causes another person distress, fear or other negative emotions. They are doing it on purpose with the intent to hurt the recipient and it's not just a one-off thing.

The Harmful Digital Communications Act was created to help people in New Zealand who are being targeted online by others. It lays out 10 communication principles that guide how to communicate online. Some types of bullying are covered by this law. The law also covers other things like encouraging people to take their own life (this is illegal) and sharing naked or nearly nude images without the consent of the person in it.

How to help

Teach your child what to do if they encounter online bullying so they have the tools to deal with it. Explain that often it doesn't go away, but can escalate online and possibly involve others.

Talk to your child about how you expect them to behave towards others online. This includes:

- Letting them know that if it's not acceptable offline, it's not acceptable online
- Asking your child to think about how the recipient of the online bullying would feel
- Reminding them to come to you, whānau, a trusted adult, their school or Netsafe for help
- Explaining there's a law about how to communicate online. It provides rights for people, but also responsibilities about the ways to communicate with others

The other important thing to do if your child has been bullied online is to take screenshots or URLs of the content and report it to the platform that it's on (e.g. the social media or gaming platform).

More help is available at **netsafe.org.nz/what-is-online-bullying**

Unwanted contact

As your child becomes more independent online, they can connect and communicate with people they don't know. Often this is a positive experience, but sometimes your child could be being groomed or talking to someone who isn't who they say they are.

Online grooming is when a person tries to create a sexually abusive situation using digital technology. Some people will pretend to be a young person and use a fake profile (similar to catfishing), while others might use their actual profile if they aren't old themselves. They might pretend to have an interest in common, or to have a friend in common by looking at the young person's social media profile.

If they aren't already talking to the young person using direct messaging or text, they'll try to move the conversation somewhere where others can't see. The groomer will try to get close with the young person and may spend a long time doing this before trying to do anything sexual. Often, they use techniques and language that is positive and encourages a child to disclose personal information or their interests to try to build trust in their relationship.

How to help

It is important that your child knows that they can talk to you when something goes wrong online - no matter what happened or who caused it. Depending on the age of your child you might also want to think about turning off the chat functions on the game they play to reduce the potential for harm.

Explain to your child:

- How easy it is for someone to pretend to be someone else online
- Reasons why people pretend to be someone else online
- Ways to safely manage online friends
- What to do if someone they don't know wants to chat or become a friend
- How to work out if the person is who they say they are
- What to do if things start to become uncomfortable when talking to an online friend

If you suspect your child is being groomed online, contact the Police and try to capture all of the evidence.

More help is available at **netsafe.org.nz/grooming-and-online-predators**

Social media

The minimum sign up age for Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter and YouTube is 13. This is because a child's social and emotional capability is still developing which can make it more difficult to identify and manage challenges that occur on a platform designed for adults and teens.

If your child is under 13 and keen to use social media, consider their capability to manage potential online challenges before setting up a profile. It is better your child is honest with you as you can help them to stay safe online.

How to help

Make sure you've taught your child the online safety basics before they start using social media. You can help them by:

- Setting up the account together
- Using your email instead of your child's (depending on their age)
- Entering their actual birthday so they're less likely to see inappropriate content
- Becoming their friend or following them
- Visiting the safety centres of the social media sites they use
- Talking regularly about the need for privacy settings, how to handle social conflict online and what to do when they are concerned

More help is available at
netsafe.org.nz/privacy-settings-on-social-networks

Sexting

Sexting describes sending or receiving nude content. It can include naked pictures, underwear shots and sexual text messages, pictures and videos. There are many reasons why young people get involved in sexting including exploring sex and relationships or pressure from a partner or friends.
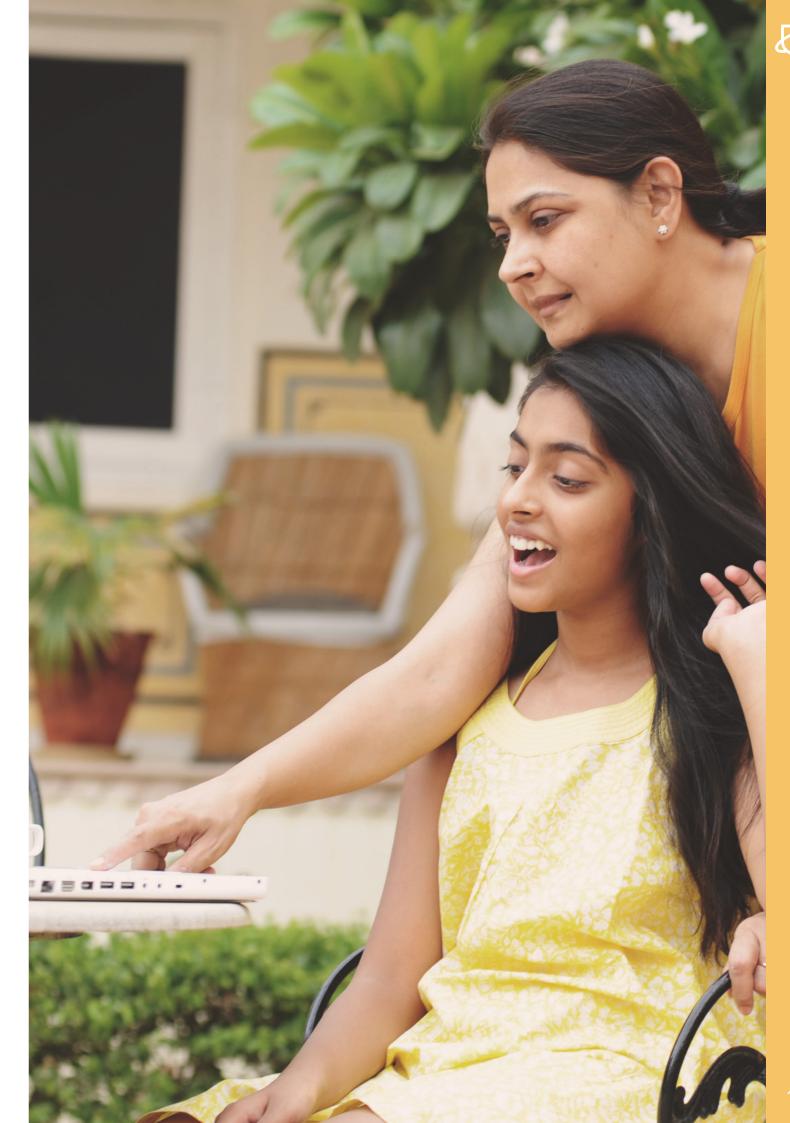
Research in New Zealand suggests that the rates of young people sharing nude images of themselves are relatively low (just 4 percent of young people aged between 14-17 surveyed had done so). What is more common and can create pressure by thinking everybody is doing it, is that one in five young people report having been asked to send a nude image.

How to help

Having an open conversation about it can help your young person understand the implications of sending a nude image. Talk to them about the risks of sharing personal information and sexual images and what can happen to those photos or videos once created and shared.

It's important your child understands how easy it is for private content to be shared outside of their audience.

More help is available at
netsafe.org.nz/sending-nudes-parents

Inappropriate content

Sometimes young people can see inappropriate, offensive or illegal content online even if they haven't sought it out. It can pop-up during a game, someone could send them a link, a simple video search can show explicit images, or a misspelt word could return unexpected content.

Offensive or illegal content may include topics, images or other information that could be prohibited in New Zealand. The content can also be upsetting to a young person when they discover it.

How to help

Some of the things your child may see online can be distressing. It's important you build their resiliency when they start to go online and continue to have regular conversations about what they are seeing and doing.

Some of the other things you can do is:

- Monitor what your child is doing online
- Use parental control tools to filter the content your child can access
- Respond calmly if your child has seen inappropriate content and has come to you for help
- Explain the approach you plan to take if this happens and try not to take away their devices or remove access to it if they do come across this type of content

More help is available at
netsafe.org.nz/upsetting-content/

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Learn about your child's online activities

The easiest way to find out about their online activities is to ask.

It's important you understand more about the online activities and experiences your child has or wants to explore. **Talk to them about what they do online, how they use devices and who they're talking to.**

Take the time to tune in to the conversation – what might seem like just a game to you might be the way your child is connecting and interacting with people they don't know.

Research shows that parents are critical to the success of young people becoming safe, confident and capable in their use of digital technology. Regular proactive conversations at home helps to minimise the damage if things do go wrong online.

Who is in their network?

Why they like certain apps or sites?

Are they making music or videos?

What they are playing?

What information they share?

Asking your child about the advice they would give to a friend facing an online challenge can make it easier for them to discuss. It also helps you understand what they know, what they do and how they behave.

Showing an interest makes it easier to have more difficult conversations if a challenge arises.

Explore the technology

If you don't understand what your child is doing online, then try it.

Explore the websites, apps and technology your child uses. This will help improve your knowledge, and it also gives you a greater understanding of the challenges they could face.

Don't ignore new technologies as young people will use them - if not at home then at their friends' houses or at school.

Ask your child to show you how their favourite website or device works as a way to start an online safety conversation. Ask them to explain how they keep themselves safe, what features they use and how they protect their identity.

Make sure you also take the time to read terms and conditions. They explain how old someone should be before using the service and what happens to the information your child provides.

3

Agree and set expectations

Sometimes young people don't know the rules or how to moderate their own lives.

Discuss the experience your child might have online including the benefits and challenges. Talk to your child about the type of behaviours you'd like them to adopt and reinforce that what they do leaves a permanent digital footprint.

Set expectations about:

- A balanced amount of time online
- The apps and sites that are appropriate to use
- How their behaviour impacts on others
- What types of information is safe to share online
- Where they should go for advice including you, another trusted adult, a teacher, or Netsafe.

The approaches will be different depending on the age and stage of your child - and what you feel comfortable discussing.

Technological options like parental controls can help, but they work best when teamed with online safety education.

Setting aside time to create a family code with your child about online activities is a practical step the whole family can be involved in.

It allows you to talk about what you value as a family and what suits you all best.

Young people need to understand that everyone faces challenges online. Talk about the issues you have encountered even if it's as simple as you forgot your password and explain how you resolved it.

Encourage your child to talk to you about what they are doing online and when anything is worrying them. Regardless of what it is, and what caused it, try not to overreact.

Find out how to use parental controls at **netsafe.org.nz/filters**

Read more about spending time online at **netsafe.org.nz/screen-time**

4

Teach the basics

Let them know the basics of online safety.

Most social media and gaming organisations have a safety centre. Look at the safety centres with your child and teach them how to use the tools available. Start with how to block people, how to report content and how to use privacy settings. Teach your child to capture screenshots or URLs in case something goes wrong and this information is needed.

One of the other things parents will think about at some stage is whether their child needs a device. If you're considering getting your child their own device, check out the advice at **netsafe.org.nz/byod**

Netsafe's **5 tips to help your child thrive** are some of the best online safety tools you can teach:

1 Keep it locked
Passwords and pin codes help protect your child's profiles and accounts. Set up pins and passwords with them – and reinforce they shouldn't share it with anyone except you. Get more information at **netsafe.org.nz/passwords.**

2 Keep it private
Some information when shared publicly online can make your child more vulnerable to identity theft or grooming. It's important to be cautious when sharing:

- Passwords
- Address
- Birthdate
- Bank account details
- School details
- Their location on apps
- Personal information that can be used to guess security questions
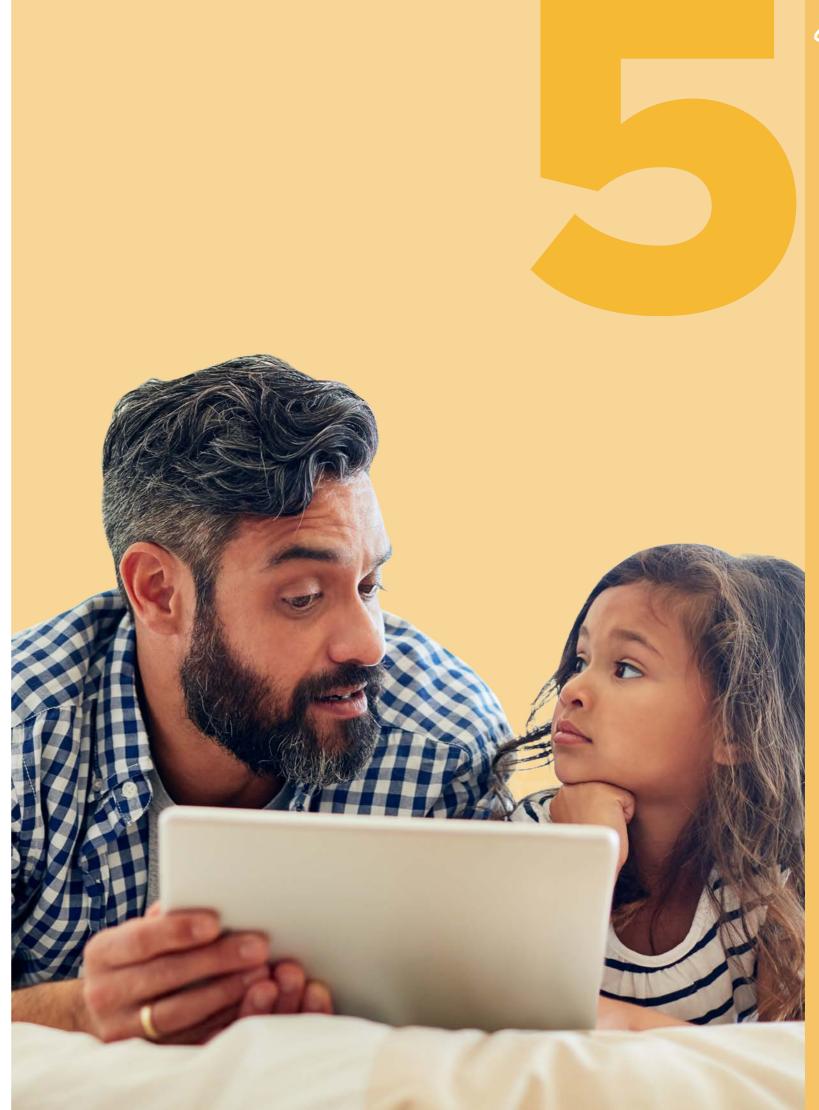
3 Keep it helpful
A digital footprint is the trail of 'electronic breadcrumbs' you leave behind online and it needs to be managed carefully. It can last long after they think something has been deleted and may follow them into adulthood. Learn more at **netsafe.org.nz/digital-footprint.**
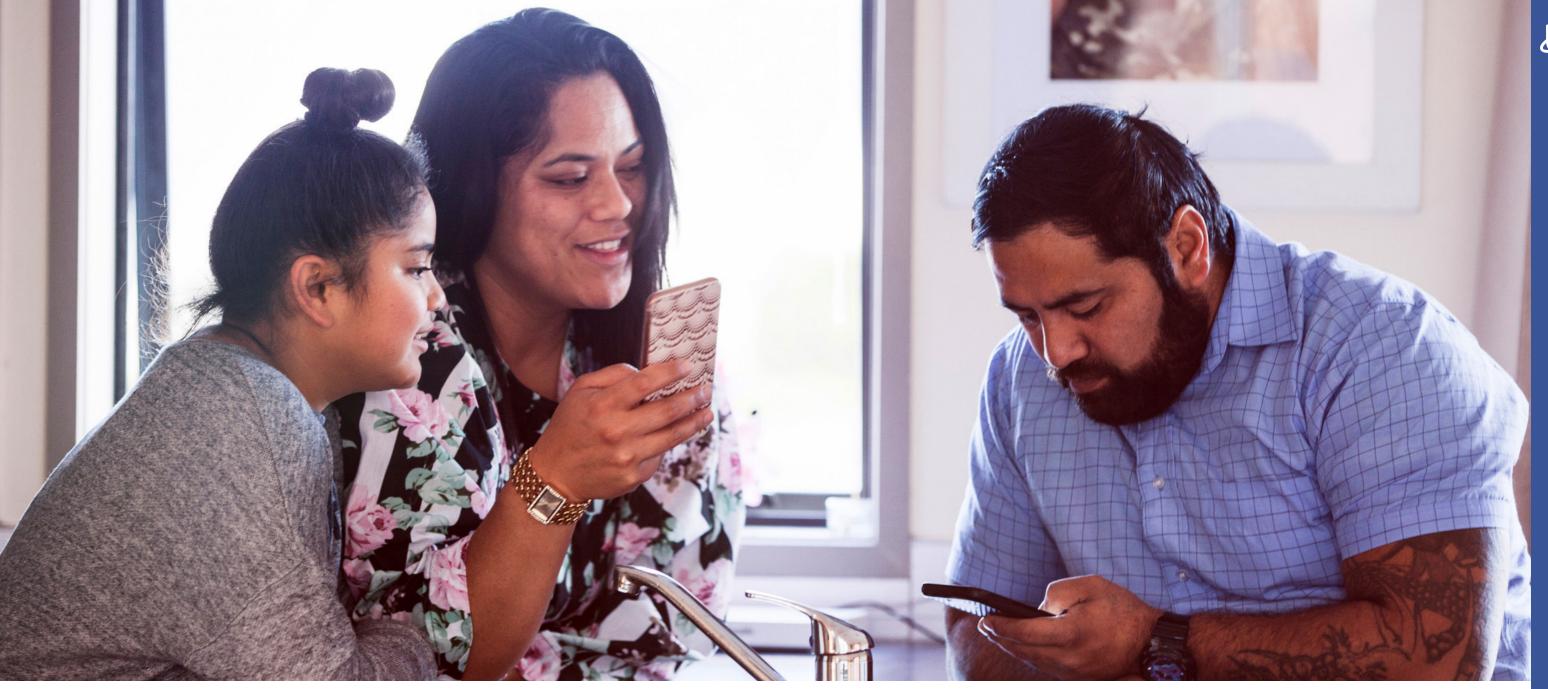
4 Keep it real
It can seem like common knowledge to adults, but it is hard for children to understand that not everyone is who they say they are. It can be exciting when people want to friend, communicate or follow them. **Talk to your child about invites or conversations with strangers, why this is not safe and how they should handle it.**

5 Keep it friendly
Teach your child to be kind and respectful online, and to be careful talking to, or sharing information with, people they don't know.

6

Role model for them

Young people are always watching what happens, so you don't want to be a hypocrite.

Take a look at the way technology is used by people in your home.
Think about if there are patterns, behaviours or activities that might need to be rethought. Are phones used at the table? How do you talk or post online?

It can be hard to set expectations for family when you are not doing it yourself.
Discuss some of the key safety aspects with your child, but make sure you're doing it too.

Make a plan

Young people need to know where to get help.

Let your child know the options available to them if they are experiencing online challenges. Do you want them to talk to you, whānau, a trusted adult, their school or Netsafe?

It is usually a big step when young people seek help. Netsafe's research shows that many young people choose not to seek support when something goes wrong online. They often ignore the problem or try to fix it themselves or think their parents will take the technology away as a first step.

If a young person comes to you focus on fixing the issue, not on punishing those involved or confiscating their devices - even if they did something wrong. If you take away their access to technology, then you're less likely to be the first port of call next time something happens.

Netsafe has created the Family Safe Online Treaty to help guide these conversations, and make the experience easier.

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Family Safe Online Treaty

Netsafe wants all Kiwi kids and their whānau to have a safe and positive time while using the internet and devices. It can be useful for families to agree on some guidelines so this can be done.

1 KEEP IT KIND
When you are online, think about others and talk or share in a kind way.

2 KEEP IT TO YOURSELF
Keep your passwords and information about yourself or other people safe and private.

3 KEEP IT CAREFUL
Think carefully about what you share and make sure it's something you are proud of and would be happy sharing with someone else face to face.

4 KEEP IT REAL
Not everything you see online is real. It might look or sound real, but some things are made up or fake, so be careful to check or ask a teacher if you're not sure.

5 KEEP IT HONEST
When we copy or use words, pictures and ideas from the internet, we need to make sure we share these things in the right way and follow the rules for sharing things that don't belong to us.

6 KEEP IT FAIR
Make sure you check with others if it is okay to record them, or share photos or videos with them in it. They should have a say in what happens to things that go online if they are in them.

7 KEEP IT RESPONSIBLE
If you bring your own device to school, use it in ways, and at the times that your teacher says it is okay to.

8 KEEP IN MIND
There is free and confidential help available from Netsafe (**netsafe.org.nz** or **0508 NETSAFE**) if anyone faces online challenges.

What other guidelines are useful and what will happen if they aren't followed?

_____

_____

_____

If we need help because of a problem with this Treaty we will talk to:

_____

_____

My signature confirms I agree to the guidelines above

Child's signature_____   Date _____

I/we agree to help manage these guidelines fairly. The use of technology deserves respect from everyone and there will be a family discussion if these guidelines are not adhered to. I/we will friend and follow, but will not stalk you online.

Parent/guardian signature _____   Date _____

Get support

There are a variety of places to get support when it comes to online safety issues.

netsafe.org.nz

Netsafe: Offers a free and confidential online safety service for everyone in New Zealand. It helps people with online bullying, abuse, harassment and other online challenges

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certnz

CERT NZ: Provides practical information and advice on how to keep your information safe and secure online. You can also report cyber security problems.

NEW ZEALAND
POLICE
Ngā Pirihimana o Aotearoa

NZ Police: If you think you or someone else is in immediate danger or if a crime has been committed call 111.

Connect to Netsafe

Netsafe is an independent non-profit organisation with an unrelenting focus on online safety. We keep people safe online by providing free support, education and online incident expertise seven days a week.

Contact Netsafe's helpline

We are available everyday. Whether you're dealing with online bullying, a suspicious online request or you want advice for your family, we can help.

- Call us toll-free on 0508 NETSAFE
- Email help@netsafe.org.nz
- Text 'Netsafe' to 4282
- Online report at netsafe.org.nz/report

Visit netsafe.org.nz

Our website has information, tips and self-help guides about a range of online safety topics. We also offer resources for the education sector and advice about the newest trends in online safety.

Stay informed

You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter at netsafe.org.nz/newsletter or follow 'NetsafeNZ' on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to keep up with the latest in online safety news, advice and tips.

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To keep up with the latest advice

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