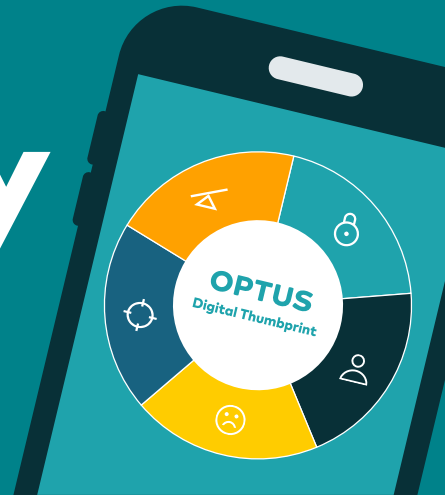# Protecting your identity

Blocking unwanted contact

Has anyone random ever tried to contact you before, maybe on a game or on socials? You might have started chatting and having a great time until they said or shared something that made you feel bad. This is unwanted contact, and it can come from a stranger or from someone you know. It can feel pretty uncomfortable, but luckily, there are heaps of ways to prevent or stop unwanted contact ruining your time online.

This guide will help you:

- ✓ Understand what unwanted contact is
- ✓ Learn the signs of unwanted contact
- ✓ Keep yourself safe from unwanted contact
- ✓ Learn what to do if you experience unwanted contact
- ✓ Learn the basics to blocking and reporting accounts
- ✓ Find more help when you need it

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Unwanted contact is online communication that is inappropriate, offensive or makes you feel uncomfortable.

What is unwanted contact?

In a healthy online conversation, messages should make you feel connected, respected and comfortable. With unwanted contact, often your gut feeling will tell you something is off. It can be from a stranger or random person, but also someone you know.

An alternative way of thinking about unwanted contact is whether you would feel comfortable if the same message/photo/video sent to you online is shown to you in real life. If the answer is no, there is a high chance that is unwanted contact.
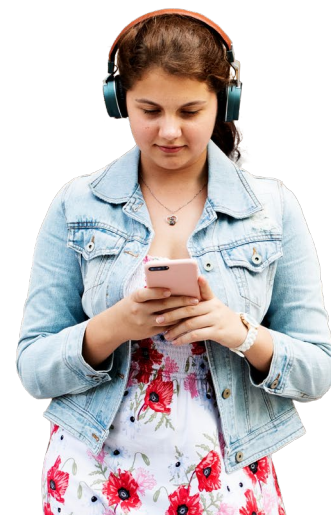
⚡ Most gaming and social media platforms outline the types of content they consider as inappropriate in their community guidelines or rules and policies. These could be a good starting point to understand what you consider as unwanted contact.

Signs of unwanted contact

Sometimes it's hard to know what unwanted contact actually looks like. If you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, trust your gut! You might be experiencing unwanted contact.

Some tell-tale signs of unwanted contact might be:

Inconsistent

They tell stories that don't match up to different bits of information they previously shared with you, like their age or location.

It's like...

An online friend says they're in Year 7, but you remember a time last week when they told you about going to a birthday party that made them seem a lot older.

Persistent

They keep contacting you or asking you to respond across multiple online platforms like games, messaging apps or social media sites.

It's like...

You played against a stranger on an online game and didn't think you shared any personal information. Now the same person has added you on Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat and started messaging you on all three platforms, insisting you respond on each.

Nosey

They ask for or try to force you to share personal details about your life like where you live, how you get to school and who you live with.

It's like...

A friend who you've never met asks you about what bus you catch to school, who you catch it with and who meets you when you get home, but you know they don't go to your school and don't know why they'd need to know about that bus or your routine.

Making you feel uncomfortable

They might make you feel embarrassed or uncomfortable by asking personal questions that intrude on your privacy, like asking about relationships or your body.

It's like...

Your best friend's sibling is in Year 10 and keeps messaging you on Snapchat. They ask if you have a crush, if you've ever kissed someone and always tell you how attractive you are.

Offensive

They sound threatening or extreme and say or send things that are insensitive, hateful, violent or just make you feel really uncomfortable, often without your consent.

It's like...

You beat a stranger at an online game. You come off mute and say 'Good game!' and they then send you a video of themselves making fun of your accent, your ethnicity and threaten to hurt your younger sibling or your pet.

Asking you for favours

They ask you for money, in-game tokens, payments or pictures of yourself or your friends.

It's like...

A kid from another school liked your Instagram post and you've been messaging for a month and talking about what you like to do in the summer. They're now asking you to send them a 'cute pic' of you in your bathers so they can imagine you enjoying the beach.

Keeping yourself safe

There are some simple things you can do to make it harder for people to contact you in a way you don't want online.

✓ Try and know your online friends IRL

✓ Be extra careful about sharing personal information and avoid clicking on any external links

✓ Go through your contact/follower lists and remove and block unwanted accounts
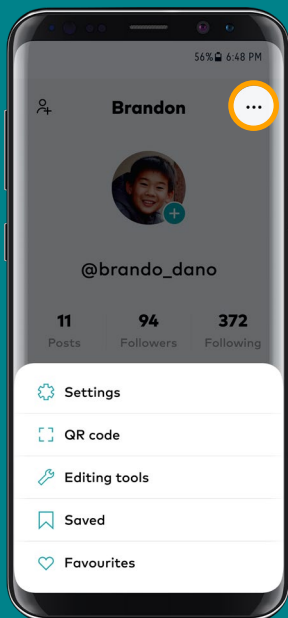
Check your privacy settings

You can also use privacy settings on social media and gaming accounts to block strangers and people you know from contacting you in a way that you don't want.

Settings screens may look different across different apps, but most allow you to stay private and control who contacts you. Here are some general steps to follow to keep your accounts private - ask a trusted adult to help you!
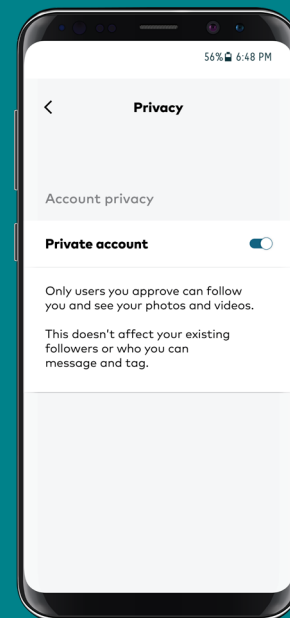
1 Go to settings

2 Find privacy settings
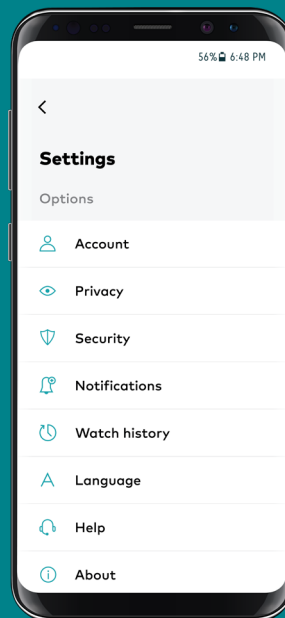
3 Select private account/limit who can contact me

You can also check the community guidelines for all games and apps to find out what behaviour can be reported to the app. Just Google the name of the app or game and 'community guidelines' to find the information you need.

What to do if you experience unwanted contact

Depending on the situation, there are different things you can do to deal with unwanted contact. As soon as you receive unwanted contact, you should tell a trusted adult like a parent or teacher. You can work through these steps with them.

Someone contacted me and it made me feel uncomfortable... what now?

Get support

Tell an adult that you trust - they can help you work through the below steps and feel safe while doing so.

Ask them to stop

If you feel safe to do so, tell the person they've made you uncomfortable and ask them to stop and change their behaviour. This is especially important if the person is a friend or someone you know – they may not know your boundaries or know they've done something wrong.
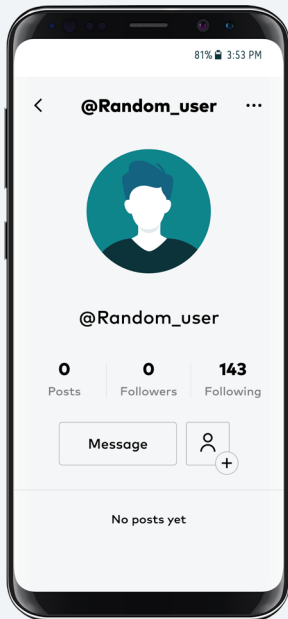
Block them

Use the app settings to block, mute or unfollow the person making you feel uncomfortable so they can't talk to you anymore.

Like checking privacy settings, these steps may vary slightly depending on the app or game but most will allow you to block and report someone to stop them contacting you online.
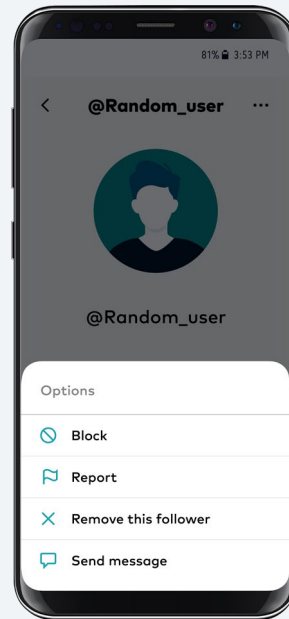
1 **Identify the profile or post you want to block and/or report**

2 **Click the three-dots or more button**
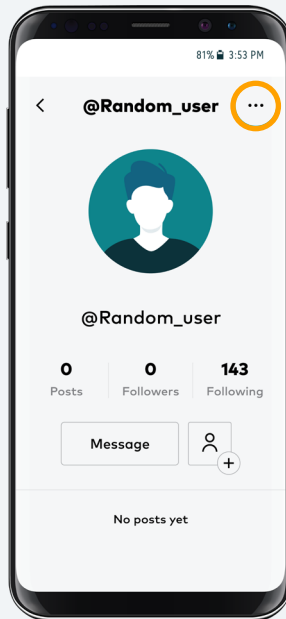
3 **Find and click on the block or report buttons**

Report them to the platform

Screenshot or screen record the evidence of their actions and report them to the social media or gaming platform. Remember, you can do this confidentially if you're worried about your safety.

If they're sending or requesting nudes, tell a parent or trusted adult and collect evidence for the report. You can take screenshots or recordings of when and where it was shared, but **do not** take screenshots of the intimate image or video, itself, as this can be a crime. There's more information from the Office of the eSafety Commissioner here.

Report them to the Office of the eSafety Commissioner

If the content is still up and you're still being bothered 48 hours after reporting to the app, make a report to the Office of the eSafety Commissioner. You might be experiencing harassment, and eSafety can help you get the user removed from the platform.

Report them to the police

You may also need to report unwanted contact to the police. Talk to your parent or guardian about this as they can help to report it over the phone, online, or to the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE), who accept reports about inappropriate online behaviour like this.

You can learn more about keeping yourself safe from and managing unwanted contact at Unsafe or unwanted contact | eSafety Commissioner.

What to do if you need more help?

If you ever feel anxious, angry or sad about unwanted contact, you should let someone you trust know what's going on. Tell:

- a friend
- a parent
- a teacher
- a trusted adult
- Kids Helpline

About Optus Digital Thumbprint

Optus Digital Thumbprint supports digital safety and wellbeing for young people and families. Find out more at www.digitalthumbprint.com.au

Trusted eSafetyProvider
esafety.gov.au