

Staying Safe with AI

AI is powerful - but like any online tool or service, it is important to use it safely and mindfully. These short reminders and age-based tips will help you (and the young people you care about) use it safely and confidently.

1. Remember What AI Is (and Isn't)

AI doesn't *think* — it *predicts*.

It's trained to sound helpful and human, but it doesn't understand feelings or context. Think of it as a (usually) clever assistant, not a trusted friend.

2. Protect Your Privacy

- Never type or upload anything into AI you wouldn't say on speakerphone in a café or post publicly online.
- Avoid sharing names, addresses, photos, or private family information.
- Don't upload creative or business work you want to keep ownership of.
- If it's yours and you want credit for it — don't feed it into AI.

3. Guard Your Emotional Boundaries

AI can sound caring - but it isn't conscious or empathetic. Use it for ideas and organisation, not comfort or counselling. If you're struggling, reach out to a person or service such as Lifeline (13 11 14).

4. Check Before You Trust

AI can sound confident even when it's wrong. Always double-check facts or advice. Treat it like a work-experience student - often brilliant, sometimes way off base.

5. Keep AI in Its Lane

Use AI to:

- Save time - planning, writing, researching
- Reduce mental load - lists, reminders, summaries
- Spark creativity - ideas, recipes, journal prompts

Avoid using AI to:

- Make emotional, medical or financial decisions
- Replace real conversations or human support

AI Safety by Age: Talking with Kids About AI

AI is now part of everyday life — from smart speakers to school tools. These tips and short phrases help parents and carers guide safe, age-appropriate conversations. More information is available at esafety.gov.au

Ages 3–5 – “Let’s ask the robot”

- Kids should always be supervised. Teach that AI isn’t a person — “*Let’s ask the robot!*”
- Use AI together for short, playful learning moments (like naming animals, colours, or songs).
- Remind them: it’s something we use *together* — not something that plays by itself.

Ages 6–9 – “Spot the trick”

- Teach early digital thinking: “Let’s ask the robot — then check if it’s right.”
- Explain that AI is not a toy or game — it’s a helper, not a decider.
- Encourage curiosity and teamwork: “Let’s find out together.”

Ages 10–12 – “What to ask, what to share”

- Clarify boundaries: “AI can’t care and it can’t keep secrets.”
- Use it for ideas or projects, not personal details.
- Ask: “Is this something you’d tell a teacher or friend?” If not, don’t tell the AI.

Ages 13–15 – “Decode the feels”

- Talk about influence: “Likes and compliments aren’t always real.”
- Pause before reacting: “Is this *really* helpful, or just persuasive?”
- Build media literacy: AI predicts patterns; it doesn’t *think*.

Ages 16–18 – “Use it, don’t be used”

- Empower them: “How can AI help you study, create or organise — without doing the thinking for you?”
- Encourage reflection: “What bias or error might be hidden in this answer?”
- Balance convenience with conscience — AI should amplify learning, not replace it.

Parent Takeaway

AI is a tool — not a teacher or friend.

Young children should **always** use AI under adult supervision, with shared screens and open conversations. As children grow, keep the conversation going: ask what tools they’re using, what they’re learning, and how they check if it’s true.

Boundaries + understanding + appropriate supervision = safety.