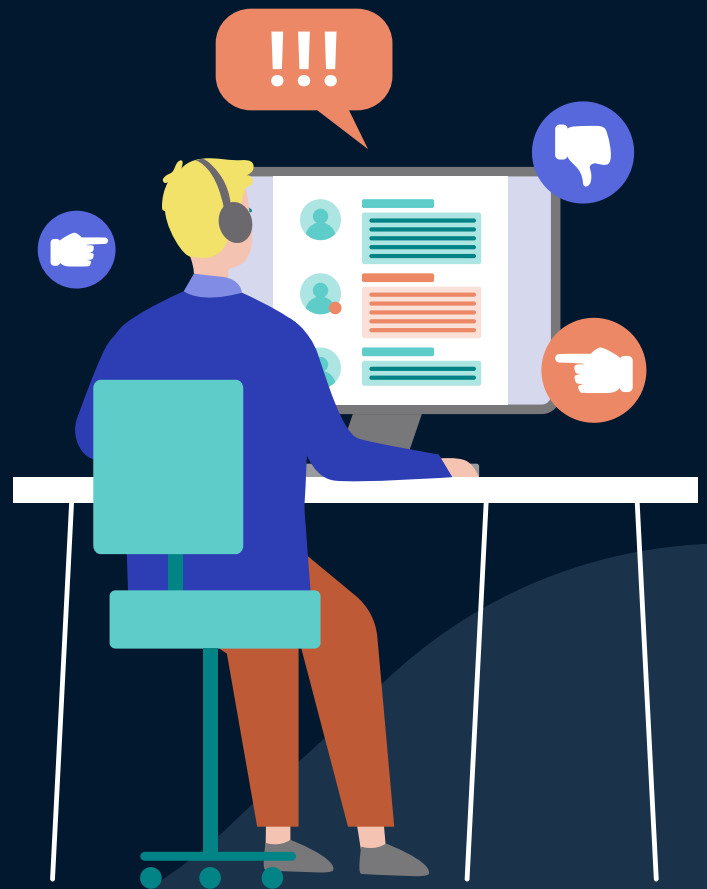




Guide for students: dealing with online abuse



This guide provides students with advice about how to deal with online abuse. Online abuse is behaviour that uses technology to threaten, intimidate, harass, humiliate or seriously offend someone. It can include adult cyber abuse, image-based abuse such as sexual extortion, and other harms.

Experiencing online abuse can have a severe negative impact on a person's mental health, wellbeing and ability to access or complete their studies.

All students should feel empowered and confident speaking up if they experience or witness any form of bullying or abuse – online or offline.



What is online abuse?

Online abuse can take place on social media, through online chat and video messaging services, in online classrooms, in text messages, in emails, on message boards and in online forums that allow people to comment publicly. These are some examples:

- Making targeted and persistent personal attacks online that ridicule, insult or humiliate a person, or make others think badly of them. If the attacks relate to their physical appearance, religion, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation and/or political beliefs this is sometimes known as online hate.
- Sharing, or threatening to share, an intimate or sexual photo or video of someone without their consent. This is known as image-based abuse. It includes 'deepfake' AI generated images and videos.
- Blackmailing someone by threatening to share a nude or sexual image or video of them unless they give into demands for money or something else. This is a form of image-based abuse known as sexual extortion or 'sextortion'.
- Encouraging someone online to self-harm or suicide.
- Cyberstalking, which is when someone keeps constant track of a person online in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable, worried or threatened.
- Posting someone's personally identifiable information online without their consent, to make them feel unsafe, which is known as doxing. An example is sharing their phone number or home address on social media and saying they are available for sex, so strangers call or visit them.
- Threatening violence or inciting others to do the same – such as saying a person should be killed or raped, whether it leads to assault or not.



Managing incidents

Do you feel unsafe right now?

If you are in Australia and in immediate danger or at risk of harm, call emergency services on Triple Zero (000).

If there are threats to your safety or threats to your friends or family members, contact your local police on 131 444.

If an online incident involves staff or other students, you should refer to your institution's relevant policies or code of conduct alongside the advice in this guide. You can also take these steps:

- If another student is targeting you online, consider raising this with your teacher, tutor or lecturer, the course coordinator and/or your student safety or wellbeing officers.
- If a staff member is targeting you online, approach another staff member and let them know what is happening or you can contact student services, the employment office or anti-discrimination unit, the equity office, or the human resources unit of your institution.
- If a fellow student is being targeted, be an 'upstander' instead of a bystander by encouraging them to report it to an appropriate staff member and sharing eSafety advice with them.

If the incident relates to domestic, family and sexual violence you may wish to contact [1800RESPECT](https://www.1800respect.org.au) (1800 737 732). Remember, your safety is important. If an abusive person learns that you are seeking resources and information, their behaviour may get worse. To help manage the abuse, [learn more](#) and [connect with support](#).



External reporting

In addition to speaking with your institution, you can take the following steps to report serious online abuse and have harmful content removed:

- 1. Collect evidence** – [take screenshots](#) of what has happened and which platform it occurred on.
- 2. Report it** –
 - Harmful posts, comments, messages and profiles should be reported to the online platform or service first. If they don't help, and the abuse is very serious, [report it to eSafety](#).
 - Sharing or threatening to share an intimate image or video of you without your consent is [image-based abuse](#) – it can be [reported to eSafety](#) immediately unless you're being blackmailed. If you're being blackmailed, go to our advice on [how to deal with sexual extortion](#).
- 3. Stop contact** – tighten your security settings and prevent content from being shared further.
- 4. Get more support** – check eSafety's tips for managing the impacts of [adult cyber abuse](#), [image-based abuse](#) or [child cyberbullying](#).

Learn more about what can be reported and how using eSafety's [summary table](#) which outlines different forms of online abuse and ways to deal with it. If the online experience does not fit the criteria for eSafety to investigate, it may be helpful to learn about the other [options available](#).

Note: Remember to obtain consent if you are taking any action on behalf of anyone else who may be experiencing online abuse.



Ongoing support

Finding help is important if you're anxious or depressed or feel like things are getting too hard for you.

Signs to watch out for include changes in your mood, sleep patterns, energy levels and appetite. Not feeling like socialising or not wanting to go to your place of study or work can also be a sign that it's time to get more help.

You can reach out for help through:

- your institution's wellbeing and support services
- general **[counselling and support services](#)**.

