

Excessive internet use

Older children

Many older children spend time on the internet socialising, studying and for entertainment. There is no guideline for the 'right' amount of time for children to spend online, however if their online behaviour appears to impact negatively on their behaviour or wellbeing, or that of the family, it may be time to discuss expectations, and establish online time limits.

The following tips can help your child manage time spent online and maintain a healthy balance.

- Look for indicators that your child may be spending too much time online, such as declining interest in other activities, talking constantly about an online game or activity, a decline in grades or irritability when they are away from an online game. You may also suspect they are getting up after bed time to play a game.
- Children may seem quite tired during the day or skip meals to avoid leaving the computer.
- You may like to check with your child's school to identify whether they are experiencing issues with timeliness or quality of work, and tiredness.
- Consider establishing rules about when children can play games or use the internet and how long they can play each day. You might consider agreeing with your child a set balance of online activities and offline activities such as outside play, homework and housework. A two week trial of new rules might be useful to establish whether they seem to provide a good balance for your child and your family.
- Establishing rules with children when they are young can help with the management of their online activities as they get older.
- Try to locate the computer in a shared or visible place in the home so you are aware of how much time your child spends online.
- If you have concerns about your child's online behaviour explore your concerns with them. If necessary seek professional support, including support through the Cybersmart Online Helpline at www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx. The Cybersmart Online Helpline provides free, confidential online counselling for children and young people. Your child's school may also be able to provide guidance and support.

More information

The Cybersmart program provides a range of cybersafety materials for parents and their children. For more information, resources, advice and tips, visit the Cybersmart website at www.cybersmart.gov.au. Encourage your children and teens to take a look around the website. If you have young children, you may like to explore it together to help them understand how to protect themselves against online risks and make the most of their experiences online.