

PARENTAL WARNING: LIVE VIDEO CHAT WITH STRANGERS

Omegle, a website that matches strangers to chat via webcam, is being increasingly used by primary school students in Australia. As highlighted by the 2022 TV series, *Mirror Mirror* (Ch 10), there is absolute consensus that Omegle presents extreme risks for children and teens.



What is Omegle?

An anonymous chat (text and video) service, available on all mobile devices and computers with a web browser.

Why is it so unsafe?

- No age verification required
- No registration required, don't have to even provide an email address
- No parental controls or safety settings

Known Risks:

- Grooming by paedophiles
- Explicit sexual content performed live
- Sexual and other adult chat
- Racist and homophobic hate speech

Having used Omegle recently, within 5 chats we had been asked to send nude images, sent a link to hardcore pornography and been confronted with a naked man live on camera.

It is not a matter of if your child will be exposed to graphic sexual content, but when.

Is it the only anonymous "chat with strangers" app or website available?

No, there are many alternatives to Omegle with names such as Chat Roulette and Chat Random as well as a host of mobile apps including Meetme, Yik Yak and Whisper.

6 things parents can do:

- All devices must have parental controls enabled (to restrict content that children can access). The best example of parental controls is [Apple's ScreenTime](#) which enables filtering of adult content for iPads, iPhones & iPods. For a Full guide to parental controls please see [eSafety Guide to Parental Controls](#).
- Absolutely no devices allowed in bedrooms, bathrooms or toilets for primary school aged children.
- Supervise your children's online activity (check what apps and websites they are using).
- Be the 'askable and tellable' parent. No matter what you discover or they share with you, be calm (fake it if you have to!) and ask curious questions in the first instance, for example "Okay, start at the start and tell me what happened".
- Reassure your kids often that no matter what happens you can help them sort it out AND you will not ban the internet or remove their devices if they come to you with a problem. Expect your kids to make mistakes, which is simply part of growing up and learning how to operate in a digital world.

To open up the chat about 'tricky' topics, try these conversation starters:

"I saw a tv show about kids in grade 5 going on websites where they talk to strangers? Have your friends talked about doing this?"

"I know you care about your friends being okay so I need to ask you this, have your friends talked about seeing naked people online or other adult videos?"

"If a friend ever tells you to look something up online, it is important to check with me first because there is a lot on the internet that is not safe for kids. I promise I won't just say "no", unless it's unsafe or inappropriate."

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