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Digital parenting now comes with a manual

Inspired by a library, a free mobile-first knowledge hub has been launched to help caregivers support young people being safer online

More than half of parents of teens say they're struggling to keep up with their children's digital lives, with [research](#) showing 32% of parents find it difficult to know how to keep their children safe online, rising sharply in the teen years. A comprehensive and free new [Netsafe platform](#) launching today, is set to change that.

Inspired by the idea of a community library, the Digital Guardian Guide is a dedicated online hub of knowledge and support, designed to help parents, caregivers and other trusted adults know what to do, and what to say, throughout the everyday moments and challenges of digital life with young people. Even the tricky topics.

“For years we’ve told parents to keep their kids safe online but seldom have we given them the tools to actually do it. The Digital Guardian Guide is designed to change that.” says Netsafe CEO Brent Carey.

“Until now, much of the available advice and resources have been fragmented or too focused on all the risks, and that’s where many families have felt stuck or underprepared. As adults we’re expected to have all the answers, but online life moves faster than anyone can keep up with and when things go wrong, it’s often not a lack of care but a lack of practical support.”

“That’s why we created the Digital Guardian Guide, to help whānau feel more confident about what’s coming and knowing how to respond when it matters.”



Carey goes on to say that the free Guide is underpinned by the idea that online safety for young people is a journey that should be grounded in relationships and conversations, not just rules. “There’s a lot of focus on what schools, platforms or governments should do but years of research by Netsafe show young people experience the online world through their relationships. Parents and caregivers are still one of the most important influences on young people’s digital lives.”

Encouraging caregivers to just ‘start where you are’ and build knowledge at their own pace, alongside rangatahi, the Guide comprises practical age and stage-specific advice and resources. From unpacking AI or social media slang, through to how to deal with a ‘10pm Panic Moment’, like when you discover your child has been messaging with a stranger.

“Real life scenarios, like when young people get their first phone, when something just ‘feels off’ or when caregivers feel overwhelmed with social media like TikTok, are all part of the guide.” says Carey.

The culmination of years of frontline experience and insights gathered from New Zealand families using Netsafe services and hearing from those out in the community, the Guide brings together 30+ downloadable resources, 40+ interactive tools, two podcast series, and over 200 pages of practical advice to help whānau navigate the digital world. It includes videos featuring 2025 Young New Zealander of the Year Eteroa Lafaele, youth-led content co-designed with rangatahi, and simple tools like Kōrero Cards to support confident, everyday online safety conversations.

Anna Mowat, founder of Real Collective, works in the parenting space and was interviewed for one of the podcasts available through the platform. She said parents worry about getting it wrong when it comes to online safety.

“The digital world is constantly shifting and our tamariki and rangatahi are often navigating parts of it before we are. That doesn’t mean we’re failing as parents. It means we need to stay in communication with our children and young people, remain curious, keep learning alongside them, be willing to reset boundaries as things change, and use the Digital Guardian Guide from Netsafe. Ultimately, we want young people to grow up understanding the digital world and feeling confident navigating it, even when things get tricky, and our role is to walk alongside them as they learn to do that.”

The Digital Guardian Guide platform is now live and available free. It will be updated regularly to reflect ongoing changes in digital technology, including how young people engage with online spaces and the evolving challenges faced by parents and caregivers.

The creation of the Digital Guardian Guide has been supported by the Spark Foundation, Four Winds Foundation and the Trillian Trust.

When to use the guide and why

- To prepare yourself – you can use the guide to prepare yourself before you need it, to improve your understanding and anticipate the challenges that come from the young people in their lives being online.
- In the moment – when you need to respond to a situation, and handle those tricky questions
- When your child is doing something new – when your child is visiting online spaces for the first time, or entering a new platform or app. They are relying on you to give them access to safe spaces
- When your child is learning to use online devices, apps and platforms – with your supervision, your child is learning how to interact with devices and behave online from you and everyone else around them.

- When you need to be a coach – when your young person is exploring online space with increasing independence, they still need to you check in, be curious, help them make good choices, and show them how to respond if something happens.
- When a child needs support – when your young person is navigating online spaces independently, they still need to know you're there something feels off, or they're unsure about something

How to get started: Start where you are

- Go to the Digital Guardianship Guide [website](#)
- Browse the curated collections, or Search with Scout to find relevant resources based on a topic, or the age and stage of your whānau
- Check out the practical tools: agreements, checklists, guides, podcasts, videos and activities.
- Start by normalising the conversation with your young person - Kōrero cards, conversations starters and a conversation planning tool to help you start making online safety part of your everyday family dialogues.
- Increase your digital systems literacy: Algorithms, AI, persuasion, monetisation.
- Get help when things go wrong: Recognise, Respond, Support advice for the online risks and harms we know you worry about.

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For further information, please contact:

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About Netsafe

Netsafe is an independent charitable organisation supporting people in Aotearoa to have safe and positive online experiences. We keep people of all ages safe online by providing free support, advice, and education.

Support available

Netsafe provides free, confidential support to anyone experiencing online harm, including unwanted digital contact, harassment and bullying.

Contact Netsafe:

Online report: <https://netsafe.org.nz/report/>

Email: help@netsafe.org.nz

Text: 4282

Free phone: 0508 NETSAFE (0508 638 723)
(Available 9 am–6 pm weekdays)