



Australian Government
Office of the Australian
Information Commissioner

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

Short Guide to the draft Children's Online Privacy Code

Short guide



Introduction

The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) is the Australian Government's privacy regulator, and our goal is to protect the privacy of Australians.

We are responsible for writing the Children's Online Privacy Code.

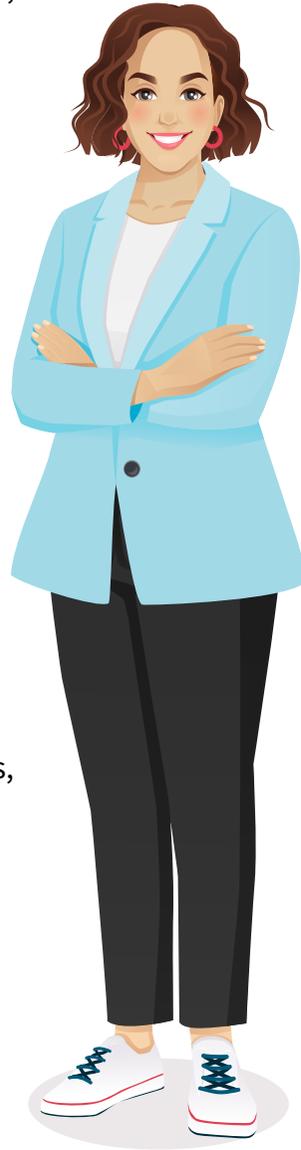
When we refer to 'children' and 'young people' we mean individuals under the age of 18.

We have made this short guide with primary school aged children in mind. But everyone is welcome to read it!

The Children's Online Privacy Code (the Code) puts children and young people at the centre of online privacy protections in Australia.

This new Code will help protect children's online privacy by telling many online services, like apps, games, and websites, how they need to follow special privacy rules when taking care of children's personal information online.

Personal information is things like your name, address, email, phone number, school, date of birth, photos or videos of you, location, and online activity.



Types of personal information



Name



Address



Email



Phone number



School



Date of birth



Photos or videos of you



Location



Online activity

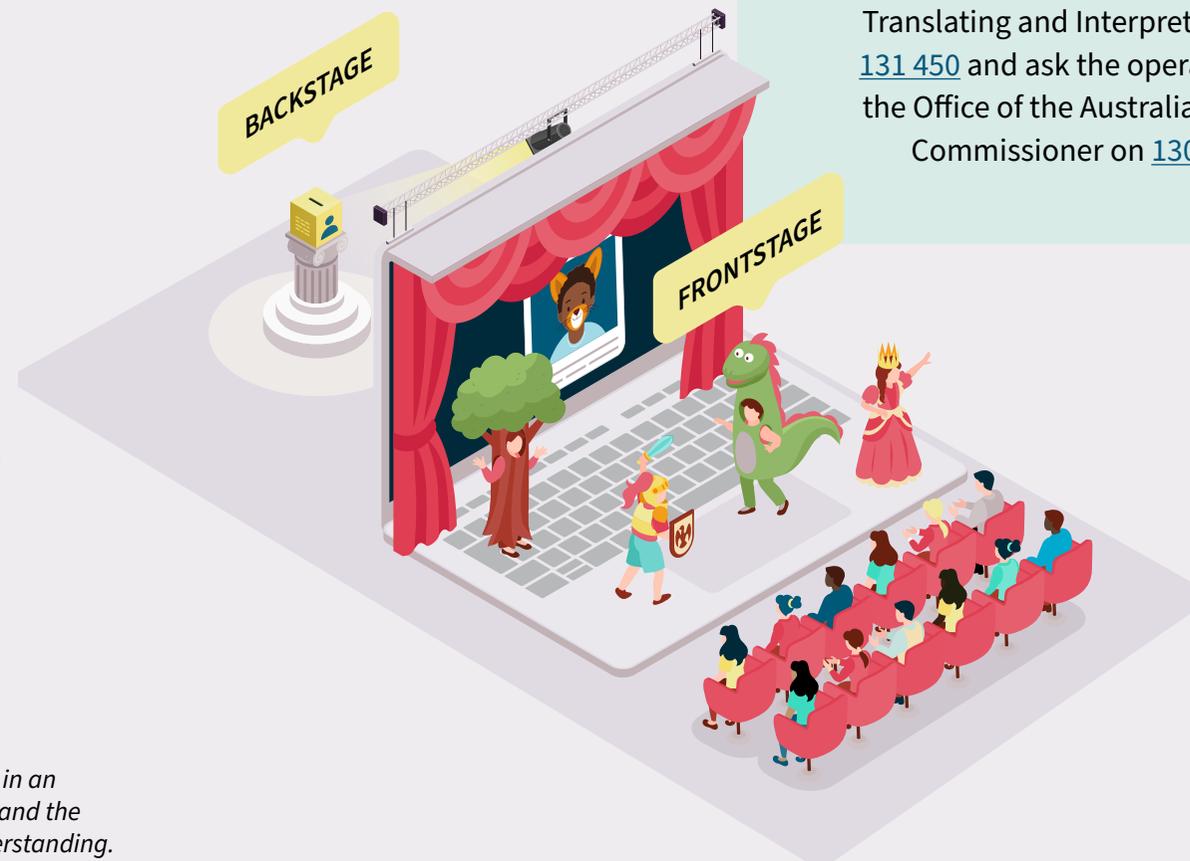
Protecting your personal information online is one important step to protecting your online privacy.

Think about **online privacy** like a stage where you watch school assembly or a music concert, where the frontstage and backstage are separated by a curtain.

The frontstage is in front of the curtain and is where everyone in the audience can see what is happening. The frontstage is like where you or other people share things about you online for other people to see (like sharing photos of you with your friends and family). To help protect your online privacy frontstage, you and other people (like your family, friends, school and clubs) need to think carefully about what is shared publicly for others to see.

The backstage is behind the curtain and is where only the people running the show can see what is happening. The backstage is like where you share your personal information with an app, game, or website to use that online service. To help protect your online privacy backstage, online services need to take care of the personal information you choose to share with them.

The Code focuses on protecting your online privacy backstage. It does this by shining a light on what happens to your personal information behind the curtain, telling online services how to take care of children's personal information, and giving you more control with what happens to your personal information online.



You can ask for help to read this document.

A friend, family member or support person might be able to help you. If you speak a language other than English and need help with this document, please call the Translating and Interpreting Service on [131 450](tel:131450) and ask the operator to contact the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner on [1300 363 992](tel:1300363992).

This guide is intended to explain the main rules of the Code in an accessible way. It does not reproduce the Code's legal text, and the language has been adapted and simplified to support understanding. The official 'Exposure Draft' of the Code remains the authoritative source.

The Children's Online Privacy Code is currently a draft.

Think of it just like the first version of a speech you rehearse with your parents or carers, or a practice written response you would share with your teacher for feedback at school.

We are still planning what special rules online services should have to follow, but we are showing you what we have brainstormed so far to get your feedback.

The official draft Code is a long document filled with lots of words that relate to the law.

That is why we have worked with a group of young people to help make child-friendly guides that explain the draft Code.

The final Code must be ready by 10 December 2026.



For adults

This short guide is intended to explain the main principles of the Code in an accessible way. It does not reproduce the Code's legal text, and the language has been adapted and simplified to support understanding by children. The official Exposure Draft of the Code remains the authoritative source.



For children and young people

This short guide is here to help you understand the main ideas of the Code. It uses simple words instead of the exact words in the official draft. The official draft is the version that online services must follow.



Tell us what you think of the draft Code!

From **31 March to 5 June 2026** we want to hear from children, young people, parents and carers.

Have your say about the draft Code by heading to www.oaic.gov.au/privacyforkids

Helpful Information!

The Code says a lot about how online services can collect, use, and share your personal information. What this means is:

Online services **collect** your personal information when your personal information is handed over to them and they keep it (think of it like an online library of personal information). This might happen when you first sign up or use an app, game or website.

Online services **use** your personal information when they take the personal information they have collected from you and do things with it to help them, like running the app, game or website, or to note down your interests so that it can show you ads that they know you will like.

Online services **share** your personal information when they give your personal information to another service. This might be for reasons that are to do with the actual online service, like learning how it could improve or it could be to try and get you to buy things.



The draft rules for the Children's Online Privacy Code

Rule #1

Many online services will need to follow the rules in the Code

These include online services:

- that you **use in your daily life**, like messaging apps, games, and education websites, and
- that the **adults in your life use to record and share personal information about you**, like school apps used by teachers to message your parents or apps that parents use to track their babies sleep.

Section 5-7

This is where you can find the rules in the draft Code

Rule #2

To protect your personal information, online services might have to either give everyone better privacy protections or check your age

If the online service is used by both children and adults, the online service can either give adults the same privacy protections as children or check your age. Checking your age **will not stop you or limit your use of the online service** but make sure that the online service is taking care of your personal information in the right way.

Section 8

Rule #3

Online services can only collect, use or share the bare minimum amount of personal information they need to run the app, game or website unless you choose differently

Online services can do this by **raising the standard** when it comes to privacy protections and **giving you (and your parent or carer) the control** to change your privacy settings to share more personal information, if that is what you want.

Section 9

Rule #4

Online services need to be fair and take care of your personal information in a way that is best for you

When online services collect, use or share your personal information it must be in your best interests (**meaning it is best for you and fair**).

Section 10-11



Important fact!

This Code is different from the Social Media Age Restrictions, which removed under 16s from age-restricted social media platforms. You can learn more about that at www.oaic.gov.au/smma.

The Children's Online Privacy Code does not delay children from engaging in the digital world. Rather, the Code protects children when using online services at any age, by strengthening the privacy protections of their personal information.

Rule #5

Online services need to ask for your permission to do things with your personal information

If you are 15-years-old or older

You can make your own decisions about your personal information online. Online services can go to you directly to ask for your permission.

If you are under 15-years-old

Your parent or carer will need to be asked for permission to make decisions about your personal information online.

Section 13

Rule #6

If you are under 15-years-old, in some situations online services will need to involve both you and your parent or carer, to get permission to change your privacy protections

If you choose to allow an online service to:

- use or share your personal information for some reason beyond the bare minimum to run the app, game, or website (like to show you ads that have been specially picked, just for you), or
- collect sensitive information (which is personal information that needs to be treated extra carefully, like your health information).

The online service **will ask you first** to give permission to share your personal information so that you get to have a say (part of getting that permission means that the online service must give you an explanation of what the change means so that you understand what will happen and why).

The online service will **then ask your parent or carer** if they give permission, either 'yes' or 'no', because they have ultimate say. Only once your parent or carer has said 'yes' can permission be granted and the change to your privacy protections happen.

Section 20



Rule #7

Online services must not trick you into giving them permission

Online services must not deliberately trick, confuse, or pressure you into giving permission to collect, use, or share your personal information. This means online services cannot do things like be sneaky and hide buttons that give you a choice to say 'no'.

Section 21

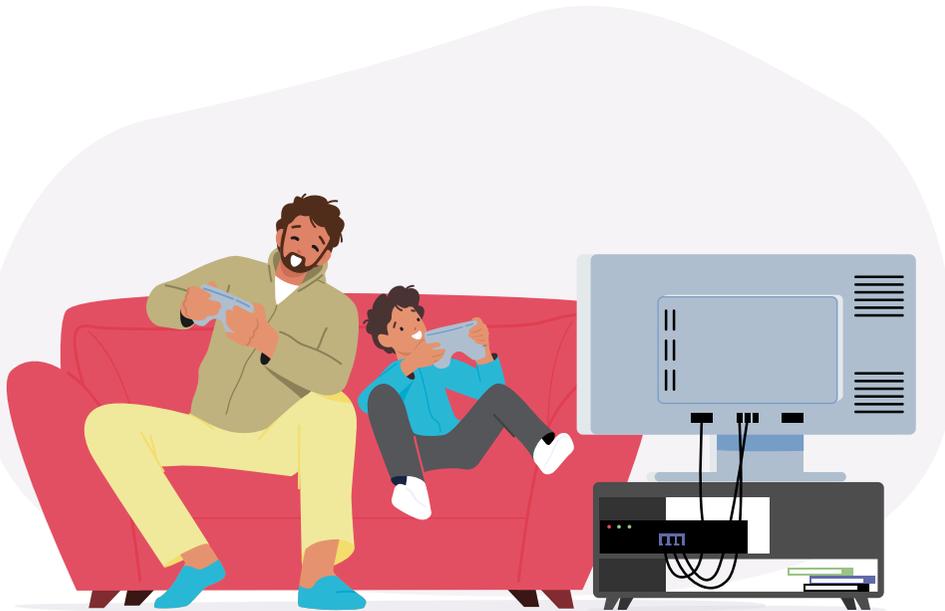
Rule #8

Online services must make sure that the permission they get from you (or your parent or carer) is 'good' permission

When online services ask for your permission to collect, use, or share your personal information online, they need to tick the 6 boxes below for that permission to be 'good' permission:

- ✓ without pressuring, tricking or confusing you into making a decision (**voluntary**),
- ✓ give you all the right information you need to make a decision (**informed**),
- ✓ ask you often and at the right times because permission does not last forever (**current**),
- ✓ make sure that you know that you are allowed to take back your permission at any point (**be withdrawn**),
- ✓ make sure that you understand 'why' they need your personal information and 'what for' (**specific**),
- ✓ make sure that you have clearly agreed and given your permission with a solid 'yes', because when you say 'maybe' or nothing at all, it is a 'no' (**unambiguous**).

Section 14–19



Rule #9

Online services must make sure you can access and understand what they do with your personal information

Online services must make sure that their **privacy policies** and any notices that ‘pop up’ that tell you what they do with your personal information, is **child-friendly**. That means they need to be easy to read and understood by you (no big words!).

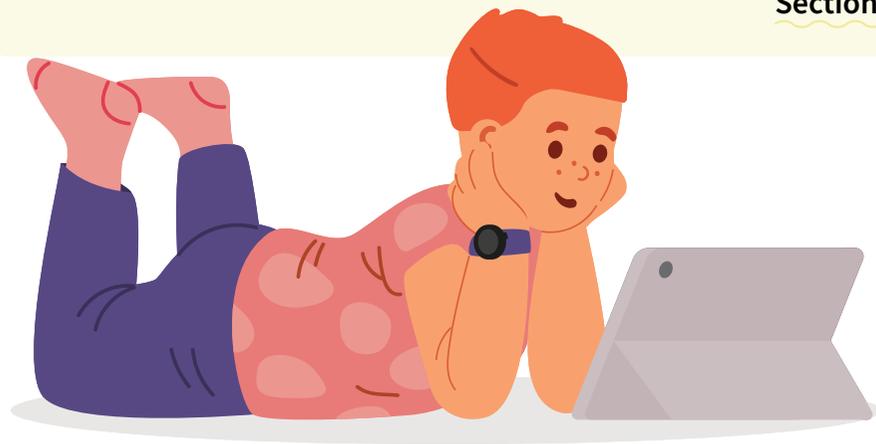
Online services must make it easy for you to **find the instructions** on the app, game or website that **tell you how to ask for what personal information the online service knows about you**.

Online services must make it easy for you and your parent or carer to **ask for what personal information is known about you and what the app, game, or website does with it**.

Section 23–28

Online services must make it easy for you to ask them to **stop showing you ads** that have been specially picked, just for you and the main goal of the ads are to get you to buy things.

Section 29



Rule #10

Online services must answer you within 30 days (in most cases) if you ask to see, change or delete your personal information

Online services must respond to you (or your parent or carer) within a fair amount of time, if you ask to see, change or delete what personal information they know about you.

If it takes longer than 30 days, the online service must explain to you why it is going to take longer.

Section 30–31

Rule #11

Online services must delete your personal information if you (or your parent or carer) ask for it to be permanently deleted

You can now ask an online service to **permanently delete** the personal information they have collected about you, and they have to do it unless there is a good reason they cannot (like a law says that they can't).

Section 32

Rule #12

Online services must tell you when your physical location can be seen by other people and parental controls are being used

Online services must tell you if your parent or carer can see your physical location or can see or control the activity that you are doing when using an app, game or website.

Online services must also tell you if and when another user of the same online service can see where your physical location is by tracking your device (like your phone, tablet or smart watch).

Section 33

Rule #13

Online services must make it easy for you to ask questions and complain if there is a problem with your personal information

Online services must give you all the information you need in a way that you can understand, so that if you have questions or something goes wrong in how they have collected, used, or shared your personal information, you feel like you can easily ask a question or tell the online service that there is a problem (this is called, 'making a complaint').

Section 35–36

Rule #14

Online services will need to think and plan before they act

Online services will need to plan (*stop, think, write and record*) how they will protect children's online privacy, if they are creating a new service or changing their existing service.

The Code will also make sure that the people who work for online services, who look at your personal information often, are trained to protect children's online privacy.

Section 38–40



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