

# Spooky Content



This lesson can take up to 45 minutes. It can be broken down into smaller lessons or extended as required.

Ages 7-9

The lesson has been designed for learners aged 7-9. The “checkpoints” offer differentiation strategies to scale learning as required.

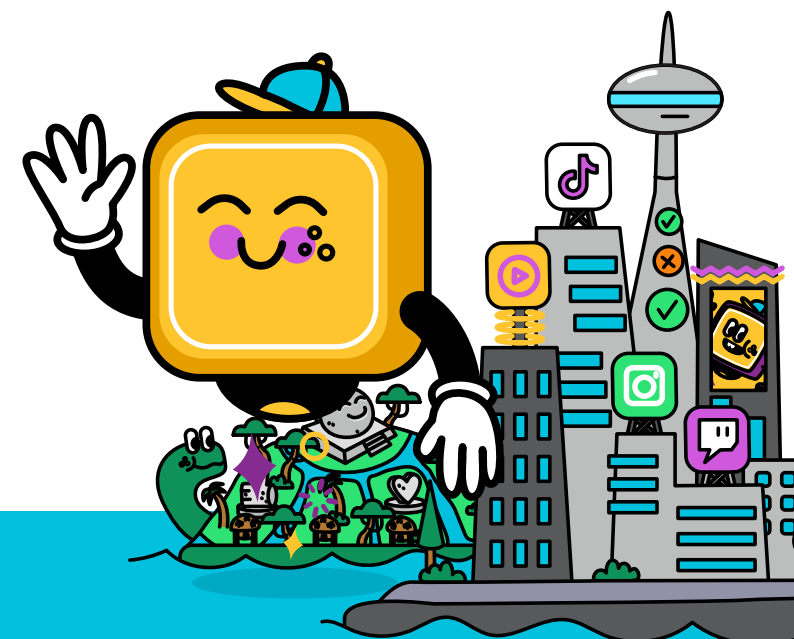


## This lesson is part of the eSmart Digital Licence program

By completing just four engaging lessons, including this one, your class can earn their eSmart Digital Licences—signalling their understanding of safe and responsible online behaviour. Start now and guide your learners toward becoming confident and positive digital citizens.



Learn more about the program  
[be.esmart.org.au/dl/overview](https://be.esmart.org.au/dl/overview)



## Overview

"Spooky Content" is full of pumpkin spice and online content advice! Geared towards ghouls and ghosts, in this activity students will create a collage of ingredients that guard against spooky online content.

Download the "Spooky Content Activity Pack", or let students go rogue with arts and crafts to create their special protection brew!

This activity is relevant for:

- Introducing students to core media and digital literacy concepts, such as the variety of online content and curation strategies.
- Defining protective strategies in response to problematic online content.
- Students who enjoy creative activities and would benefit from traditional arts to express themselves.

## Learning intentions

By completing this activity, our class intends to:

- Identify a range of physical and emotional responses that may be experienced in relation to online content.
- Explore a range of protective measures that seek to both avoid and find support in relation to problematic online content.

## Activity setup

Download and print the "Spooky Content Activity Pack" from the Resources section.

Each student should have access to one pack.

Ensure that students have access to glue sticks, scissors (if age-appropriate), and coloured pens or pencils.



1

## Thumbs up, thumbs down

As a whole class discussion, introduce students to the idea that feelings can be linked to the things that we watch or listen to.

Ask students to give a thumbs up (positive) or thumbs down (negative) in terms of how the following scenarios might make them feel.

Use the “Educator Tip Sheet” resource to help provide supporting suggestions and advice in relation to each of the scenarios.

Discussion prompts include:

- What emotion they might be feeling in each scenario
- Where they might feel it (i.e. by a smile on their face, laughing until tummy hurts, maybe feeling sick in the tummy if they are anxious).
- What they might do to help calm difficult emotions.

### Scenarios:

- Watch a funny cartoon with silly characters who make you laugh.
- Play a game where you can't make it to the next level.
- Watch a movie where a monster jumps out and makes a loud roar.
- Listen to a story about a lost puppy who can't find his way home.
- Watch a show where superheroes save the day.
- Listen to soft music that makes you feel relaxed and sleepy.
- Watch a video where a person talks for a long time without showing any pictures or doing anything fun.

2

## Cut and collage

Next, direct students to the “Spooky Content Activity Pack”. Ask students to cut out and colour the potion ingredients that would be helpful in protecting them against online content that might be difficult, or raise negative emotions.

Once students have cut and chosen their answers, hold a class check-in discussion to make sure that the potions are on the right track. A recommended answers key is provided in the “Spooky Content: Educator Tips” in the Resources section.

Then, ask students to glue their potion ingredients onto the cauldron template provided. Note: this activity can be completed as a whole group poster, with each student sticking ingredients for the protection potion onto a large sheet of poster paper.

3

## Exit pass: Show and tell

Hold a whole class discussion to allow students to present their magic potions.

Ask students to explain the ingredients they have chosen for their poster, and how these ingredients might assist in warding off spooky content in the future.

## Australian Curriculum (Version 9.0)

### Foundation: General Capabilities

#### Digital Literacy

#### Manage Online Safety:

- Level 1: Use online tools that are safe or only under direct supervision, seeking help from trusted adults when feeling unsafe.

### Foundation: Health and Physical Education

- AC9HPFP04: Explore how to seek, give or deny permission respectfully when sharing possessions or personal space.

### Foundation: Visual Arts

- AC9AVAFD01: Use play, imagination, arts knowledge, processes and/or skills to discover possibilities and develop ideas.
- AC9AV AFC01: Create arts works that communicate ideas.
- AC9AVAFP01: Share their arts works with audiences.

### Year One: General Capabilities

#### Digital Literacy

#### Manage Online Safety:

Level 2: Use online tools that are age appropriate or only under supervision, seeking help from trusted adults when feeling unsafe.

### Year One: Health and Physical Education

- AC9HP2P04 : Practise strategies they can use when they need to seek, give or deny permission respectfully.

### Year One: Visual Arts

- AC9AVA2D01: Experiment and play with visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials.
- AC9AVA2C01: Use visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials to create artworks.
- AC9AVA2P01: Share artworks and/or visual arts practice in informal settings.

## My Time, Our Place

### Outcome 3: Children and young people have a strong sense of wellbeing.

Children and young people are aware of and develop strategies to support their own mental and physical health, and personal safety.

This is exemplified when children can:

- Identify protective strategies in relation to problematic and/or offensive online content.
- Talk about how others' use of technology impacts on them or makes them feel.

## CASEL Framework

Responsible decision-making: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behaviour and social interactions across diverse situations. For example:

- Learning how to make a reasoned judgment after analysing information, data, and facts.
- Recognising how critical thinking skills are useful both inside and outside of school.



### Spooky Content: What is It?

Streaming services often rely on advertising revenue to support their platforms. Advertisers target specific demographics, including children, based on their browsing history, preferences, and viewing habits. This targeted advertising can sometimes lead to the promotion of content that may not be suitable for children. For the purpose of this activity, we have called this “spooky content”.

### Online Advertising and Algorithms

Advertisements promoting children's movies or games may appear innocent at first glance, but could lead to inappropriate content if clicked. This can lure children into accessing content that is beyond their age appropriateness. Furthermore, streaming platforms may promote shows or movies that are tied to merchandise or toys aimed at children. While not necessarily inappropriate, these promotions can influence children to watch content that may not align with their developmental stage or parental guidelines.

Streaming services use algorithms to recommend content based on viewers' past preferences and viewing history. While algorithms aim to personalise the viewing experience, they can inadvertently suggest inappropriate content. If a child has watched a mildly scary or intense show, the algorithm might suggest more intense or age-inappropriate content in the same genre.

Algorithms often prioritise popular or trending content. If a particular show or movie gains popularity among children, the algorithm may push similar content to capitalise on this trend, even if it contains themes or scenes that are not suitable for all young viewers.



### Student Experiences

Between March and June 2024, we conducted workshops with nearly 350 primary school students across Australia to explore their experiences with technology and online spaces. In the age group 4-6 years old, the majority reported:

- Using devices without adult supervision.
- Encountering frightening content on platforms like YouTube and finding ways to navigate and self-regulate in response.
- Having mixed concerns about hacking, nightmares, mean comments, and privacy issues, along with recognising the fun and exciting aspects of being online, such as playing games, messaging, and social media use.

These insights highlight the importance of developing strategies to help students manage online spaces safely and confidently.

### Recommendation 1: Talk to a Trusted Adult

Children may not always understand what they see online, or may stumble upon content that is not suitable for their age. Encouraging them to talk to a trusted adult ensures they have support in processing and understanding what they encounter. This rule also emphasises the importance of maintaining open communication with adults who can guide them in navigating the online world safely.

Trusted adults can be family, educators, or other caregivers who can help explain things in a way that is appropriate and comforting for the child. Encourage students to share what they encounter online and ask questions.



### **Recommendation 2: Establish Safe Apps and Websites**

Children should be guided to use websites and apps that are safe and age-appropriate. Safe websites are those that have content suitable for children their age and are designed with their safety and well-being in mind.

Educators and caregivers can help students identify safe websites by introducing them to educational platforms, games, or websites specifically designed for young children. These sites often have parental controls, content filters, and child-friendly interfaces that minimise exposure to inappropriate content. However, students can also avoid inappropriate content by investigating the source, reading reviews, or checking ratings.

The eSafety Guide, provided by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, is an excellent place to start investigating the appropriateness of apps and websites.

### **Recommendation 3: Set Time Limits**

Setting time limits helps children manage their screen time effectively and reduces the risk of overexposure to online content. It encourages healthy habits and ensures that children have balanced activities throughout their day. Emphasise the importance of balancing screen time with other activities such as outdoor play, reading, or hobbies.

Time limits are even more effective when students are able to set their own goals and screen time agreements. Encourage activities where students can self-assess, evaluate their behaviours, and create a plan for their own screen time management.





### **Recommendation 4: Block and Report Strategies**

Ensure that children are aware that if they come across something inappropriate or upsetting online, they can block the content, report it to the platform, and report it to a trusted adult. Reporting helps ensure their online environment remains safe for themselves and others.

Our advice is that students should know how to block and report inappropriate content or behaviours to whichever platform or service they are using. This activity could be positioned as a compulsory precursor to allowing students to use platforms or devices in the first instance.

The eSafety Guide, developed by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, provides guidance on how to report and block content on a range of platforms.

### **Recommendation 5: Close or Skip Ads**

Students may inadvertently click on ads or pop-ups that lead to unfamiliar or inappropriate content. Furthermore, the longer that ads are left to play, the more impact they may have on later receiving more ads on similar topics or themes. Students should be taught to close or skip ads at the earliest opportunity; usually, via an "X" or close button at the top right of the ad, or via a "Skip Ad" button on the bottom right.

It's important to note that these close or skip functions may not appear immediately; in some cases, students may have to wait up to 15-30 seconds for these functions to appear. In the meantime, they may need to close the app or website entirely, or switch to a different video, if the ad persists.





### **Recommendation 6: Stay in Public Areas**

Children should be encouraged to use digital devices in public areas of the home or school, where adults can supervise their online activities. Public areas provide a safer environment and reduce the risk of accessing inappropriate content without oversight.

In educational settings, educators can create designated areas in the classroom or school library where children can use devices under supervision. This rule promotes safety by ensuring that online activities are conducted openly, where adults can intervene if needed.

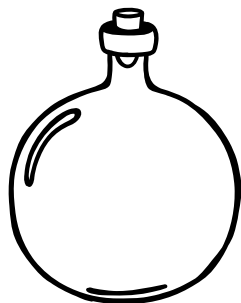
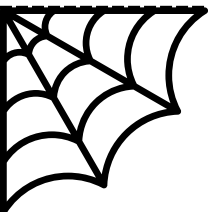
### **Recommendation 7: Ask Before Clicking**

Children should develop the habit of asking a trusted adult for permission before clicking on unfamiliar links, downloading apps, or accessing new websites. This helps them avoid accidental exposure to inappropriate or harmful content.

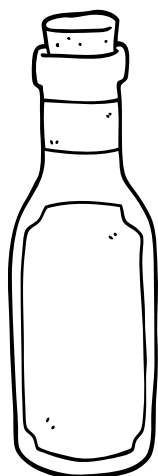
Educators can role-play scenarios where children encounter new links or requests for downloads and teach them to pause and seek guidance from an adult before proceeding. This rule encourages critical thinking and reinforces the importance of seeking permission in digital interactions.

## Create your own potion!

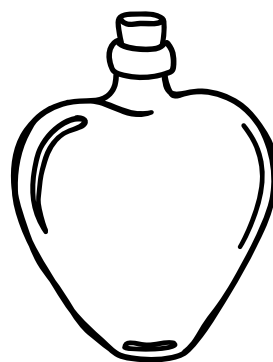
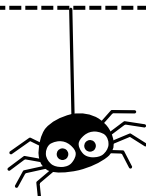
Cut out and colour the ingredients that you will use to keep yourself safe against tricky and spooky things online.



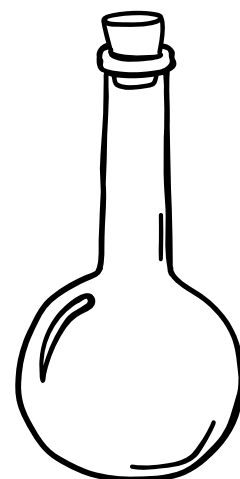
Talk to a  
Trusted Adult



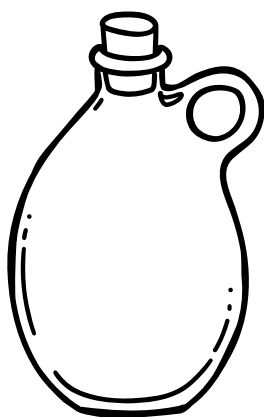
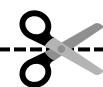
Use Safe  
Websites



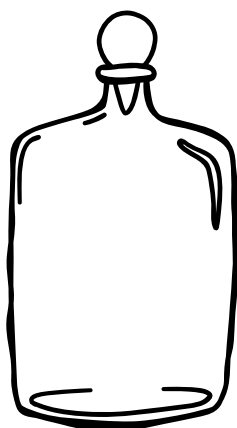
Set Time  
Limits



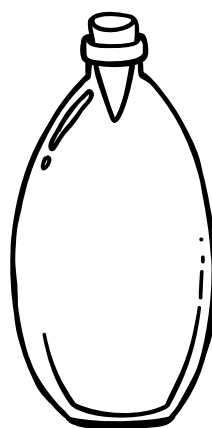
Block and  
Report



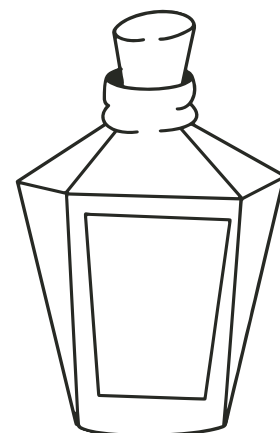
Use Parental  
Controls



Close or Skip  
Ads



Stay in Public  
Areas



Ask Before  
Clicking

## Put your potion ingredients into the cauldron!

Glue the potion ingredients that you will use to keep yourself safe against tricky and spooky things online.



**My potion is called:**



Paste your potions here



**This potion will help to protect me online by:**

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