Talking to AI Safely and Effectively

1. What is AI good for?

AI can help you do a lot of useful things, like:

- Brainstorming ideas
- Explaining hard topics
- Practising questions
- Organising notes
- Comparing different viewpoints
- Improving a first draft
- Making study plans

Just keep in mind that AI can make mistakes, sound confident when it is wrong, or agree with you too quickly.

2. How to use AI safely

Step 1: Decide what you need

Before you type anything, ask yourself:

- Am I looking for information?
- Am I asking for ideas?
- Am I trying to understand a topic?
- Am I upset and looking for support?
- Is this something a real person should help me with?

Step 2: Share only what is needed

Keep general details in your chat and leave out private info. Do not share:

- Your full name
- Your address or exact location
- Passwords
- School login details
- Private messages
- Medical records
- Another person's private info
- Photos or details that could identify someone

Step 3: Write a clear prompt

Include a few basic parts when you write a prompt:

- The task
- Helpful context

- The kind of answer you want
- Any limits
- A request for what the AI is uncertain about

Example prompt: "Explain this topic in simple language for a high school student. Give me two examples, point out anything uncertain, and do not assume my first idea is right."

Step 4: Check the response

Before trusting a reply, ask yourself:

- Did the AI give reasons?
- Did it mention uncertainty?
- Could the info be outdated?
- Did it agree with me too fast?
- Did it leave out another point of view?
- Can I check this with a teacher, trusted adult, book, or reliable source?

Step 5: Decide what to do next

Pick what makes sense for your next step:

- Use the answer as a starting point
- Ask a follow-up question
- Check another source
- Rewrite the prompt
- Stop the chat
- Talk to a real person

3. Casual AI conversation

Casual chats with AI can include:

- Asking for a joke
- Brainstorming a story
- Practising a language
- Asking for recipe ideas
- Getting help with a hobby
- Exploring a school topic

Even in casual chats, leave out private info. AI is not a friend, therapist, doctor, or trusted adult.

4. When is it time to contact a real person?

Reach out to a real person when:

- You feel unsafe
- Someone is threatening or hurting you

- You are thinking about hurting yourself
- You are worried someone else might be in danger
- You need medical or legal help
- You are being bullied or pressured
- Someone is asking you to keep a harmful secret
- The situation feels too heavy to handle on your own
- The chat makes you feel more scared, dependent, or mixed up

Simple rule: If the situation affects your safety, health, rights, or immediate wellbeing, talk to a real person.

5. Who you can contact

At school	At home	In the community
- Teacher - Tutor - School counsellor - Head of year - School nurse	- Parent or carer - Older sibling - Relative - Trusted family friend	- Doctor - Youth worker - Counsellor - Social worker - Local support service

Urgent Care:

- Lifeline Australia. Call 13 11 14, text 0477 13 11 14, or use their online chat for 24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention.
- Suicide Call Back Service. Call 1300 659 467 for 24/7 professional phone and online counselling for anyone affected by suicide.
- Beyond Blue. Call 1300 22 4636 or chat online 24/7 for support with anxiety, depression, and everyday mental health challenges.
- 13YARN. Call 13 92 76 for a 24/7 confidential crisis line run by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Kids Helpline. Call 1800 55 1800 or chat online 24/7 for free counselling for young people aged 5 to 25.
- headspace. Call 1800 650 890 or use eheadspace webchat (9:00 am to 1:00 am daily) for youth mental health support for ages 12 to 25.
- MensLine Australia. Call 1300 78 99 78 for 24/7 telephone and online counselling tailored for men.
- QLife. Call 1800 184 527 or chat online (3:00 pm to midnight daily) for anonymous LGBTIQ+ peer support and referrals.
- 1800RESPECT. Call 1800 737 732 or text 0458 737 732 for 24/7 support for anyone impacted by domestic, family, or sexual violence.

6. Example situations

Example 1: "I want help planning an essay"

1. **What AI might help with:** Brainstorming angles, making an outline, or explaining a concept so you can plan your own draft.
2. **What AI should not handle alone:** Writing the whole assignment for you or making up sources you do not check.
3. **Who to contact:** Your teacher or tutor if you get stuck on the topic or instructions.

Example 2: "I feel lonely tonight"

1. **What AI might help with:** Giving you a neutral writing prompt or a low-stakes distraction like a game or hobby idea, if you keep it light and do not treat it like a person.
2. **What AI should not handle alone:** Being your emotional support, pretending to care about you, or replacing real connection.
3. **Who to contact:** A friend, family member, school counsellor, or trusted adult.

Example 3: "Someone is threatening me online"

1. **What AI might help with:** Helping you sort out what happened in plain words so you can explain it clearly to someone who can help.
2. **What AI should not handle alone:** Deciding how to handle threats, keeping secrets about abuse, or protecting your safety.
3. **Who to contact:** A parent or carer, school staff, trusted adult, or police/emergency services if you are in danger.

Example 4: "I think I may hurt myself"

1. **What AI might help with:** Nothing when you are in distress. You should close the chat and get real support.
2. **What AI should not handle alone:** Any self-harm thoughts, crisis moments, or safety planning.
3. **Who to contact:** A parent or carer, doctor, school counsellor, crisis support service, or emergency services right away.

Example 5: "The chatbot told me to keep this secret"

1. **What AI might help with:** Nothing. Do not follow a chatbot telling you to hide things from people who care about you.
2. **What AI should not handle alone:** Telling you what to hide, pulling you away from real people, or acting like a secret confidant.
3. **Who to contact:** A parent or carer, teacher, school counsellor, or another trusted adult.

7. Safe prompts you can copy

- "Explain this without assuming I am right."
- "Give me two different viewpoints."
- "Tell me what you are uncertain about."
- "Ask me one question at a time."
- "Help me organise my thoughts, but do not diagnose me."

- "Help me prepare what I want to say to a teacher or trusted adult."
- "Do not encourage secrecy or dependence."

8. Final checklist

- ☐ I shared only what was needed.
- ☐ I did not include private information.
- ☐ I checked whether the answer could be wrong.
- ☐ I asked for another viewpoint.
- ☐ I kept my own judgment.
- ☐ I know who I can contact for real support.
- ☐ I will reach out when the situation is serious.