

The DIY Guide: Developing User Agreements

Student user agreements can be an important building block of online safety in schools and kura.

Netsafe has created templates that can be found in this kete. However, we recommend adapting our templates to suit the specific needs of your school and community. Since all schools and kura are unique, there is no “one size fits all” agreement. Many schools find it helpful to unpack or co-construct the agreement with students.

This brief guide will step you through creating agreements for your school that engage leadership, staff, students and the parent/whānau community.

Why customise the agreements?

- Your school’s values will be reflected in the final agreement – making it relatable for your students
- If you unpack or co-construct the agreement with your students, it will encourage their personal investment
- By creating custom agreements together, you are creating opportunities for discussion and learning about online safety.

There are five sections:

1. Link the overview to your school’s values
2. Outline your school’s commitment
3. Co-creating your students’ commitment
4. Defining how you will manage incidents and support students
5. To sign or not to sign

1. Link the overview to your school's values

The first section of each agreement introduces the purpose of the agreement – for the school and the students to both commit to online safety and digital citizenship.

School leadership may want to customise this section using the school's values, vision or motto. This section sets the tone for the remainder of the agreement.

AN EXAMPLE:

Netsafe's Upper Primary template reads, "When we use digital technologies, we need to know how to keep ourselves safe and make good choices. We can all play our part to make our school a safe and positive place for everyone. At [Insert school], we call this being a good digital citizen."

If your school's values are **Respect, Responsibility, Honesty and Courage** or traditional values through te ao Maori concepts of Manaakitanga, Kaitiakitanga, Whanaungatanga, and Kotahitanga, these could be worked into your new agreement.

When we use digital technologies, we need to know how to keep ourselves safe and uphold our core values of integrity, respect, responsibility, perseverance and co-operation.

By living by our school values online, we all play our part to make our school a safe and positive place for everyone. At our school, we call this being a good digital citizen."

2. Outline your school's commitment

The next section of the agreement outlines what you will do as a school or kura to create a safe and positive online environment. By including this, you are acknowledging that the school also has responsibilities.

Some staff groups might find it useful to hold a short workshop to discuss, understand and participate in creating the components of an online safety programme for your school. This could be structured around a model of:

- **People** – what are we committing to doing?
- **Processes** – what processes will we have in place to keep students safe?
- **Systems** – what technology and systems do we use to manage safety?

AN EXAMPLE:

The school's commitment should:

- Use clear and specific statements
- Add or remove detail from the template to accurately reflect your school's commitment and capability
- Engage any staff involved in ensuring or enforcing elements of the agreement – make sure they are aware and agree to the commitment

3. Co-creating your students' commitment

The third section of the agreement sets out the expectations of digital technology use for your students to follow.

It may also cover:

- How breaking the agreement may need to be enforced
- What to do if a student faces challenges online

The co-creation process creates an important platform for developing a culture of online safety. By building the agreement together, you're avoiding a situation where people who break the commitment say they "didn't realise" or "didn't understand". Instead, you're giving students a chance to contribute to something that affects them directly.

AN EXAMPLE:

How can our school community co-create our student commitment?

There's no one-size-fits-all approach, but here are a few ideas to get the ball rolling.

- Work together with students during lesson time to create a fair agreement that reflects your school's values
- Have the staff and the students present their commitments as drafts to the parent/whānau community to ask for feedback
- Gather feedback from a survey for parents/whānau

4. Defining how you will manage incidents and support students

Your agreement needs to clearly define how students can seek help if they face challenges online.

Depending on how your school or kura generally handles incidents, this may need to be adapted to fit. This section should also keep in mind the age of your student audience; for lower primary, telling a teacher may be all the information you need to provide. Secondary students may need more reassurance about the processes in place.

AN EXAMPLE:

- How will issues be handled?
- Who should issues be referred to?
- What processes are in place to support students resolving online issues?

5. To sign or not to sign

Some schools may want to get students' and parents' signatures as a sign that they understand and accept the agreement.

It's up to your school's leadership to decide if student signatures should be sought.

AN EXAMPLE:

Agreements are often included in enrolment or arrival packs – which can be tricky as students don't always understand what they're signing before being part of the school!

Co-constructed agreements that allow students to engage in the process are generally much more robust than agreements signed without discussion.