

Safety tips & Advice

HOW TO RECOGNISE ONLINE PREDATORS

Young people can spend hours online chatting with friends. Sometimes these friendships can build into, what they think are, "relationships". They can get caught up in something dangerous when their online buddy turns into their boyfriend/girlfriend.

Not everyone they meet online is going to be who they say they are. Their "someone special" can be an adult (or older teenager) posing as a friend with the sole purpose of gaining your child's trust to abuse them.

Grooming is how online predators manipulate children into meeting in real life with their sole goal of having sex with them. Predators will spend weeks, months, and/or possibly years "grooming" their victims before asking them to meet in real life.

Their goal is to make their potential victims feel loved and comfortable, by providing affection, attention, kindness and/or sending gifts. They will be up-to-date on popular music and hobbies to keep your child's interest. Once they have gained their potential victim's trust, they will slowly start including sexual content to their conversations.

Online predators often follow some of below tricks to entice their victims.

- **Chatting Privately:** If they meet in a chat room they will ask to talk with their victim in a private chat room or by phone/text messaging.
- **Flattery:** Online predators will flatter or give special attention to their victims. They will say they are in love with them or promise they can get them a job as a model.
- **Intimidation:** Once an online predator knows their victim, they can intimidate or threaten them by exposing pictures or telling their parents.
- **Asking for Personal Information:** Asking about their victim's interests such favourite music and movies. This gives them the upper hand when sending gifts. If they are sending gifts the potential victim can become comfortable enough to give out their address.
- **Sympathy:** Predators can pose as other teenagers using sympathy to gain their trust. When teens are at a certain age they feel no one understands them and they search for sympathy, support, or validation online from other teens.

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POLICE MEDIA UNIT

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2 Adelaide Tce
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(08) 9222 1784

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Police.media@police.wa.gov.au



Sex Crime Division

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HOW TO RECOGNISE ONLINE PREDATORS cont'd

Signs to watch out for:

- **Spends more time online:** Children who are being groomed begin to spend more time in chat rooms.
- **Receives phone calls from people you don't know or makes calls to numbers you don't recognise (watch out for long distance calls):** Online predators will try to contact their potential victims to set up meetings. If your kids remembered everything you taught them, they will not give out their phone number. But this will not stop online predators from giving your child their number or have him or her call them collect (which will allow them to get the number with caller id).
- **Receives mail/packages from out-of-state or from names you don't recognise:** Online predators will send letters or gifts to their potential victims. Online predators have sent airline tickets to entice their potential victims to visit them.
- **Becomes withdrawn or secretive:** To gain their potential victim's trust, an online predator will begin to drive a wedge between kids and their friends and family. If your child begins to skip classes or begins to blow off their friends, it could mean they are sneaking off to meet their online "friend" Be especially weary if they begin to quickly turn off the monitor when you walk into the room.

How to Protect Your Children

- **Talk to Your Kids:** Talk to them about online predators and the dangers of the internet.
- **Have the Computer in a common area:** Move the computer from your children's bedroom to the family room or an area where you have access to monitor their internet usage.
- **Monitor the Amount of Time They Spend Online:** Have a set time limit your kids can use the computer. If they begin spending more time online (especially at night) it can mean that there is a problem. If your kids begin to complain, don't give in because it is your job to protect them from online predators.
- **Continue Educating Yourself:** Do research and continue reading about the potential dangers that are out there.

Further safety tips can be found at the Australian Communication and Media Authority (ACMA) website at <http://www.cybersmart.gov.au> or the ThinkUKnow website produced by the Australian Federal Police in conjunction with Microsoft at <http://www.thinkuknow.org.au>



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