

Safe Surfing Advice

The internet is a great place to chat to friends, show all your photos and have fun, but it's important to know how to stay safe too.

If you are setting up a profile on a social networking site such as Facebook, MySpace, Piczo and Bebo, joining a forum, or just chatting on an instant messenger, there are lots of things you can do to stay safe. If you do have a problem, or if someone contacts you that you don't know, it's important to know what to do.

How do I create a safe profile?

When you're online, you won't always know who you're chatting to. Most social networking sites allow you to change the security settings on your profile, so it can only be seen by people that you allow to see it. They also allow you to choose who you are friends with. Here are some tips to help you stay safe:

- Never use your real name
- Never tell anyone any personal things about yourself or your family like your address, phone number, the name of your school
- Instead of posting a photo of you, you could use a picture you like or a photo of your favourite band instead.
- Don't post any photos or videos that you wouldn't be happy for your parents or teacher to see. Once they are up online they can be copied and posted in other places where you can't get rid of them.
- Keep your passwords private and don't tell anyone, not even your best friend.

What else can I do to stay safe?

Once you have registered and set up your profile you can start adding your friends and sending them messages. As long as you are careful online, you can have a lot of fun with your mates.

- Don't add anyone you don't know to your friend list, even if they say they know you. If you don't know them, don't add them.
- If someone contacts you or one of your friends with weird or nasty messages, don't reply to them but do save the messages. Tell someone you trust such as a parent as soon as possible and show them what you have been sent.
- If you are writing a blog, be careful what you write in it. Don't give away too many details about yourself.
- Don't arrange to meet someone that you have met online. Some people lie online may not be who they say they are.
- If you are contacted by someone that you are unsure of on a forum, contact the forum administrator.
- Avoid sites that are meant for adults.

Is it ok to meet someone I have chatted to online?

It is not a good idea to arrange to meet people that you have chatted to online, as you can never be sure if they are who they say they are. If you do decide to meet up with them, tell someone you trust, such as a parent, that you want to do this. Arrange to meet in a public place and take a trusted adult with you.

What about staying safe when I'm using my mobile?

- Keep your phone with you at all times. If you are worried about someone taking it at school or if you are out, leave it at home.
- Only give your mobile number to your friends and people that you trust.
- Don't lend your phone to someone you don't know or trust, or put it in a place where other people could get hold of it.
- Most phones allow you to lock your phone with a PIN code. If you don't have the code you can't unlock it, so if anyone steals your phone they won't be able to use it.
- If someone is pressuring you into giving them your number, tell someone about it such as a teacher or a parent.

If you are worried about anything to do with [staying safe online](#) you can call us to talk about what's wrong.

Extra links

thinkuknow has the latest information on the sites you like to visit, mobiles and new technology. Find out what's good, what's not and what you can do about it. Visit www.thinkuknow.co.uk.

chatdanger is a website about the potential dangers on interactive services online like chat, IM, online games, email and on mobiles. It includes advice about how to use them safely. Visit www.chatdanger.com.