

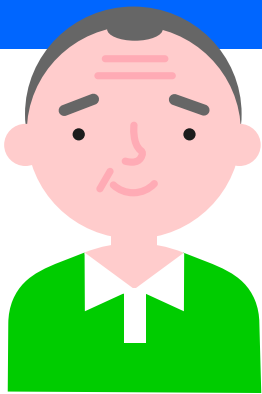
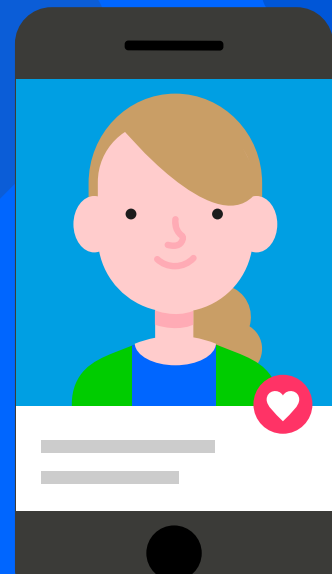
Teens and online dating

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Advice and support for parents

For young people dating online isn't just about using dating apps - it's about how relationships develop on social media and through private messaging.

Here are ten tips to equip teens with the tools they need to make safer choices about who they interact with romantically online.



Equip teens with tools to keep their identity safe

Keeping certain personal information private such as their location, address and where they attend school or college is important. **Using the right privacy settings** across all their social accounts and turning off locations services, can help them stay on top of what information is available for everyone to see.

TIP: Doing a search of their name could be a simple way of checking out what information is available about them.



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Discuss the potential risks of managing romantic relationships online

Not everyone they meet online will have the right intentions, so it's important to discuss the risk surrounding online dating such as online grooming and also what signs to look out for to avoid putting themselves in unsafe situations.

Also, **empower them** to say 'no' or shut down conversations when they feel uncomfortable.

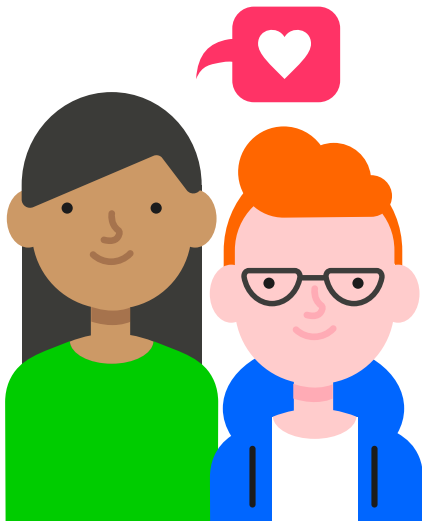
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Build up their awareness of topics they may come across

Prepare them by talking about a range of topics they may be exposed to while dating online like trust, sex, intimacy. This will help ensure they stay balanced when coming across things that may be incorrect or lead them to believe something that isn't true.



Talk about healthy and unhealthy relationships

Talk to them about how they approach dating and relationships and how to create a healthy and fulfilling one. Advise them that these usually require more than a swipe:

- **Discuss tech dangers** - sometimes teens are tempted to [send nude photos](#) and unfortunately, there have been cases where these pictures have become public.
- **Make sure they understand they have the right to say no** and that anyone who cares about them should respect that.
- **They can also use an app like [Zipit from Childline](#)** – the Zipit app is designed to help teens on how to respond to someone if they're sending inappropriate messages – such as asking them to send nudes.

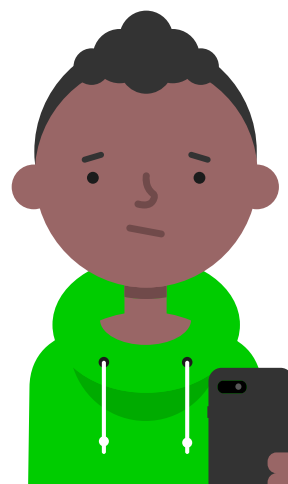


If they are already dating online, have an open conversation

If you find out that your teen is involved in a romantic relationship online, remain calm and **have an open conversation about their experience**. Talk to them about how they met the person - if they have friends in common. They can also try to [reverse image search](#) the pictures using a search engine to see if the person is who they say they are.

If your child is dating offline, talk to them about what dating online looks like

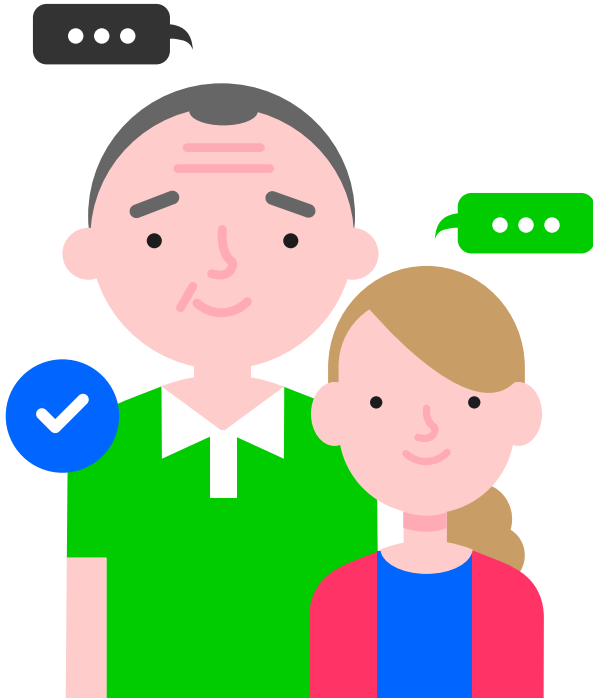
Often teens will develop romantic relationships with someone they've met at school or at a party and then extend their relationship online. In this case, it's important to talk to them about how to do this safely so they **don't share something in the moment that they would later come to regret**. Remind them to only share things they wouldn't feel uncomfortable being seen by friends and family.



Be aware of the minimum age for dating apps and websites they use

The majority of dating apps and sites are designed for **adults** (minimum age of 18). However, parents should be aware that there are dating and 'meet up' apps and sites designed for children as young as 12 - but these can still present risks to young people.





Agree safety rules to protect your child

Help them **learn skills that build up their critical thinking** and **digital resilience** when it comes to exploring dating online:

- Create a space where they feel able to talk openly about their digital life
- Encourage them to share details with you about potential dates – to stay engaged provide your support
- Remind them not to meet up with online friends alone. If they do, it should be with a trusted adult and in a public place
- **Sexual communication with a child is a criminal offence.** Make sure your child knows that adults who want to talk about sex are doing something wrong and should be **reported**



Respect your teen's space

If they're of age and you feel they're emotionally and mentally mature, it's a good idea to give them the space to help them develop their independence. Obviously, if they are involved in an unhealthy relationship then these rules don't apply. **Understanding and listening to their perspective might help you express if you have concerns.**



Online relationships should supplement and not replace, their face-to-face relationship

You should regularly check in with your teen to ensure they have a **healthy balance between spending time online and offline**. You could also remind your child of ways to connect with their peers offline – such as sport, dance and drama classes or other social activities.



If you're worried about someone your child is in contact with online, it's important to report these concerns to NCA-CEOP. Make sure your child also knows how and when to report – you can find more information by visiting www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/.

For more advice visit Internetmatters.org/

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