SAFETY

# Safe Online Talk

grades 6-8

## Lesson Plan

**Estimated time:** 45 minutes

### Essential Question: How should you handle inappropriate online talk?

## Learning Overview and Objectives

*Overview:* While recognizing the benefits of online talk and messaging, students consider scenarios in which they might feel uncomfortable or encounter inappropriate talk or behavior on the Internet. They find out how to recognize online predators, and learn safety rules to apply online.

As a class, students discuss what online predators are and how they try to gain kids' trust. Through the **Warning Signs Student Handout** students learn to recognize risky situations and respond to communications that make them feel uncomfortable. Using the **Internet Traffic Light Student Handout**, students then work in groups to rate the danger level of several online scenarios. They complete the lesson by learning a set of safety rules for interacting with others on the Internet.

**objectives**

*Students will:*

- Describe positive aspects of online talking and messaging
- Identify situations in which flirting and inappropriate talk is risky
- Learn about online predators and how they gain kids' trust
- Understand rules for safe online talk and messaging and feel empowered to deal with online predators

## Materials and Preparation

*Materials*

- **Warning Signs Student Handout**
- **Internet Traffic Light Student Handout**
- **Internet Traffic Light Student Handout – Teacher Version**
- Half-size sheets of paper, three for every student
- Green, yellow, and red markers or colored pencils, one set for each group of four to five students

*Preparation*

- Copy the **Warning Signs Student Handout**, one for every student
- Copy the **Internet Traffic Light Student Handout**, one for every student
- Review the **Internet Traffic Light Student Handout – Teacher Version** and be prepared to guide students through the activity

*Parent Resources*

- Send home the **Safe Online Talk Parent Tip Sheet**


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## Key Vocabulary

- **Inappropriate**: Not proper; not okay
- **Risky**: Possibly dangerous
- **Online Predator**: An adult who stalks kids or teens on the Internet, and tries to draw them into inappropriate talk or actions
- **Warning Signs**: Signs that warn drivers of dangers on the road; or anything that warns you of danger ahead

## teaching plans

### Introduce

**ASK** *How would you handle it if someone walked up to you on the street and started making crude or sexual comments?* (Students should respond that they would walk away, and get help if they felt threatened.)

**ASK** *How would you handle it if someone tried to flirt with you on the street?* (Students may respond that it depends whether they know the person or not. They may also say it depends on whether the person is someone their own age or much older.)

**EXPLAIN** to students that the same kinds of things happen when they are online. Sometimes it's obvious that what a person is saying online is wrong and may be dangerous. Sometimes people flirt online, and then it isn't always so obvious.

**REVIEW** the Key Vocabulary words **inappropriate** and **risky**.

**DISCUSS** with students how flirting is normal among middle school kids. When it is done face to face, it might feel comfortable. But it can quickly become uncomfortable online, even when it's with kids you know. That's because kids sometimes say things online to one another that they might not say if they were face to face. Let students know that if it feels uncomfortable, they should ignore the comments or tell a friend or adult they trust about it.

**EXPLAIN** to students that when they talk online with people they don't know in person, flirting and other sexual talk is **risky** behavior. Point out that, for one thing, the people they are talking with online might not be who they think they are. They might be grownups, not kids, for instance. If the person they're communicating with online says anything **inappropriate**, and that person is older than they are, students should stop talking right away, and then tell a parent, teacher, or other trusted adult.

**POINT OUT** to students that what they learn in this lesson will help them evaluate when online communication becomes **inappropriate** and **risky**.

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## Teach 1: Warning Signs

**DISTRIBUTE** the **Warning Signs Student Handout**.

**REVIEW** the Key Vocabulary **online predators** and **warning signs**. Talk to students about the idea that **online predators** often try to get kids to trust them before they begin any inappropriate talk or actions.

**REVIEW** with students the list that appears in their handouts of methods predators use to try to win their trust. Explain to students that these are **warning signs**. Students can use them to stay away from online predators, just as drivers use warning signs to avoid danger on the road.

• **P**retend to be your age and pretend to have similar interests

• **R**oam around sites that a lot of kids use

• **E**ncourage you to talk about anything you want

• **D**eny their real identities

• **A**sk you to keep the friendship secret

• **T**ry to get you to give them personal information

• **O**bject if you want to tell someone else about your relationship

• **R**equest personal information from you

• **S**end pictures, and ask you to do the same

**EXPLAIN** that they will be reading stories of two children who met people online who made them feel **uncomfortable**. They have to decide whether these people might be **online predators**. To do that, they need to recognize **warning signs**.

**SELECT** volunteers to read aloud the stories of Kaylee and Jason, and have students read along on their handouts.

**ASK** students to share their responses to the questions that follow each story. Use the following points to guide discussion.

*What made Kaylee feel uncomfortable?*

- Students should understand that it was right for Kaylee to feel uncomfortable when someone asked her to send sexual messages over the Internet. Sexual talk with people you know only online is **risky** behavior. (Flirting with people you do not know offline is also **risky**, because it might encourage the person to pursue an offline sexual relationship.)
- Also point out that Kaylee might have assumed KoolDave was her age because he likes the same music that she does. When she realized he was an adult, she felt uncomfortable. Make sure students understand that flirting and sexual activity – even online – between adults and young people is **inappropriate**. Adults who target kids for this kind of communication are considered **online predators**.

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*What made Kaylee feel safe?*

- Students should realize that Kaylee needs to sign off immediately and block any further contact with KoolDave. In the future, she should be aware that adults use this site and others like it, and she should be careful. She should confine her talk to music, and not reveal any personal information.
- Kaylee should also discuss her experience with a trusted adult.

*Is it okay for Jason to give his address? At what point should alarm bells go off in Jason's head?*

- Jason should not give out his offline address to someone he only knows online.
- Like all kids who talk online, Jason should stay alert for people who steer talk and messages toward **inappropriate** topics or behave in any way that feels strange. Even though Jason has only talked with this person about playing the game, a big alarm bell should go off when the person asked him not to tell his parents.

*What are some ways Jason might respond, to stay safe?*

- Jason should stop communicating with the person who asked for his address. If he's careful, Jason can continue playing the game, but he should avoid messaging with anyone he doesn't know offline.
- Jason may also want to tell his parents or a trusted adult about his experience.

**REVISIT** the list you wrote on the board. Ask students which items in the list turned up in Kaylee's and Jason's stories.

**ENCOURAGE** students to share their own stories of feeling uncomfortable while talking or messaging online. Have other students respond to their classmates' stories with suggestions for what actions they might have taken to stay safe online.

## Teach 2: Internet Traffic Light

**ARRANGE** students in groups of four or five.

**DISTRIBUTE** the **Internet Traffic Light Student Handout**, one for each student. Also distribute three sheets of paper for each student and one set of green, yellow, and red markers or pencils for each group.

**FOLLOW** the instructions on the **Internet Traffic Light Student Handout – Teacher Version** to guide students through the group activity and class discussion.

## Wrap Up and Assess

You can use these questions to assess your students' understanding of the lesson objectives.

### ASK

*In what online situations should your alarm bells go off to tell you that you may be at risk?* (When people you know only online flirt with you or talk about sex; when someone you don't know wants to meet you alone or asks you to keep your conversation a secret.)

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*What are some rules for staying safe when talking and messaging online?* (Only do private messaging with family and friends; don't flirt or talk about sex with people you only know online; don't reply to any questions that make you uncomfortable; tell a trusted adult when someone bothers you online; and never plan to meet a person you only know online without taking along a trusted adult.)

**REVIEW** with students the idea that online flirting and sexual talk with people you don't know in person is always **risky** behavior. Remind them that **online predators** use tricks to gain kids' trust. Students should always be aware of the **warning signs**. They can keep online predators out of their lives and be in control of their own online safety.

## Extension Activity

Focus the discussion on the social networking profiles and blogs students may create for themselves. Point out that social networking profiles and blogs are not in and of themselves dangerous but that teens need to be careful how they use them. Challenge students to come up with a "Do" list of how to safely enjoy social networking and blogging and a "Don't" list of risky behaviors to avoid. These lists should be created to avoid unwanted contact with strangers or people they might already know online. They may wish to use the **Internet Safety Rules on their Internet Traffic Light Student Handout** for guidance.

## Homework

Invite students to create "Stay Safe Online!" posters to alert other students who go online. Suggest they refer to their **Warning Signs Student Handout** and Internet Safety Rules, and include one or more of these in their posters. Display posters in the classroom or school hallway.

### Alignment with Standards – National Educational Technology Standards for Students© 2007

(Source: International Society for Technology in Education, 2007)

**2. Communication and Collaboration**

a. interact, collaborate, and publish with peers, experts, or others employing a variety of digital environments and media

b. communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats

**5. Digital Citizenship**

a. advocate and practice safe, legal, and responsible use of information and technology

b. exhibit a positive attitude toward using technology that supports collaboration, learning, and productivity

Common Sense Media is an independent, nonprofit resource that helps families and educators teach kids how to be safe and smart in today's 24/7 media world. Go to www.commonsensemedia.org for thousands of reviews and expert advice.


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