



Essential Question: How should you handle inappropriate online talk?

Learning Overview and Objectives

Overview: While acknowledging the benefits of online talk and messaging, students consider scenarios in which they may feel uncomfortable, or may encounter inappropriate behavior on the Internet. Students first watch a short video in which teens share their rules of the road for connecting with others online. Through a guided class discussion, students then learn strategies for recognizing and responding to risky online interaction. Finally, students work in groups to rate the riskiness of several online scenarios using the **Internet Traffic Light Student Handout**.

objectives

Students will:

- Describe positive aspects of online talking and messaging
- Identify situations in which flirting and chatting become inappropriate and risky
- Understand rules for safe online messaging, and feel empowered to deal with uncomfortable situations when communicating online

Materials and Preparation

Materials

- **Take Three Student Handout**
- **Take Three Student Handout – Teacher Version**
- **Internet Traffic Light Student Handout**
- **Internet Traffic Light Student Handout – Teacher Version**
- **Safe Online Talk Teacher Backgrounder**
- 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

- Download the **Safety Video Vignettes: Safe Online Talk**, preview the video, and be prepared to play it for the class
- Copy the **Take Three Student Handout**, one for every student
- Copy the **Internet Traffic Light Student Handout**, one for every student
- Review the **Take Three Student Handout – Teacher Version**
- Review the **Internet Traffic Light Student Handout – Teacher Version**
- Read the **Safe Online Talk Teacher Backgrounder**

Parent Resources

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



Key Vocabulary

- **Opportunity:** A chance for something to happen
- **Pitfall:** A hidden or unsuspected problem or danger
- **Inappropriate:** Not proper; not okay
- **Risky:** Potentially harmful to one's emotional or physical well-being
- **Harass:** To bother or pressure aggressively

teaching plans

Introduce (5 minutes)

INVITE students to raise their hand if they have ever heard the saying, “Don’t talk to strangers.”

ASK *How might this “rule” change when we communicate online?* (Students’ answers will vary. Guide students to recognize that while the Internet allows people to keep in touch or hang out with friends they already know offline, it also allows people who don’t know each other to interact, debate, share, and collaborate.)

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary term **opportunity**.

POINT OUT that the Internet gives students a wide range of opportunities to connect with or learn from people who may not be in their circle of close friends — whether through games, social network sites, blogs, instant messaging, forums, and so on.

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary terms **pitfall** and **inappropriate**.

EXPLAIN to students that connecting with people online occasionally can have its pitfalls. Therefore, it is important to know how to deal with inappropriate situations if they arise.

Teach 1: Safety Video Vignettes (10 minutes)

DISTRIBUTE the **Take Three Student Handout**, one for each student.

EXPLAIN to students that they are going to watch a video of three teens sharing their experiences about connecting with people online. Students should pay attention to the opportunities and the pitfalls that each of the three teens mentions in the film.

WATCH the **Safety Video Vignettes: Safe Online Talk** as a class.

TELL students to complete the **Take Three Student Handout** with a partner. Meanwhile, project or draw the Take Three graphic organizer on the board for the class to view.

INVITE students to share the opportunities and the pitfalls that Randy, Aseal, and Renee talk about in the video. Fill in the graphic organizer on the board as students discuss their answers.

ASK *Which story do you feel most connected to? Why?* (Students’ answers will vary.)



ASK *What advice did the teens share in the video? Would you add any advice of your own?* (Students may recall the following pieces of advice: end any conversation that starts to make you uncomfortable; remember that you can shut off a device at any time; remember that people are “far away” online, in a sense, so it’s easier to take awkward or annoying moments less personally. Guide students to also consider the supportive roles that friends, parents, and mentors can play in uncomfortable situations.)

ASK *Renee talks about getting a “gut feeling” when she felt something was “off” online. What does that feel like? In which situations have you had that kind of gut feeling?* (Students may share stories about being uncomfortable while chatting online, whether with strangers or with people they know. Others may share stories about detecting online scams or spam.)

Teach 2: What’s Risky? (10 minutes)

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary term **harass**.

POINT OUT that Randy and Aseal use this word in the video to describe awkward or annoying interactions with strangers online. For example, Aseal says he was harassed when during a game someone he didn’t know said some mean things about him.

EXPLAIN that online flirting can sometimes be a less obvious form of harassment.

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

ASK *How would you handle someone trying to flirt with you on the street?* (Students may respond that it depends on 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 situations can happen when they are online. Sometimes it’s obvious that what a person is saying online is wrong and even harmful. Other times people may flirt online, and such warning signs are not always so obvious.

DISCUSS with students how flirting is normal among middle school kids. When flirting is done face to face, it might feel comfortable. However, it quickly can become uncomfortable online, even when it’s with other people that they may know. This is because people sometimes say things online to one another that they might not say if they were face to face.

DEFINE the Key Vocabulary term **risky**.

EXPLAIN to students that when they are talking online with people they don’t know in person, flirting and other sexual talk is risky behavior. There are times when flirting can lead to an ongoing relationship with a stranger that seems deep and personal. But this is tricky, because some people online don’t actually have teens’ best interests in mind. If the person they’re communicating with online says anything inappropriate or sexual, and especially if that person is older than they are, students should stop talking right away and then tell a friend or trusted adult about it.



Note: Some young teens may feel excited about the idea of developing romantic relationships with older teens or young adults online. Consider discussing why this can be emotionally and developmentally harmful. Keep in mind, though, that the latest research does not support the “online predator” myth. Please refer to the **Risky Online Relationships Teacher Backgrounder** for more information.

Teach 3: Internet Traffic Light (15 minutes)

DISTRIBUTE the **Internet Traffic Light Student Handout**, one for each student.

REVIEW the Internet Safety Tips on the handout aloud. Tell students to keep these rules in mind during the following activity.

ARRANGE students in groups of four or five. 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 (5 minutes)

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

ASK *What are some of the opportunities and some of the pitfalls of connecting with people online?* (The Internet gives you the opportunity to connect with people your age that aren’t in your close friend group; with the Internet, you can work together with people in an online game or virtual world; dealing with online harassment can be a pitfall when connecting with strangers online.)

ASK *In what online situations should you get a “gut feeling” that tells 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 you to send them a picture, to meet you alone, or asks you to keep your conversation a secret.)

ASK *What are some rules for staying safe when talking and messaging online?* (Don’t reply to any questions that make you uncomfortable; tell a friend or trusted adult when someone bothers you online; avoid flirting or using sexual language online, especially with people you and your friends do not know in person; never plan a face-to-face meeting with someone you met online without taking along a parent or guardian.)



Extension Activity

Focus the discussion on the social networking profiles and on the blogs that 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 with how they use them. Challenge students to come up with a “DOs” list of how to safely enjoy social networking and blogging and a “DON’Ts” 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 Tips 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 to the opportunities and the pitfalls of online communication. Suggest that they refer to their **Internet Traffic Light Student Handout**, and include one or more of the tips in their posters. Display the posters in the classroom or school hallways.

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