



How to Recognize Grooming

The following is extracted from safekids.com

Sometimes the very reason kids and teens spend time in social-networking sites is to "meet new friends." So it's not always easy for them to tell when "new friends" have bad intentions, and research consistently shows that about 20% of online kids receive unwanted sexual solicitations.

"Grooming" is the way sexual predators get from bad intentions to sexual exploitation. Basically, grooming is manipulation. It's the process paedophiles use to get children they target online to meet with them offline, the simple goal being sex.

Sometimes it involves flattery, sometimes sympathy, other times offers of gifts, money, or modelling jobs. It can also involve all of the above over extended periods of time. That's why it's called "grooming." Experts say the short-term goal of these manipulators is for the victim to feel loved or just comfortable enough to want to meet them in person, and these people know that sometimes takes time. That's ok, they'd say, because groomers tend to have a lot of patience, and they also tend to "work" a number of targets at once, telling all of them that they are "the only one for me." You can imagine how well that can work with kids seeking sympathy, support, or validation online.

That's about as general as we can get, because grooming is carefully individualized. Groomers design what they say as they go along, tailoring their flattery or offers as they learn about the victim. Here are some tactics kids can watch out for:

- "Let's go private." Leave the public chatroom and create a private chat or move to instant-messaging or phone texting
- "Where's your computer in the house?" To see if parents might be around
- "Who's your favourite band? Designer? Film? Questions like these tell the groomer more about you so they know what gifts to offer -e.g., concert tickets; Webcam, software, clothes, CDs)
- "I know someone who can get you a modelling job." Flattery, they figure, will get them everywhere
- "You seem sad. Tell me what's bothering you." the sympathetic ear
- "What's your phone number?" Asking for personal info of any kind usually happens at a later stage, after the target's feeling comfortable with the groomer.
- "If you don't do what I ask, I'll tell your parents OR share your photos online
- "You are the love of my life" What everyone wants to hear

What can you do to protect a child online?

You need to be mindful that part of the fun of being online is communicating and often sites are designed for you to do so with people you don't know. It is important to talk to the child about who they are friends with and how to manage these online relationships.

Not sure where to start? Talk to your child about:

- What sites they use
- The friends they have and how they know them
- How they communicate with these friends
- The type of information they can share

For further help and guidance on all the information mentioned please visit:

**www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents
or
nspcc.org.uk**