



Safe online dating

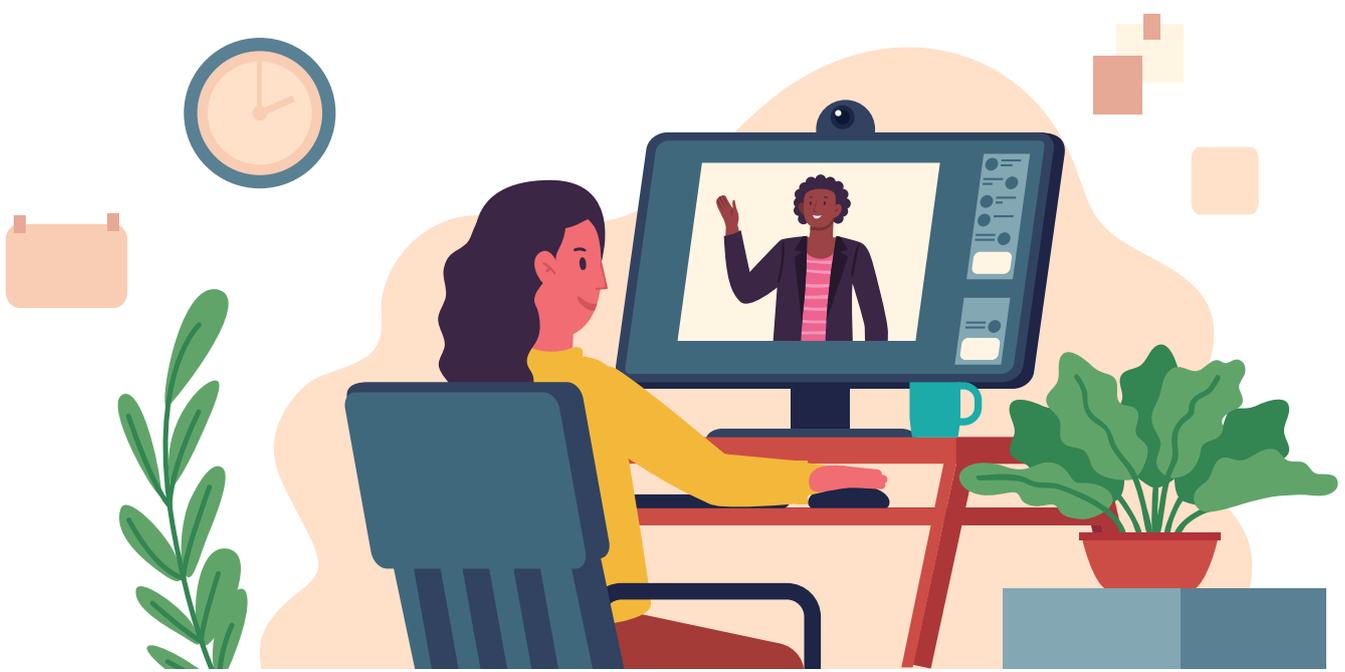
Online dating can be a great way to meet new people and have new dating experiences. However, it comes with many risks. It is important that you are aware of the risks and take action to protect yourself from harm.

It is a good idea to empower yourself with information and strategies when online dating. Take control of your own safety from the start. You are worth it.

Be aware of:

- ▶ **Scammers**, who attempt to deceive you into giving money. They often use the fake story of an emergency, such as a sick family member, to get your sympathy
- ▶ **Cheaters**, who are married or in a relationship and lie about this
- ▶ **Players**, who are only looking for one-night stands
- ▶ **Predators**, who are looking for someone to abuse, or to gain access to your children to groom them for sex
- ▶ **Liars**, who lie on their profile (including about their age, interests and profile picture) and/or lie in person.

Stay alert!



Safety tips before meeting up

1. **Take your time** getting to know the person online by asking lots of questions.
2. **Try to find out more details** about who you are meeting by searching online.
3. **Don't give out your phone number.** Google Voice can provide you with a free phone number which will allow you to keep your personal number private.
4. **Video chat before meeting in person** and check that the person matches who they claim to be.
5. **Keep personal details private until you trust the person.** This includes your address, date of birth, workplace, names of family members and regular places you visit.

Extra precautions

Some people choose to carry extra safety objects as a precaution. These include pepper spray, high-powered whistle, personal alarm to signal others, or safety apps. More information about these options can be found online.



Safety tips when meeting up

- 1. Arrange to meet in a public place** with other people around (for example a café). A day-time meetup can be a good idea. If they change the meeting place at the last minute to somewhere you don't know, cancel the meeting. Never go to the other person's place, or allow them to come to your place, on a first date.
- 2. Tell a trusted friend or family member** who you are meeting, when and where you are meeting and when you expect to be home. Arrange to call them when you arrive home safely. Consider allowing a trusted person to be able to track your phone, in case you don't return home when expected.
- 3. Make sure your phone battery is fully charged** before leaving home, and have emergency numbers saved on your phone.
- 4. Take your own vehicle** (if you can) to meet-ups so you have control over when you leave and can get home safely.
- 5. Stay sober.** Taking drugs and excess alcohol makes you more vulnerable. It is important to be alert and clear-headed when meeting people for the first time. Keep sight of your drinks to make sure they aren't spiked. If you leave a drink to visit the restroom, don't continue drinking it when you return.
- 6. Trust your instincts.** If something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't. It is time to leave.



Remember

You don't owe your date anything. It is okay to say 'no'. It is okay to choose not to see them again.

You do not have to have sex with them, even if they pay for your meal or drinks. It is best to be polite but firm when turning someone down. Never personally insult the other person.

It is common for people to be 'ghosted' with online dating. This is when someone you have been messaging or dating disappears. Try not to take offence; they are probably not the sort of person you would want to stay with long term.

If you fear for your safety

Call the police on 131 444

If you are in immediate danger call police for emergency help on triple zero (000)

For advice on online safety

www.esafety.gov.au

If you start seeing someone, look out for relationship early-warning signs, such as controlling, manipulative, abusive or jealous behaviour. You deserve better.

Refuse to provide sexualised photos of yourself if you are asked. Once shared, they can never be completely deleted, and may be used for threats, extortion, image-based abuse or even superimposed for use in 'morph porn'.

Insist on using a condom to prevent infections.

To report image based abuse

www.esafety.gov.au/report/image-based-abuse

Technology safety for women

www.techsafety.org.au/resources/resources-women (WESNET)



*If you are looking for a relationship,
you deserve safety, love and respect.
Don't settle for less.*



A positive, healthy relationship

It can be helpful to remind yourself that a positive, healthy relationship includes:

- ▶ Having respect for each other
- ▶ Showing care and kindness to each other
- ▶ Being free to see friends and family
- ▶ Each having your own interests
- ▶ Feeling safe in the relationship
- ▶ Enjoying each other's company and having fun together
- ▶ Having a mix of shared time together and time on your own
- ▶ Being free to have a career and control your own money
- ▶ **NO** physical violence.

The **Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC)** is a free 24-hour emergency service providing medical and counselling services for people who have experienced a recent (within 14 days) sexual assault. Counselling for any sexual assault/abuse experienced recently or in the past is also available to people of all genders aged 13 years and above. Call SARC on **(08) 6458 1828** or Freecall **1800 199 888**.