



THE DIGITAL UNIVERSE OF YOUR CHILDREN

— ONLINE TIPS FOR PARENTS —

MEETING STRANGERS

Through the internet, children are now able to communicate with people from all over the world. Online ‘friendships’ can sometimes evolve into real-life friendships. This means your children may be interested in meeting virtual strangers. Depending on the age and maturity of your child, as well as the context of the meeting, you can allow your child to go to a meeting with a stranger together with a friend, instead of a trusted adult. As young people can sometimes be naive and lack the social skills to assess the intentions of the people they meet online, it’s necessary for you to set clear rules about meeting strangers in real life.

SUGGESTED RULES FOR YOUR CHILDREN

- 1** Before meeting someone you’ve met online, make sure you get to know them better first. Ask them about their family, hobbies, etc. If you notice any inconsistencies in their story, or if they seem too good to be true, it’s better not to meet them.
- 2** Tell a trusted adult (parent / family member / caretaker) that you intend to meet this person and give them details about the person’s identity.
- 3** Tell a trusted adult (parent / family member / caretaker) where and when you are meeting and make clear arrangements on when you’ll be back home.
- 4** It is very easy for people to pretend to be someone else online. Therefore, it’s worth doing a background check by using Google search or asking your friends and family.
- 5** Bring a trusted adult or friend to your first meeting, they can always leave you once you have arrived at the location and feel at ease. If your online friend refuses to come to the meeting if an adult or friend is there, then this is usually a sign of trouble.
- 6** Arrange to meet in a public place, not at a private location. Having other people around will make it safer.
- 7** Make sure your phone is charged and keep it on and with you at all times.
- 8** Trust your intuition. If something doesn’t feel right, it may be best to cut the meeting short and contact a trusted adult.
- 9** Meet your new friend(s) a few times under these circumstances until you are certain they really are the person you’ve gotten to know online.

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