

Teens and Tech: Swipe Safety - A Digital Dating Guide

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Please note that the contents of this document should not be regarded as legal advice. The information contained within is relevant as of December 2025.

Using apps or social media to meet new people can be exciting, but it's also important to think about whether you're ready to date and what healthy connections look like. This guide is here to help you swipe safely, understand your boundaries, and stay in control of your choices.

Your Profile

Your profile is the first thing people see, so it's a good idea to think about what you share. Double-check what's showing in your photos. License plates, school logos, even a name tag can give away more than you realise.

Avoid tagging your real-time location, especially if you're alone or with someone new. Wait until you've left the location before posting, and consider sharing only with trusted friends. Real-time tags can make it easier for someone to find you without your consent, especially if your account is public or visible to people you don't know well.

The “talking” stage: protect your privacy

There is no need to share personal details like your phone number, address, passwords, location, or personal photos early in the talking stage. Even seemingly harmless individuals can misuse this information. And remember, you're never required to give out details just because you're asked. Be cautious if money is brought up. Your financial resources (the money in your wallet/bank account) and safety are off limits and not up for grabs.

Research vs. cyberstalking

Let's be real about dating in a digital realm... a quick video chat with someone or a look at their socials can help confirm they're real and match the vibe they give online. What if someone avoids any verification at all? That's a red flag. But obsessively tracking someone, digging through their followers, or watching their every move online can cross into unhealthy territory. If it's not info they've chosen to make public, or if it's feeding anxiety more than peace of mind, it might be time to step back.

Watch for red flags

A red flag is anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, pressured, or unsafe - even if it seems small at first. You get to decide when (or if) you meet, call, or get vulnerable with someone. Watch out for digital manipulators who love-bomb, guilt-trip, or pressure you into fast intimacy.

Preparing to meet in real life (IRL)

Before meeting anyone in real life, take a few precautions to increase safety.

Tell a friend:

- where you're going,
- who you're meeting,
- and when you expect to be back.

Share a screenshot, drop your location, or use a safety app. These aren't overreactions, it's smart planning.

Knowing if you're ready to meet a person in real life is really about checking in with yourself. It's important to feel emotionally ready and confident that this person has earned your time and energy through respectful conversations and consistency. You should know your boundaries, feel no pressure to meet up, and have a safety plan in place, like meeting in a public spot and letting someone you trust know where you'll be. It's ok to be curious about someone, but meeting in IRL should happen when you feel secure, respected, and in control of your decision.

Some dating apps even offer safety tools built-in, so take advantage of them!

The first meet-up

- Meet in public—think cafe, book shop, or a busy park.
- Arrange your own transport there and back, so you can leave when you want to.
- Trust your gut: if anything feels off, you don't owe anyone an explanation for leaving early.

Agreeing to meet doesn't mean you have to stay. If you don't feel safe or comfortable, it's okay to leave. Your safety and comfort come first, always. Trust your gut, have a plan to exit if needed, and don't worry about being polite. You never owe anyone your time or presence if the vibe isn't right.

Acknowledgement

This handout has been created by Wesnet under licence from the National Network to End Domestic Violence.