



# How to safely start and manage online friendships



## A definition

In this day and age, many relationships are formed and/or maintained through social media.



## Why is this important?

Beyond the difficulty of long-distance relationships, there are various risks when meeting people online: harassment, identity theft, scamming, catfishing and even abductions.

According to an [NSPCC study](#), online grooming crimes have risen by more than 80% in four years due to the rise of social media platforms, such as Snapchat, used in 33% of the cases.



## Tips and tricks

- ➔ Pay attention to various criteria before accepting a friend request on social media: if a profile is brand new, has very few photos, rarely posts, etc.
- ➔ To verify the person's identity, ask them for a picture or video of themselves holding a specific object or saying a chosen sentence or word out loud or on a piece of paper.
- ➔ To keep a friendship healthy, be true to yourself, respect expectations and boundaries, and maintain a social circle outside of the virtual space as well.



## Useful resources and tools

- ➔ Regain, [“Are Online And Real Life Friendships The Same? How The Internet Makes A Difference”](#), explains the pros and cons of online friendships and how to maintain them.
- ➔ Degges-White on Psychology Today, [“Do Online Friendships Differ From Face-to-Face Friendships?”](#), explains the differences and risks between real and online friendships.
- ➔ Glum on International Business Times, [“Online Safety For Teens: Are Internet Friends A Good Thing?”](#), explains why teenagers develop an online social life and its dangers.
- ➔ Get Safe Online (UK internet safety), [“Making online friends the safe way”](#), gives a series of advice on how to safely meet people online and what to share.
- ➔ Lenhart & Madden on Pew Research Center, [“Friendship, Strangers and Safety in Online Social Networks”](#), provide data and testimonials on teenage online friendships.