



# 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 <a href="MSPCC study">MSPCC study</a>, 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.



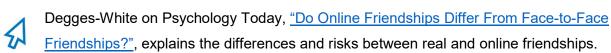
## Tips and tricks

- 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**





- 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), <u>"Making online friends the safe way"</u>, gives a series of advice on how to safely meet people online and what to share.
- Lenhart & Madden on Pew Research Center, <u>"Friendship, Strangers and Safety in Online Social Networks"</u>, provide data and testimonials on teenage online friendships.

