

# Being Smart, Staying Safe Online

## A Lesson Plan from Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum

*Fostering respect and responsibility through age-appropriate sexuality education.*

### NSES ALIGNMENT:

By the end of 8th grade, students will be able to:

**HR.8.GS.1** - Develop a plan to stay safe when using social media.

**HR.8.SM.2** - Describe strategies to use social media safely, legally and respectfully.

**TARGET GRADE:** Grade 7  
Lesson 11

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Laptop or desktop computer with computer access
- LCD projector and screen
- Take Three Student Handout – one per student
- Take Three Handout – Teacher Version
- Internet: Traffic Light Student Handout – one per student
- Internet Traffic Light: Handout – Teacher Version
- Safe Online Talk Teacher Backgrounder
- Half-size sheets of paper, three for every student
- Green, yellow, and red markers or colored pencils, one set for each group of four to five students
- Whiteboard and markers
- Speakers to project sound from videos
- Homework- Staying Safe Online — one per student

### ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LESSON:

- Download the Safety Video Vignettes: Safe Online Talk [www.commonsense.org/education/lesson/safe-online-talk-6-8](http://www.commonsense.org/education/lesson/safe-online-talk-6-8) preview the video, and be prepared to play it for the class
- Reach out to the school's IT person to make sure the above website is unblocked for use in class
- Review the Take Three Handout - Teacher Version
- Review the Internet Traffic Light Handout - Teacher Version
- Read the Safe Online Talk Teacher Backgrounder

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Describe positive aspects of online talking and messaging. [Knowledge]
2. Identify examples of flirting and chatting that can be inappropriate or risky. [Knowledge]
3. Demonstrate an understanding of how to deal with uncomfortable situations when communicating online. [Knowledge, Skill]

### A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE:

Language is really important and we've intentionally been very careful about our language throughout this curriculum. You may notice language throughout the curriculum that seems less familiar - using the pronoun "they" instead of "her" or "him", using gender neutral names in scenarios and role-plays and referring to "someone with a vulva" vs. a girl or woman. This is intended to make the curriculum inclusive of all genders and gender identities. You will need to determine for yourself how much and how often you can do this in your own school and classroom, and should make adjustments accordingly.

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### PROCEDURE:

**STEP 1:** Ask students to raise their hand if they have ever heard the saying, “Don’t talk to strangers.” Ask, “How might this ‘rule’ change when we communicate online?” Probe for the fact that while the Internet allows people to keep in touch or hang out with friends they already know offline, it also allows people who don’t know each other to interact, debate, share, and collaborate. Explain that the Internet gives students a wide range of opportunities to connect with or learn from people who may not be in their circle of close friends — whether through games, social network sites, blogs, instant messaging, forums, and so on. And while this can be great, connecting with people online occasionally can carry risks. Therefore, it is important to know how to deal with inappropriate situations if they arise. (3 minutes)

**STEP 2:** Distribute the Take Three Student Handout, and explain to students that they are going to watch a video of three teens sharing their experiences about connecting with people online. Ask students to pay attention to the positives and the negatives that each of the three teens mentions in the film. Play the video, “Perspectives on Chatting Safely Online” (<https://www.common sense media.org/educators/lesson/safe-online-talk-6-8>). Once the video is over, ask the students to complete the Take Three Student Handout with a partner. Tell them they will have about 5 minutes in which to complete their sheets. As they are working, draw a table on the white board that looks like this, leaving enough space between the three young people’s names:

	Positives	Negatives
Randy (Social Networking)		
Aseal (Gaming)		
Renee (Texting/Video chatting)		

(10 minutes)

**STEP 3:** After about five minutes, ask students to share the positives and negatives Randy, Aseal and Renee talk about in the video. Fill in the information on the board as it is contributed by the students.

Ask, “What advice did they share in the video that connected for you?” After a few responses, ask, “Would you add any advice of your own?”

Remind them of Renee talking about getting a “gut feeling” when she felt something was wrong online. Ask, “Have you ever had that kind of gut feeling, whether online or in real life? What does that feel like?” After a few students have responded say, “That gut feeling

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is there for a reason – it's kind of like an internal warning system. If something doesn't feel quite right, chances are it isn't. So it's important to pay attention and at least get out of the situation that's making us feel that way to have the chance to think about what was making us feel that way and why." (12 minutes)

**STEP 4:** Point out that Randy and Aseal used the word "harass" in the video to describe awkward or annoying interactions with strangers online. For example, Aseal says he was harassed when during a game someone he didn't know said some mean things about him. Explain that online flirting can sometimes be a less obvious form of harassment.

Ask, "How would you handle someone walking up to you on the street and making crude or sexual comments? (Students should respond that they would walk away, and call for help if they felt threatened.) Ask "How would you handle someone trying to flirt with you on the street?" (Students may respond that it depends on whether they know the person or not. They may also say it depends on whether the person is someone their own age or much older.)

Explain to students that the same kinds of situations can happen when they are online. Say, "Sometimes it's obvious that what a person is saying online is wrong and even harmful. Other times people may flirt online, and so warning signs are not always so obvious." Discuss with students how flirting is normal among middle school students. When flirting is done face to face, it might feel comfortable. However, it quickly can become uncomfortable online, even when it's with other people that they may know. This is because people sometimes say things online to one another that they might not say if they were face to face.

Explain to students that when they are talking online with people they don't know in person, flirting and other sexual talk is risky behavior. There are times when flirting can lead to an ongoing relationship with a stranger that seems deep and personal. But this is tricky, because some people online don't actually have teens' best interests in mind. If the person they're communicating with online says anything inappropriate or sexual, and especially if that person is older than they are, students should stop talking right away and then tell a friend or trusted adult about it. (7 minutes)

**STEP 5:** Distribute the Internet Traffic Light Student Handout. Review the Internet Safety Tips on the handout with them aloud. Tell students to keep these rules in mind during the activity you are about to do.

Arrange students in groups of four or five. Distribute three sheets of paper for each student and one set of green, yellow, and red markers or pencils for each group. Follow the instructions on the Internet Traffic Light Student Handout – Teacher Version to guide students through the group activity and class discussion.

Process by using the following questions: ☐

- What are some of the positive things and what are some of the negative things about connecting with people online? (Probe for: The Internet gives you the opportunity to connect with people your age that aren't in your close friend group; with the Internet, you can work together with people in an online game or virtual world; dealing with online harassment can be a pitfall when connecting with strangers online.) ☐

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- In what online situations should you get a “gut feeling” that tells you that you may be at risk? (Probe for: When people you know only online flirt with you or talk about sex; when someone you don’t know wants you to send them a picture, to meet you alone, or asks you to keep your conversation a secret.) ☐
- What are some rules for staying safe when talking and messaging online? (Don’t reply to any questions that make you uncomfortable; tell a friend or trusted adult when someone bothers you online; avoid flirting or using sexual language online, especially with people you and your friends do not know in person; never plan a face-to-face meeting with someone you met online without taking along a parent or guardian.)  
(15 minutes)

**STEP 6:** Explain the homework assignment, where they will take the most important points they learned from today’s class relating to being safe online that they think other students at school need to know and create a poster representing them. Tell them they can work with another student if they wish, or on their own. Determine how long you want to give them and provide a due date for that. Speak with your school about posting the homework assignments in the hallway, or keeping them in your classroom but having students from other classes visit to see what your class did. (3 minutes)

### RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

The processing of the video clips and the homework assignment will demonstrate to the teacher whether the first and second learning objectives have been achieved. The stop light activity will fulfill the third learning objective.

### HOMEWORK:

Have students watch the video, “Being Safe Online” available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MB5VDIebMd8> as a review of today’s lesson. Then, have them create “Stay Safe Online!” posters to teach other students about the pros and cons about online communication. Suggest they refer to their Internet Traffic Light Student Handout, and include one or more of the tips in their posters.

Note: This lesson originally appeared as “Safe Online Talk” in DIGITAL LITERACY AND CITIZENSHIP IN A CONNECTED CULTURE by CommonSense Media, 2012, [www.commonsense.org](http://www.commonsense.org)

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### Homework: Staying Safe Online

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: Watch the video, “Being Safe Online” available here:  
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online communication. You can refer to their Internet Traffic Light Student Handout, and  
include one or more of the tips in your poster