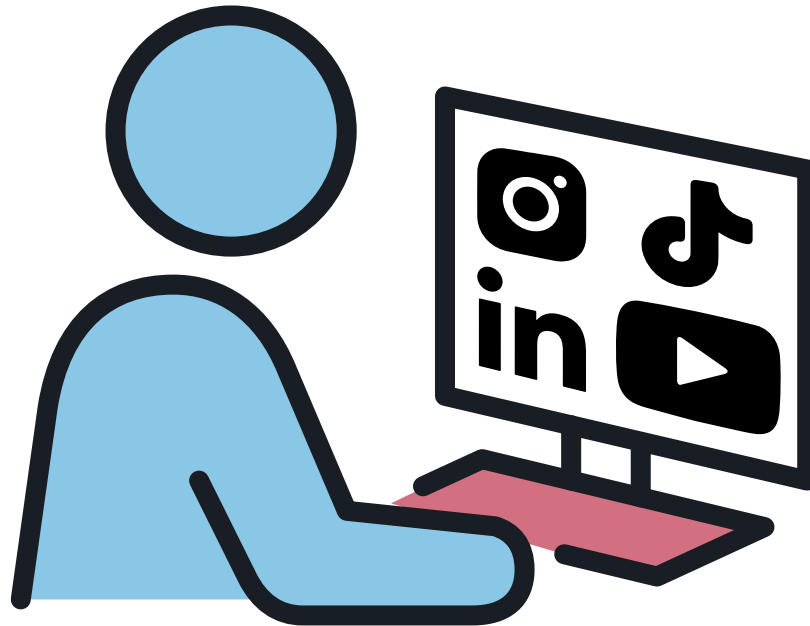


# Being safe on social media



Social media can be a way to get information and opinions from different people about sexual health, but you need to be careful. You **cannot** trust everyone on social media. This information sheet is about how to be safe when you use social media like TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and others.



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Health Canada Santé Canada

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**sieccan**  
Sex Information & Education Council of Canada  
Conseil d'information & d'éducation sexuelles du Canada

## Be careful with who you become friends with on social media

### ***If someone you already know well is requesting to connect with you or be your friend on social media***

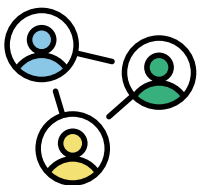


Ask them some questions that only that person would know the answer to.

*or*

Before accepting the connection request, send the person a text message first and ask them if it is actually them who sent you a connection request.

### ***If someone you do not know, like a stranger, is requesting to connect with you or be your friend on social media***



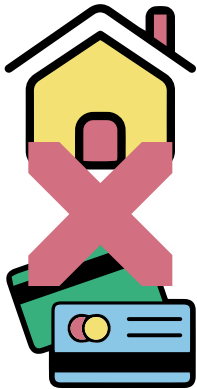
Sometimes it is okay to accept the request, but sometimes it is better not to.

For example:

- If you are using LinkedIn, it is possible that a stranger wants to talk to you because you both do similar work. In that case, it is okay to connect with a stranger.
- It is more common to connect with strangers on social media platforms like TikTok because of shared interests.
- For Facebook, it is usually better to only be friends with people you know.

If you are not sure, you can ask someone you trust to help you decide if it is okay for you to accept a connection request from a stranger.

## ***If you do talk to a stranger on social media***

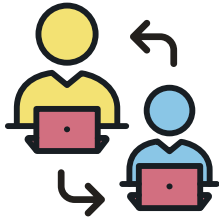


Do not give the person private information like where you live or your bank information.

Some people could try to trick you. For example, someone might ask you to send them money to “save” them.

If you meet with a stranger in-person, make sure to meet with the person during the day time and somewhere where there are other people, like at a restaurant or in a park. Tell someone you trust about who you are meeting with and where you are meeting this person.

## Important things to be careful of on social media:



### Adults trying to have sex with teenagers

There are some adults who want to have sex with teenagers, but **this is not okay**. They will give teenagers a lot of attention and try to make the teenager think that it is okay for adults and teenagers to have sex.

Online grooming is when an adult tries to befriend and gain the trust of a child or teenager online. For example, the adult might create a fake social media profile and pretend to be a younger person. The adult will then use this trust to manipulate the child or teenager into having sex with them.

You can find out more about the warning signs of online grooming here: <https://www.rainn.org/news/grooming-know-warning-signs>



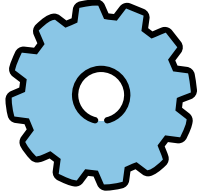
### Someone pretending to be a teenager to trick young people

There are some people who try to pretend they are someone else to trick young people. Usually, they will pretend they are a teenager and ask you to send them a naked or sexy picture/video of you. Then they will tell you that they will send the picture/video to a lot of people if you do not give them money. **Do not send naked or sexy pictures/videos of you to anyone you do not know or do not trust.**

Check out [Sexting: Information Sheet](#) for more information about things you should be careful of if you send naked or sexy pictures/videos to other people.



## Keep your personal information private

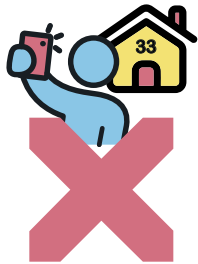


On your social media accounts, look for a “setting” or “privacy” button. Whenever possible, change it so that only your close friends and family can see what you post.

If you cannot find the button, go on Google, and search for the name of the social media network and the words “privacy settings.” For example, search “Tiktok privacy settings” or “Twitter privacy settings” on Google.



Do not post private information like your address or bank information.



Do not post private pictures or videos like pictures/videos of your house, your car, or naked pictures/videos of yourself.



Do not post about exactly where you are. If you take a picture/video at a particular location that you would like to post or share, post the picture/video after you have left that location.

**Remember that once you post a picture/video or message on the Internet, you no longer have complete control over what happens to the picture/video or message. Even if you post it on your social media only for your friends and family to see, it is always possible that someone will share the post with other people.**

**Also, remember that a picture/video or message that you post can always be connected back to you, even after you have deleted it.**

**This is why it is usually better to not share personal pictures/videos or information on social media.**

## Watch out for things that are unusual



If a stranger is asking you to give them private information like your address or your bank information, **do not give them this information.**



If your friend posts something on social media that you think is weird because it is not something they would normally post, or if they send you a friend request when you are already friends, it is possible they got hacked. This means that someone else is using your friend's account when they are not supposed to.

You can call or text your friend and tell them to check their account. **Do not accept the friend request or respond to the post.**

# Watch out for people who say mean things

## Examples of mean things people can say:



A person makes fun of you or someone else.



A person says things that are not true about a group of people.



A person says they will do something bad to you or someone else.

For example, someone says they will:

- Hurt another person
- Break someone's things
- Steal someone's things

## What to do if you see someone saying mean things on social media



**If someone is saying mean things to you**

Block them.

You can report the person to the social media site, or to local police if they threaten you.

Talk to someone you trust about it.



**If someone who is usually your friend says something that hurts your feelings or if you get into a fight with a friend on social media**

Try to find another way to communicate with the person about the issue.

For example, try calling them or meeting with them in-person to talk about it.

## What to do if you see someone saying mean things on social media



**If you see someone saying mean things about someone else**

Do not support the person saying mean things, even if they are talking about someone you do not like.

Do not like or share their post.

If you want to help the person that was hurt, you can post something nice about them or send them a nice message privately.



**If you feel uncomfortable with a social media platform because of what you see there**

Try a different social media platform that has more rules for what people are allowed and/or not allowed to post.



**If being on social media stresses you out**

Take a break from social media.

Connect with friends, family, and pets.

Do your favourite activities or look for local in-person meetups and clubs about your special interest.