



START TALKING:

A Guide to Keeping Children Safe Online 2026

Technology is constantly changing, and children change with it.

New websites, apps, games, and gadgets offer new opportunities for exploiters to take advantage of minors.

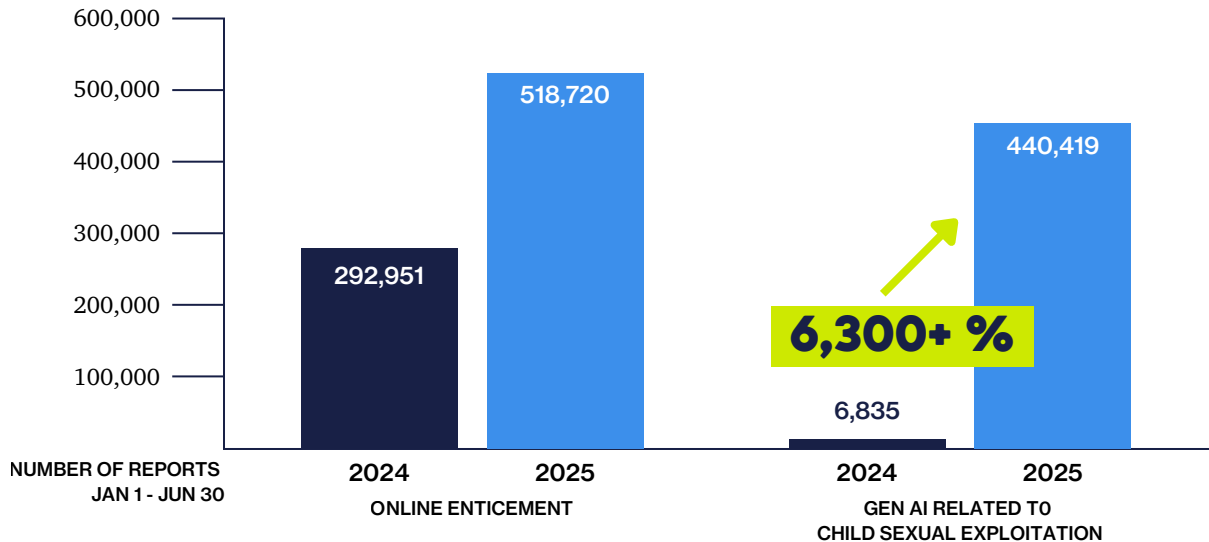


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DID YOU KNOW?

There was a dramatic increase in the number of reports received by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) CyberTipline **between the first six months of 2024 and the first six months of 2025***.



*Increase due in part to the REPORT Act, signed into law May 7, 2024, which expanded mandatory reporting requirements for tech platforms.

Davis, 2025

The relationship between children and the internet is still evolving, and as a society, we're continuing to learn how to navigate it. Like with any new development, there's a learning curve—there are things we simply haven't anticipated.

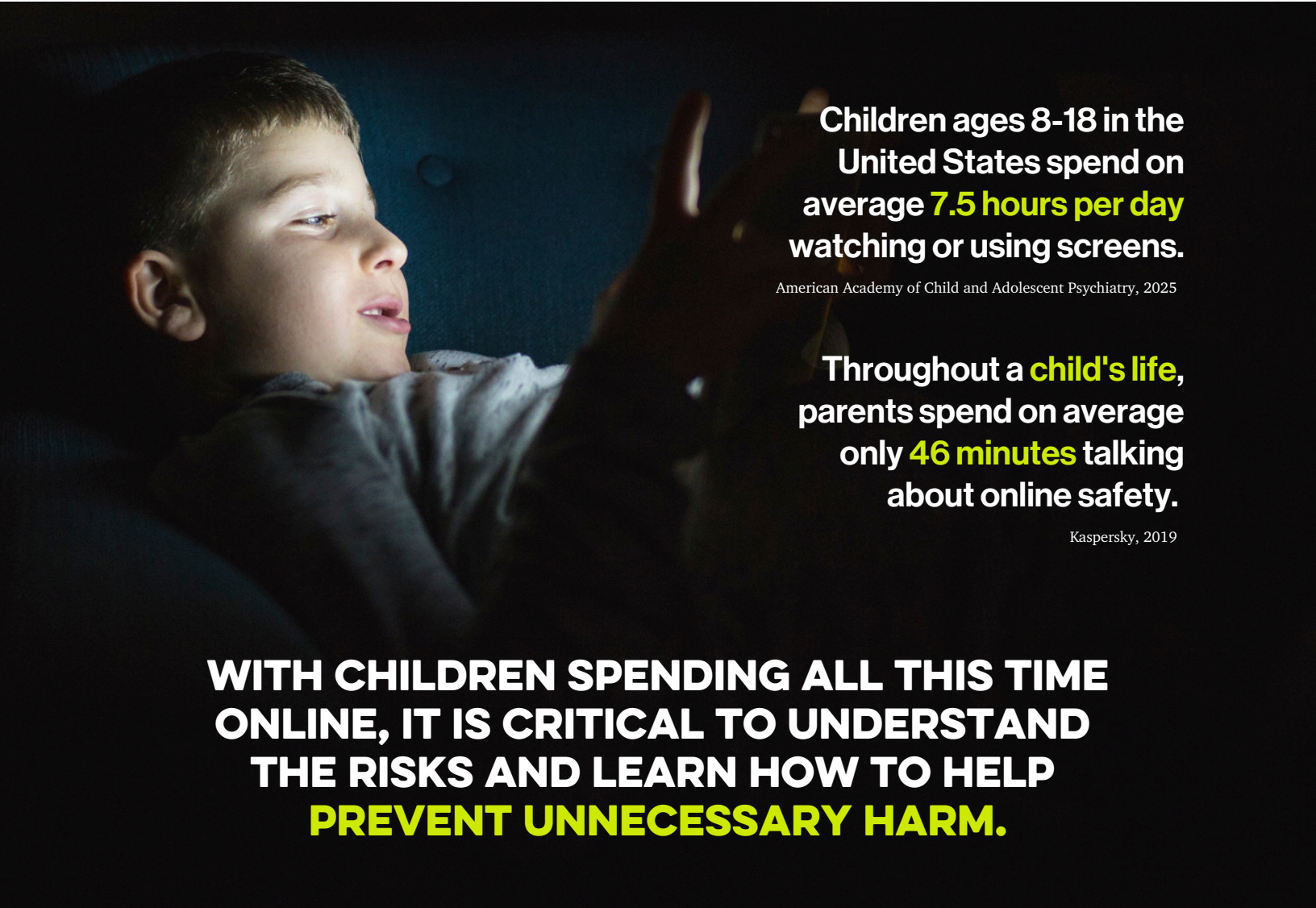
However, after more than two decades, society has gained valuable insights and gathered important data. With this growing knowledge and experience, we're now better equipped to make informed decisions to protect our children.

AFTER READING THIS GUIDE, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO:

- Recognize the impact of the internet and digital devices on children, especially as it relates to online sexual abuse and exploitation.
- Create a safe and non-judgmental environment where your child feels safe coming to you for help and guidance.
- Have open conversations with your child about topics such as online relationships, apps, grooming, digital footprints, fake accounts, generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI), and sexual extortion (sextortion).
- Teach your child how to respond to inappropriate, suspicious, or threatening behavior online.
- Respond and report appropriately if your child experiences online sexual abuse or exploitation.

THE ISSUE

Kids today are growing up with technology. They know their way around devices and the internet better than a lot of adults. So why is online safety an issue?



Children ages 8-18 in the United States spend on average **7.5 hours per day** watching or using screens.

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2025

Throughout a **child's life**, parents spend on average only **46 minutes** talking about online safety.

Kaspersky, 2019

WITH CHILDREN SPENDING ALL THIS TIME ONLINE, IT IS CRITICAL TO UNDERSTAND THE RISKS AND LEARN HOW TO HELP PREVENT UNNECESSARY HARM.

A child's or teen's online and offline worlds are intertwined.

The internet is a daily and essential part of their life.

There are risks every time someone opens a browser, starts a new chat, or downloads a new game.

To illustrate the scope of this issue, here are some statistics.

DEVICE USAGE

TEENS



46% of all U.S. teens ages 13-17 say they use the internet “almost constantly.”



95% say they have access to a smartphone.

Pew, 2025a

CHILDREN 12 AND UNDER (INCLUDING THOSE UNDER 2)

Around **6 in 10** parents say their children interact with a smart phone.

Almost **7 in 10** say their children interact with a tablet.

5 in 10 say their children interact with a gaming device.

Pew, 2025b



Of those who received sexually explicit material online as children, 68% received it through a private messaging service, and most commonly through their mobile phone.

WeProtect Global Alliance, 2021, pp. 20, 37

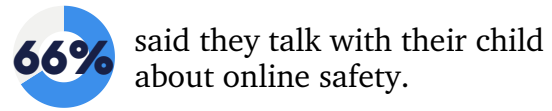
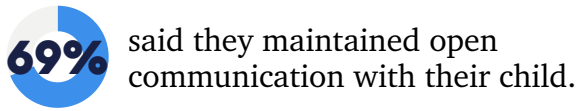


While setting and content blockers are vital, they cannot ensure that children are completely protected online.

The best tool for keeping children safe is open, continuous conversation about online safety.

THE MOST **EFFECTIVE PREVENTION** IS AN EDUCATED CHILD.

MORE THAN 9 IN 10 U.S. PARENTS WERE CONCERNED ABOUT CHILDREN'S ONLINE SAFETY.



More in Common, 2025

But is it enough?



“More than 1 in 3 minors reported having an online sexual interaction.”

Thorn, 2025b

It's up to parents and guardians to start, and maintain, this conversation.

DID YOU KNOW?

1 IN 5 MINORS

“who experienced an online sexual interaction did not disclose their experience to anyone”



REASONS FOR NOT DISCLOSING

40% “Felt this was ‘not a big deal’”

18% “Worried about police or law enforcement getting involved”

29% “Felt embarrassed and worried of being judged”

15% “Worried their report would not be anonymous”

26% “Worried about being in trouble with your family”

14% “Worried about being in trouble with school”

19% “Worried about getting bullied at school”

12% “Worried about losing friends”

18% “Felt like you were to blame or partly to blame for the situation”

12% “Worried about not being allowed to use a platform”

Thorn, 2025b, p. 27

**Children and teens need to know it's safe
for them to start talking to someone they trust.**

ONLINE SAFETY

Educating children and teens to navigate the risks and to know when to talk to someone they trust.

WHAT IS ONLINE GROOMING?

GROOMING

(noun) /'gru:ˌmɪŋ/

is the process where an offender “builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or teen so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them.

NSPCC, 2026

Whatever issues a child may be experiencing, the offender pretends to be going through the same thing or share specific knowledge about that issue. It may be body image issues, parents divorcing, recent death of a loved one or friend, or bullying.



“They look for victims who need someone or who are going through a difficult time. They pretend to be their friend and understand what they are going through. But the predator’s goal is to establish trust in order to manipulate and gain control over their victims.”

– Former Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Investigator



Preventing grooming can’t be done through a single conversation, by telling kids “don’t,” or by just restricting access to technology.

Remember, grooming can look a lot like making a good friend—it might not be clear it’s happening for a long period of time, especially from a child’s perspective.

It’s important to know that a predator’s objective may be to meet your child face-to-face in order to exploit them.

However, some predators keep the relationship only online. They use different tactics to convince the child to engage in a sexual act, whether that be sharing sexual images or engaging in sexual activity on a video call.

Child sex predators can be someone familiar or a complete stranger. They may identify as any gender. Predators often disguise their identity and age behind fake online profiles.

THEY TARGET ANY AGE, GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND SOCIAL OR CULTURAL BACKGROUND.

It may be difficult for children to understand that there are people using disguises **online**. An older man may pretend to be someone their age or someone that goes to a nearby school.

Even if a child knows they are communicating with an adult, **the age gap may instill fear into the child to comply with the predator's requests**. Some predators **start by enticing a child to share personal information** and then later use it against the child to coerce them into sexual activity.

Grooming is a process that can take place over the course of just a few hours or several years.

A groomer will create profiles on apps or games that children use in order to **gain their trust and build a friendship**. Conversation often starts through comments, direct messages, or chatrooms.



If initial contact begins on a public platform or forum, a predator will likely try to move contact with the child to direct messaging.

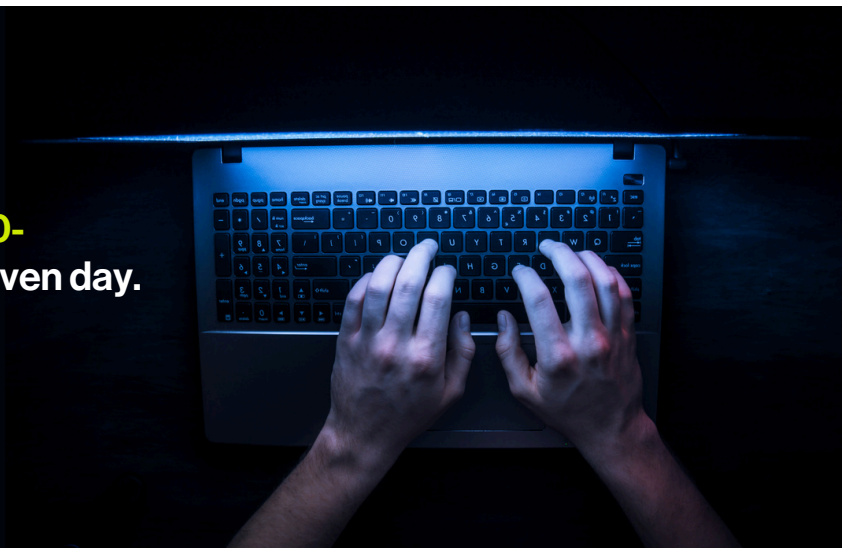
Part of the grooming process is isolating the child or teen in a private online space and then **slowly working to manipulate or force them into engaging in a sexual act.**

FAKE ACCOUNTS

DID YOU KNOW?

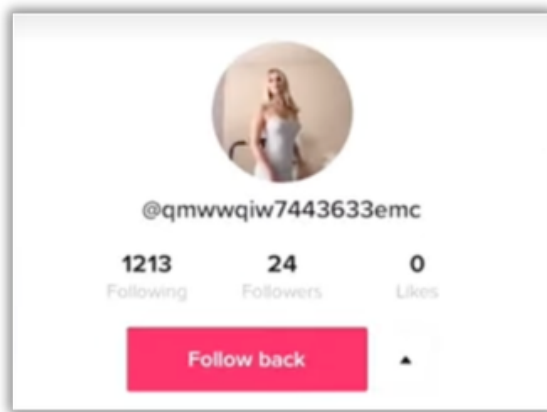
The FBI estimates between **500,000-750,000 predators are online** on a given day.

FBI, 2011



Social media was designed for social interaction, but unfortunately, it has become a playground for bad actors who are looking to take advantage of the vulnerable.

Here are four steps you can take when looking into who your child is interacting with online or to consider before letting your child have access to social media.

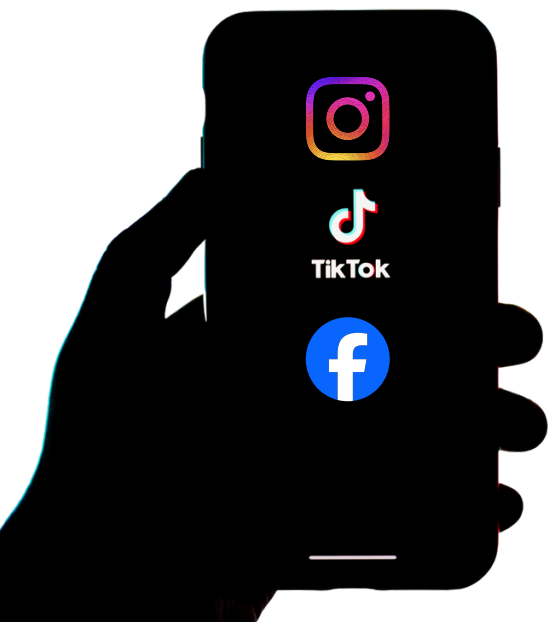


1. FRIENDS CHECK

Make sure the profile has a normal number of friends or followers. Profiles with under 100 friends are highly suspicious, especially if the account allegedly belongs to a teen.

Checking for friends is an essential step but won't always ensure the account is safe. Predators may pretend they go to a child's school or that they met the child somewhere else. They may also impersonate celebrities or other influencers.

Make sure to use the other profile checks provided here before following or subscribing.



2. PHOTO CHECK

Profiles without a profile photo are almost always spam or fake accounts. Profiles with none or only a few posted photos of themselves in social situations should raise your alarm.



3. REVERSE IMAGE CHECK

If a profile has only a few photos or you feel as though the account may be suspicious or fake, a quick reverse image search of some of the photos may be useful.

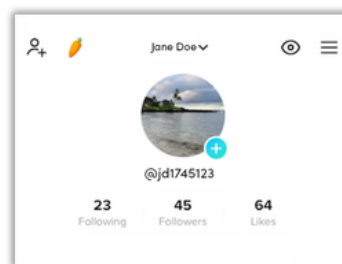
- Download or save the published photos.
- Navigate to www.google.com/imghp. This is Google's Image Search.
- Drag the photos into the Google search bar or click the "browse" button and navigate to the saved photo.
- Within seconds, Google will return results if that photo is found elsewhere on the internet. If the photo is visible on other accounts using a different name or appears to be from a commercial website, the profile is most likely a fake account.



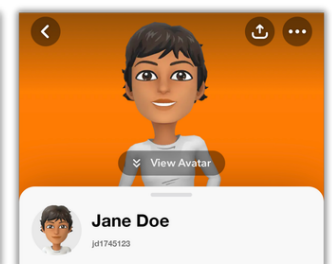
4. USERNAME CHECK

Profile names and account usernames can be different. Users can display a name on their profile different from their actual account username. Once an account's unique username is identified, a quick Google search of that username may lead you to other social media accounts or to comments/complaints related to suspicious activity.

TIKTOK PROFILE



SNAPCHAT PROFILE



When searching usernames on Google, be sure to place the username within quotes ("username.123" or "@username.123" depending on the social media network). If the username search reveals other profiles with different photos of different people, then it's likely a fake account.

ONLINE RELATIONSHIPS & APPS

While kids today often turn to social media and video games for entertainment, these platforms can also serve as an escape from feelings of loneliness, offering a virtual space where children can connect, share experiences, and find a sense of belonging.

It's important that parents and guardians understand the interactions children are having online.

54%

“of minors believe online grooming is a common experience for kids their age.”



1 in 3 minors

“consider a connection they made online among their closest friends.”



2 in 3
9-12-year-olds

“interact with unfamiliar adults online.”



1 in 6
9-12 year-olds

“have had romantic or sexual conversations with an online-only contact.”

Thorn, 2022, pp. 10, 14, 17, 18

Again, while settings and content blockers can be helpful, they can't ensure that children are completely protected online.

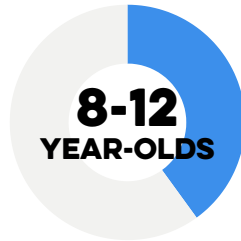
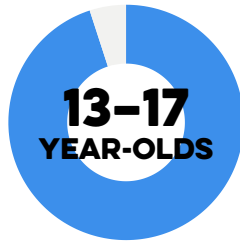
THE BEST TOOL FOR KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IS AN OPEN, CONTINUOUS CONVERSATION ABOUT ONLINE SAFETY.



DID YOU KNOW?

Predators frequently identify targets on **social media, chat rooms, and gaming platforms.**

WeProtect, 2024

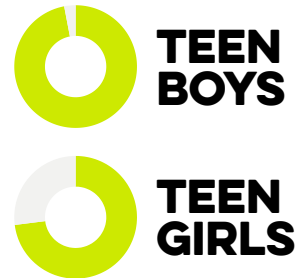


“Up to 95% of youth age 13 – 17”
and “nearly 40% of children 8 – 12
use social media.”

Office of the Surgeon General, 2023, p. 4

76% of all U.S. children,
including 97% of teen boys
and 73% of teen girls, play
video games

ESA, 2023; Pew, 2024



CHILD PREDATORS GO WHERE THE CHILDREN ARE.

Safety Precautions

- Set accounts to **private**, not public.
- Disable direct messaging from strangers.
- Turn off location sharing.
- Restrict who can comment or send friend requests.
- Review “who can find me” settings.
- Accept friend requests **only from people you’ve met in person.**

POPULAR APPS & RISKS

If your child has it, you should have it.

That simple principle can go a long way in protecting your children. If you don’t know a lot about a certain game or app, download it on your phone and look through the different features. Assume that all apps have messaging capabilities. This will help you better understand potential opportunities for predators to contact your child.

Examples of popular apps are shown on the following pages, but new apps are being developed all the time. It’s important to stay up to date on the apps your child is using.



POPULAR APPS

SOCIAL MEDIA

Most popular games among older children and teens



TIKTOK



YOUTUBE



SNAPCHAT



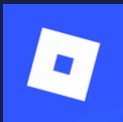
INSTAGRAM

Teen use of Facebook has dropped sharply since 2014-2015.

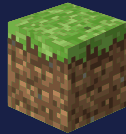
Pew, 2025c

GAMES

Popular games among older children and teens



ROBLOX



MINECRAFT



CALL OF DUTY



FORTNITE



AMONG US

Roblox is also popular among 7-9 year olds.

“If your child plays online games, treat chat features as you would unsupervised public conversations—because that is exactly what they are.”

- John Trenary, VP of Cyber, Our Rescue

MESSAGING



DISCORD



SIGNAL



GOOGLE
HANGOUTS



GROUPME



WHATSAPP



KIK



VIBER



WECHAT

Child predators often try to take online conversations with minors to a private messaging app to avoid public suspicion. That makes it easier for the predators to ask for explicit pictures. Messaging apps have also been used to buy, share, and trade images of child sexual abuse material (CSAM).

DATING



TINDER



BUMBLE



HINGE



YUBO



KASUAL



CHAT + DATE



SPOT A FRIEND



GRINDR

While dating apps should be 18+, some are labeled as 17+ or don't have minimum age verifications. This means teens can easily join the app by lying about their age. A teen seeking connection can sign up, start messaging adults, and become the target of a predator. Some apps are even made for meeting in person for sexual experiences, putting teens in immediately dangerous situations. Even when these interactions remain online, private messaging and photo functions open doors for exploitation and enticement.

SECRET PHOTO VAULTS & BROWSERS

Multiple applications and websites allow users to hide their pictures and messages. These features are accessible to any user, regardless of age, and allow kids and teens to hide inappropriate messages and chats from concerned parents or friends. While children sometimes do this out of a desire for independence and privacy, predators take advantage of these features to keep their exploitation a secret.



CALCULATOR
VAULT



KEEPSAFE



PRIVATE PHOTO
VAULT

- These “vaults” are on photo apps where users can make photos hidden so they are **only accessible via passcode or facial recognition**.
- Apps such as the “fake calculator” allow users to **disguise the application itself, making it easy to hide sexually explicit photos** right on their home screen.
- These apps **encrypt messages and can even automatically delete messages**, making it difficult to track a child's incoming and outgoing messages.
- Kids can **erase search and website history** on browsers, making it easy to hide online activity and communication.

GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (GEN AI)

“AI that can create from words and images to videos, music, computer applications, and even entire virtual worlds.

“What makes generative AI different and special is that it puts the power of machine intelligence in the hands of just about anyone.”

Marr, 2023

WITH GEN AI, THINGS THAT ARE NOT REAL CAN LOOK AND SOUND VERY REAL.



GEN AI CSAM

Gen AI CSAM is when GEN AI is used for sexual abuse or exploitation.

It is “the production, through digital media, of child sexual abuse material and other wholly or partly artificially or digitally created sexualized images of children.”

DHS, 2025

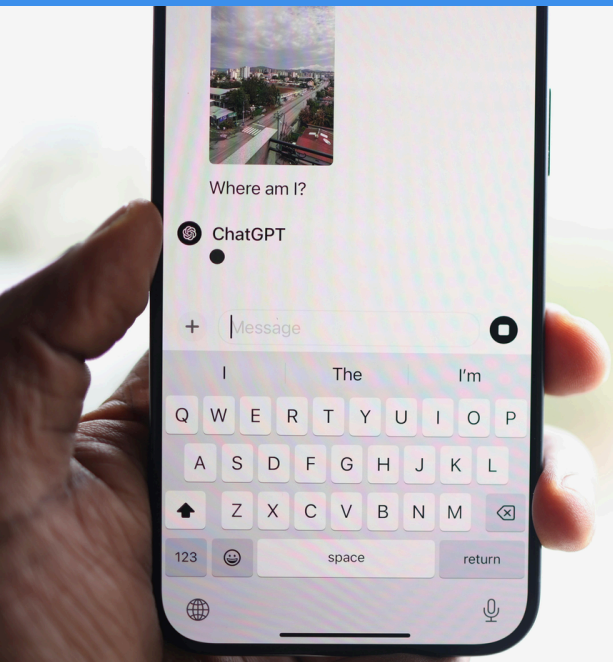
Offenders create harmful images by digitally altering photos sourced from the internet. They may remove clothing from an image or merge a child's face with a nude image, making it appear as though it is a nude picture of the child. Such images can be used for extortion, harassment, or shared widely without the child's knowledge or consent.

“Deepfake” is another word for it. It’s a **crime**.

1 in 17 teens report they have been the target of deepfake nudes.

1 in 6 victims did not seek support.

Thorn, 2025c, pp. 19, 20



CHATBOTS

Another form of AI is chatbots. If you've ever asked Siri or Alexa for help, you've interacted with a chatbot.

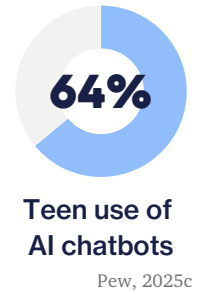
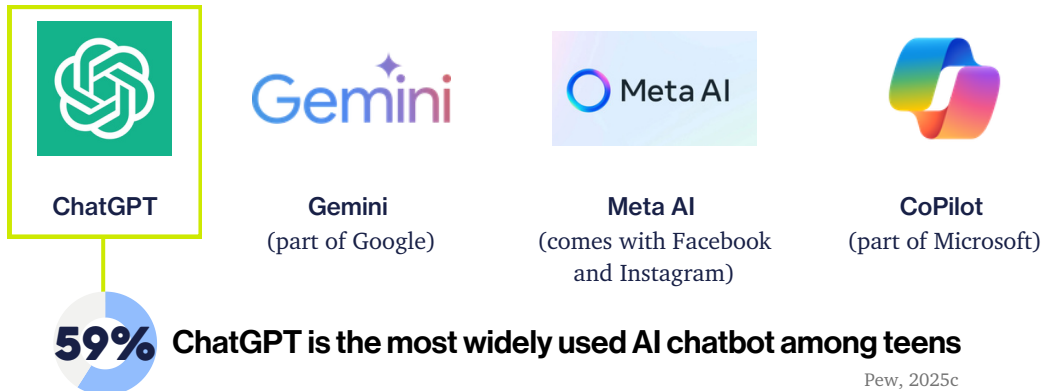
A chatbot is an artificial intelligence (AI) computer program designed to simulate conversation with human users, especially over the internet.

AI chatbots can:
Answer questions.
Provide information.
Assist with tasks.

Chatbots are powerful tools for young people seeking answers and support.

POPULAR CHATBOTS

The majority of Teens use:



AI COMPANIONS

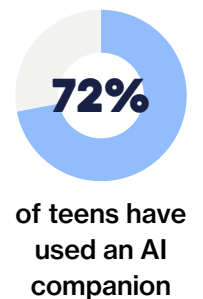
AI companions go beyond answering questions and completing tasks and act more as characters and personal friends.

Common AI companion apps include:



Some chatbots can be used as AI companions, even though they weren't designed for that purpose.

Common Sense Media, 2025, p. 2



TEEN AI COMPANION USAGE

The actual How and Why Teens are Using AI Companions may surprise you:

HOW

46% use it as a “**tool** or program”

33% for social interaction and **relationships**, including:

- 18%** for “conversation or social practice”
- 12%** for “emotional or mental health support”
- 12%** for “role-playing or imaginative scenarios”
- 9%** for a “friend or best friend”
- 8%** for “romantic or flirtatious interactions”

WHY

30% for **entertainment**

28% are curious about **technology**

18% want **advice**

17% say it’s always **available** when they need someone to talk to.

14% say it **doesn’t judge**

12% feel they “**can say things** they wouldn’t tell others”

9% say it’s “**easier** than talking to real people”

6% say it helps them **feel less lonely**



Common Sense Media, 2025, pp. 3, 4

CHATBOT AND AI COMPANION SAFETY

How Safe Are Chatbots and AI Companions?

24% of users “have shared personal or private information with an AI companion.”

34% “report feeling uncomfortable with something an AI companion has said or done”

Common Sense Media, 2025, pp. 7, 8

Don’t consider information shared with chatbots or AI companions as private. Never share personal, private, or sensitive information.

TALKING ABOUT AI USE

Include AI in your family discussions and agreements around devices and media.

You'll find potential questions to ask your child about AI in the Start Talking section at the end of this training.

Help your child understand:

- Even though AI may look and sound real, it isn't. **It can't replace real human relationships.**
- AI companions are designed to engage with human users through **constant validation.** That is not reality.
- The risks:
 - Exposure to **inappropriate material**
 - **Privacy** violations
 - Advice may be bad, or not match your family's **beliefs and values.**

Adapted from Common Sense Media, 2025



RED FLAGS FOR UNHEALTHY AI COMPANION

- Social withdrawal
- Declining school performance
- Preferring AI companions over human connection



Common Sense Media, 2025., p. 11

YOUR DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

The nature of some social platforms and apps is to make it as easy as possible to share private information or locations. **It is important that children and teens understand what is safe to share and what should be kept private.**

There is an elevated risk on more visual-based apps for children and teens to broadcast home locations and clues to places they frequently hang out. If this information is public, **predators can start understanding what vulnerabilities a child has** and what they enjoy doing, making it easier to make a connection with them over a chat or direct message.

On some apps, users can post stories that will only appear for 24 hours. Remind your children and teens that **even though stories may seem temporary, other users can screenshot anything they post.**



ANYTHING YOU POST PUBLICLY ONLINE BECOMES A PART OF YOUR DIGITAL FOOTPRINT.

Online predators may search for more information about their target, so it is important to turn on privacy settings to keep your child protected.

Here are some tips to manage a digital footprint:

Use privacy settings to safeguard your personal photos and videos.

Remove any content from social media that may misrepresent you.

Delete old accounts, especially public accounts.

Look through what others have shared about you.

Determine what you are comfortable with others sharing about you online and communicate that clearly.

Ask others for permission before sharing their photo publicly.

Avoid posting photos that show your address, typical schedule, or other identifying information, such as school, clubs, etc.

HOW POSTING INNOCENT IMAGES MAY CAUSE HARM



Your digital footprint includes **any information shared online by you or about you.**

The comments you post, videos you share, and photos you are tagged in are part of a public data pool. **Even if you delete a photo, it may still exist on the app's server or as a screenshot on someone else's computer.**



Child sexual abuse material (CSAM) contains many different media categories. Those graphic images of “child sexual abuse” are what we most commonly see or hear about in the media. Sex offenders photographing or recording the sexual abuse of their victims and then sharing and distributing that content can be found in news headlines almost daily.



When it comes to CSAM, online predators are not only using the internet to find child victims to groom, manipulate, and eventually exploit and abuse.

Offenders are just as actively searching for and downloading innocent images of children from public social media profiles belonging to unknowing parents and grandparents.



Imagery might include nude or partially nude images of extremely young children innocently playing together, modeling photo shoots, sporting events, or dancing. These are often found bundled together on peer-to-peer file sharing networks and the dark web and marketed as “child erotica or nudism.”

This content can be just as sought after as graphic sexually explicit content, sometimes even more, as it may not always be classified as illegal content.



Innocent images may also be used to create **deepfakes**: media creations that depict real people in sexual situations that never actually happened.

“I’ve seen firsthand that predators don’t need to ‘groom’ a child or even make contact to sexually exploit them. They don’t need to meet them in person or join their chat rooms. They only need a single image.

Now, one innocent photo from a social media account, a school website, or a family album can be manipulated into a convincing depiction of sexual abuse using tools that are widely available. The source image doesn’t have to be provocative . . . it just has to exist. AI can remove clothing, change poses, or even create short videos where a child is made to perform abhorrent acts.”

- John Trenary, VP of Cyber, Our Rescue



So, before you upload and post, make sure you know your audience, understand your privacy settings, and have thoroughly reviewed the content.

YOUR POSTS LAST FOREVER.

ONCE ONLINE, YOU LOSE CONTROL.

THINK BEFORE YOU SHARE.

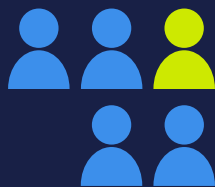
SEXTORTION

The FBI reports a huge increase in the number of cases involving children and teens being threatened and coerced into sending explicit images online.

Sextortion is when the offender threatens to make sexually explicit imagery of a victim public unless the victim sends more images.

Financial Sextortion occurs when the offender threatens to make sexually explicit material public unless the victim sends money and/or gift cards.

FBI, 2026



**1 IN 5 TEENS
REPORT HAVING
EXPERIENCED SEXTORTION**

1 IN 6 VICTIMS

of sextortion said they experienced it when they were 12 or younger.

1 IN 3 VICTIMS

victims say they knew the person offline.

1 IN 7 VICTIMS

victims say they've never disclosed their experience.

Thorn, 2025a, pp. 12, 15, 16, 32

The effect of sextortion on young people cannot be overstated. In some cases, it is a matter of life and death.



Scan the QR code to view a short film about sextortion.



The following pages contain additional statistics around sextortion to better inform parents, guardians, and children on the scope and nuances of this issue.

TYPES OF THREATS

Girls and **LGBTQ** youth are more likely to receive demands for additional sexual imagery.

Boys are more likely to receive demands for money.

1 in 7 victims describe engaging in **self-harm** following their extortion.

→ *LGBTQ+ youth are 3x more likely.*

Thorn, 2025a, pp. 12, 13, 16, 23, 32



WHO THEY ARE AND HOW THEY DO IT



61%

of sextortionists were someone only known online.

Others included current or former romantic partners, friends or someone at school, adult friend of family, and family members.

The **majority of threats** came from **social media** and **messaging** platforms or services.

Threats were also received through video calls, gaming apps, email, and adult platforms (dating or pornography sites).

Thorn, 2025a, pp. 16, 22

HOW IMAGERY WAS OBTAINED



Thorn, 2025a, pp. 22

"ABOUT 25% OF CHILDREN AGED 9-17 REPORTED THAT IT WAS COMMON FOR PEERS THEIR AGE TO SHARE NUDE IMAGES."

Thorn, 2026

RESPONDING AND REPORTING

If it happens, remember:

You are not alone.

Don't try to handle it alone.

There are several organizations with experts ready to help you.

Here are some things you should and should not do.

DO NOT

BLAME

Do not blame the child, no matter how the imagery was obtained. Remember that they are the victim of a crime.

ENGAGE

Do not engage further with the suspect. Do not send more images or pay money. Paying rarely stops the blackmail and often leads to demands for more.

MEET

Do not meet with the suspect.

DELETE

Do not delete any interactions with the suspect (this is evidence you'll want to save).

HERE'S WHAT TO DO

STOP

Stop All Contact. Cease all contact immediately.

SAVE

Save the Evidence. Again, do not delete anything. Take screenshots of everything—the messages, the user profile, usernames, and any payment information. Keep a record: These details are crucial for law enforcement to track down the criminal.

BLOCK

Block the Perpetrator. Use the platform's tools to block them on all accounts. Consider deactivating your account temporarily to prevent further harassment. (Don't delete or cancel it.)

REPORT

Report the Incident

- The platform (where it happened)
- Local police
- ic3.gov (in the U.S.) - FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3)
- cybertipline.org - National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)
- takeitdown.ncmec.org (to help remove shared images)

SUPPORT

Get Help and Support.

Tell a trusted person: Reach out to a friend, family member, teacher, counselor, or professional services.

SUPPORT RESOURCES

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI Helpline)

Call: 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

Text: "NAMI" to 62640

Email: helpline@nami.org

National Suicide Support Hotline

Call: 1-800-273-TALK or call 988, available in English and Spanish

National Human Trafficking Hotline

Call: 1-888-373-7888

Text: "Help" or "Info" to BeFree (233733)

Email: help@humantraffickinghotline.org

Domestic Violence Support Hotline

Call: 1-800-799-7233

LGBTQ+ Suicide Prevention Hotline

Call: 1-866-488-7386

Text: "START" to 678-678

Chat with a qualified professional: <https://chat.988lifeline.org/>

Call: 1-800-799-7233

Stronghearts Native Helpline (for Native and Indigenous Communities)

Call or text: 1-844-762-8483

Visit: <https://strongheartshelpline.org/>



START TALKING:

CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR ONLINE SAFETY

It's up to us as parents and guardians to make sure our children have a safe place to go when something happens—to “be” that safe place whenever possible.



The most powerful digital protection tool is an open, ongoing relationship with your child.

Children must know:

They will not be punished for telling the truth.

They can come forward if something feels strange or confusing.

And they will be protected, not blamed.

Online predators are professional manipulators who rely on silence, secrecy, and shame. Protection thrives in transparency and trust.

- John Trenary, VP of Cyber, Our Rescue





IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO BEGIN A CONVERSATION WITH YOUR CHILDREN.

A child might not recognize if they are being groomed. If someone has threatened or manipulated them online, they can be less likely to speak to an adult about what is going on. Creating an environment of honesty and no judgment can help your child feel comfortable bringing their concerns to you.

Consider opening the conversation by asking some questions to gauge their level of understanding.

Ask open-ended questions that don't require a yes or no answer. This gives them the opportunity to tell you what they think.

What are some of your favorite apps or games?

What is online grooming?

What's the difference between real-life friends and online friends? What about AI friends?

Tell me about things online that have made you feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

Can you show me where the Report and Block buttons are on different apps?

Who can you go to for help if something worries or upsets you online?

Will you show me how you use AI?

How would you feel, or what would you do, if someone asked you to keep an online relationship or something about it a secret?

What do you like and not like about AI?

Let them ask you questions, too.

Listen to their answers and experiences without interruption.

It's important to show that you are also listening to them and value what they're telling you.

CONSIDER THESE TIPS ON HOW TO NAVIGATE THESE CONVERSATIONS:



1. START SMALL

Conversations based on fear may send the wrong message to your child.

Start with having small conversations often about the topic of online safety to help them feel safe talking to you about this subject. Ask questions about what they learn in school about online safety or what rules their friends have and how they differ.

Talk while you're making dinner, doing a puzzle, or working in the yard. Make it as natural and normal as talking about other parts of everyday life.



2. EXPLORE TOGETHER

Be curious. Sit down with your child to explore different apps and websites together. Ask them to show you which apps they spend the most time on, what they like about the apps, and if anything ever makes them feel uncomfortable. Exploring together can foster natural discussion or teaching opportunities.



3. EMPOWER THEM WITH TOOLS

Empower your children with tools to feel safe navigating the internet.

It is likely that they spend time alone navigating different apps and websites, so it is important that they have an action plan for different situations they may come across.

Talk about what personal details are inappropriate to share with people they don't know. Show them the block buttons and exit buttons on their favorite apps and **let them know that they can always come to you for help.**

Teach them how to react if someone new messages them online or sends them a friend request.



4. WALK THROUGH POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

Not everyone is who you think they are.

It is easy for predators to create accounts that disguise their real identity. Help your child understand what to look out for.

Here are some questions to guide discussion:

Do you have mutual friends with this person? Do any of your friends know them in real life?

How many followers does this person have? Does it seem realistic that this is a real person?

Does the person's account have few/no real pictures? Or are there any inappropriate pictures on this person's account?

Do you share the same interests as this person? Does that mean they are safe?



5. ESTABLISH AGE-APPROPRIATE GUIDELINES

Determine the best guidelines and rules to implement for your children. It is important to establish clear boundaries and rules while also keeping open communication so that your child feels free to safely explore and play.

If your child wants an app, download it on your phone first and look for chat features, safety features, and how to turn off locations and other features that may publicize personal information.

Although there are several safety features on most electronic devices, **the best prevention is an educated child.**

BE A JUDGMENT-FREE ZONE SO YOUR CHILD FEELS SAFE SHARING THEIR CONCERNS OR QUESTIONS.



What protects kids most isn't a perfect home, perfect rules, or perfect monitoring. What protects them is trust and connection.

It's a child knowing, deep in their bones: 'If something ever feels wrong, I can tell the adults in my life. I won't be blamed. I won't be shamed. They will help me.'

That kind of trust is built in the small moments: How we react when they make a mistake, when they tell a half-truth, when they admit something that scares us as parents."

– June Haskell, Director of Survivor Engagement, Our Rescue



OUR MISSION

To end human trafficking and child exploitation while empowering survivors to reclaim their lives and thrive on their healing journey.

OUR VISION

A world free from human trafficking and exploitation.

WHERE WE WORK

We operate both locally and globally in regions around the world.

Training & Prevention

We equip organizations, professionals, and communities with the knowledge and tools they need to prevent human trafficking and child exploitation before harm occurs. Using a trauma-informed approach and expert-led instruction, we deliver flexible training through in-person sessions, live virtual workshops, self-paced eLearning, and child and teen-friendly educational games. Offerings cover widely requested topics such as Human Trafficking 101, Online Safety, Trauma-Informed Approaches, Psychological First Aid, Vicarious Trauma, and Safeguarding, ensuring learners at every level gain practical, relevant skills grounded in real-world experience. We also provide awareness raising, capacity strengthening, and advocacy support for frontline responders in our collective fight against human trafficking and online exploitation.

Field Operations

We enhance and champion the efforts of domestic and international law enforcement agencies. We also help identify, intervene, and dismantle trafficking networks. These strategic collaborations prioritize the rescue and protection of survivors, aid in the prosecution of predators, and deliver justice while restoring hope. We do this by providing specialized law enforcement training, funding essential digital forensics tools, sponsoring ESD K9s, and donating equipment for law enforcement operations.

Survivor Care

Supporting individuals who have experienced severe trauma often requires sustained effort and personalized support. Many survivors lack access to the resources they need to thrive. Our Rescue bridges that gap. We do this by assessing survivor's needs, planning individualized care, supporting their community reintegration, and empowering them toward self-sufficiency. Additionally, before every law enforcement operation we support, our teams work to ensure vetted survivor care services are in place through in-country organizations to help survivors.

AI Disclaimer:

Our Rescue uses generative AI technologies to assist in the creation of training and education materials. This allows us to avoid depicting real people in dangerous or harmful situations. Any resemblance to persons living or deceased is purely coincidental.

Please remember that unless otherwise indicated the imagery seen in this material is a depiction of situations that can happen in the real world that may be uncomfortable, but not real people in those situations.

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Learn More

Join us in making a difference in the fight against human trafficking. Visit ourrescue.org, follow Our Rescue on social media, or click the videos below to learn more and be part of the change.

[VISIT OUR WEBSITE](https://ourrescue.org)



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BECOME A VOLUNTEER

Interested in volunteering your time and skills? Create your account with Our Rescue to join the volunteer hub and stay up to date with volunteer opportunities.

[SIGN UP NOW](#)

Parents spend, on average, only 46 minutes talking to their children about online safety throughout a child's life.

Kaspersky, 2019