

Four Ways We Can Build Safe Online Spaces

Explore these ways that you can help build safe online spaces where sexual harassment and abuse have no place.



Practice Consent and Show Respect for Boundaries

Consent is when someone gives permission for something to happen or agrees to do something. If we shift from making assumptions to clearly communicating our boundaries and asking questions when we're not sure, we can create a pathway to more respectful online spaces.

We can practice and model everyday consent online by:

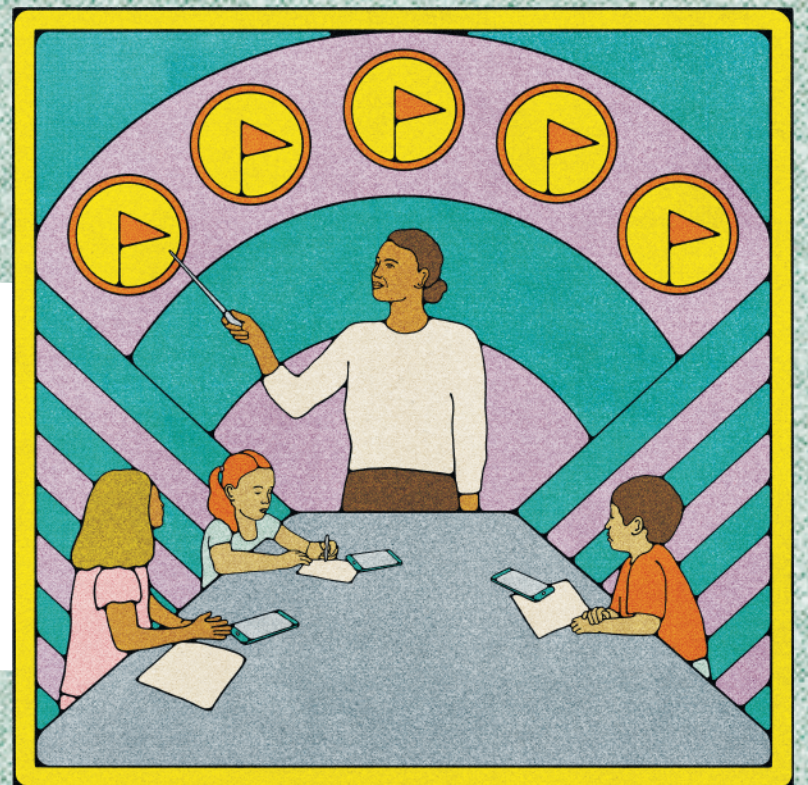
- Respecting the devices and accounts of others. It's never okay to try to unlock someone else's phone without permission or look through their inbox or texts.
- Checking if it's okay before sharing information outside of your one-on-one chat.
- Agreeing on a platform and giving options when communicating — like letting everyone know it's okay to leave their webcam off during a video call.

Identify Red Flags that Indicate Online Grooming

Grooming is when perpetrators judge how far they can push boundaries and exploit someone's trust. Parents can help keep kids and teens safe online by discussing the following red flags with them.

Parents can help kids identify the following red flags that indicate online grooming:

- Asking to keep the relationship secret
- Making suggestive or sexual comments
- Asking the child about their sexual background (have they been kissed, are they a virgin, etc.)
- Sending links to suggestive images, memes, or porn
- Asking the child to only contact them on certain apps



Create Respectful Online Workspaces and Classrooms

We're all part of communities — in towns, workplaces, campuses, or organizations. Community-level prevention means making changes to environmental factors, climate, and policies to reduce the odds that people will carry out sexual violence. Just like in in-person spaces, online spaces can develop policies and rules that promote respect and discourage harmful behaviors.

Leaders who are facilitating the space can:

- Create community agreements with participants so the expectations around respectful communications are clear to everyone involved.
- Provide a way to report harassment or abuse if another group member's behavior is making them uncomfortable.
- Establish community norms around appropriate ways for group members to communicate with one another.



Support Survivors of Online Harassment and Abuse

Victim blaming means questioning the choices of a victim in a way that directly or indirectly implies they are responsible for what happened to them. Victim-blaming comments are one way that survivors may be harassed online.

We can step in when we observe harmful behaviors online by:

- Speaking out when we see harmful comments. We can respond to comments that blame victims for what happened to them by refocusing accountability on the perpetrator. While this might not change the mind of the person who left the comment, others will see that not everyone agrees with them.
- Showing support to victims of online harassment. Check-in with the person that comments have been directed at, or consider volunteering to be a moderator to help prevent future harassment.

