



How to Talk About Online Predators and Stranger Danger to Kids

The phrase “stranger danger” is used to describe an unfamiliar person who lures a child into a dangerous situation. Today, that threat is more likely online than in the real world.

When children make friends on the internet, they may not consider these new people online to be strangers, despite the fact that the internet hides their identity.

Online Predators

Online predators take advantage of secrecy, which means abuse can occur:

- * Even if the child never meets the predator in person
- * While parents are home or in the same room as a child

Predators use a variety of apps or sites to reach children. They talk to kids via social media, online games, comment sections or message boards. Often, predators will want to:

- * Engage in sexual conversations
- * Receive or send explicit photos
- * Trick the child into giving them money
- * Meet the child in person

Parents may not be able to keep up with every app or site. That's why it's critical to check in regularly and have frequent conversations about red flags to watch for to keep kids safe.

If kids report an interaction

Listen and respond calmly. Kids will need help processing what has happened. Whatever they tell you, tell the child: “It is not your fault.”

How to Begin the Conversation

Tell Kids

- * Predators can use any app, site or platform with messaging to talk to you.
- * Any photo or video shared online is NOT private, even in a direct message.
- * They can talk to a parent or caregiver any time someone online makes them feel uncomfortable or if someone unfamiliar tries to interact with them.

Ask kids

- * Who do you talk to online?
- * Where do you talk online?
- * How do these conversations make you feel?

Learn about online grooming

Grooming is when predators try to build trust with a child, only to exploit it later. It can:

- * Happen in a matter of hours or months — there is no timetable.
- * Include questions about how involved caregivers are. Predators will try to take advantage of children who say they are not supervised.
- * Seem harmless to the child at first. Predators may start a relationship by asking them to perform a dance or gymnastics routine.

Learn more at
bark.us/predators



Our Kids is a Nashville-based clinic that provides expert medical evaluations and crisis counseling in response to concerns of child sexual abuse. For more, visit OurKidsCenter.com