

Protecting Your Child from Online Trafficking Risks

A PARENT & GUARDIAN TOOLKIT FOR NAVIGATING SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE GAMES



Learn the risks. Recognize the signs. Keep your child safe.

What Every Parent Should Know

Understanding the Danger of Online Grooming

- Traffickers use social media & games to build trust and manipulate.
- 97% of teen boys & 83% of teen girls play online games.
- Online enticement has increased over 300% (2021–2023).
- No child is immune — traffickers target all ages and backgrounds.



Know the Apps: Platform-by-Platform Risks

How Predators Exploit Popular Platforms



Private chats, predators, no filters, hidden grooming, secret servers.



Disappearing messages, secret chats, and photo-based predator grooming.



Chat with strangers, gift grooming*, manipulation and sexual content



Fake accounts, compliments, and false modeling offers are used to lure kids



Voice chat with strangers, in-game gifts, chat moves to private apps.



Private messages, live chats, and manipulative flattery from predators.

*Gift grooming on Roblox is when predators use virtual gifts to build trust and manipulate kids and often escalates into asking for personal information and moving to other platforms like Discord.

Warning Signs

Red Flags Your Child May Be Targeted

Online Predator Tactics

- Excessive flattery and attention
- Requesting personal information
- Pushing conversations to private apps
- Grooming with gifts or in-game rewards
- Asking for secrecy
- Escalating to inappropriate or sexual content

Child Behavior

- Behavioral Changes
- Secretive about devices
- Late-night screen time
- Mood swings or depression
- Gifts from unknown sources
- Talking about new “friends” they won’t explain

How to Talk to Your Child

Conversations That Build Trust & Safety

Tips:

- Start young, use simple language ("tricky people")
- Role-play "what if" scenarios
- Reinforce: "I'll never be mad if you tell me"
- Use everyday moments to check in
- Involve them in setting boundaries and safety rules together.
- Assure them that speaking up won't lead to punishment or losing their devices.
- *For Teens:* Emphasize how predators manipulate, not how smart someone is.



Action Steps for Adults

10 Things You Can Do Today

Whether you're a parent, grandparent, guardian, or mentor – these practical steps can help protect the kids in your life from online trafficking risks

- ✓ Put devices in shared spaces
- ✓ Know passwords & approve downloads
- ✓ Turn off location & chat where possible
- ✓ Use privacy settings & parental controls
- ✓ Set a family tech contract
- ✓ Teach how to block & report
- ✓ Monitor content regularly
- ✓ Know your child's online friends
- ✓ Stay updated on apps
- ✓ Have a “Plan If Something Goes Wrong”
 - Create a family code word they can text or say if they feel unsafe.
 - Practice what to do if someone online asks to meet in person.
 - Agree on safe steps: block, screenshot, tell a trusted adult immediately.



If Something Happens

What To Do If You Suspect Grooming or Trafficking

- Stay Calm and Open a Conversation– Approach the child without judgment or panic to encourage honesty and reduce fear of punishment.
- Secure and Review Devices– Check messages, chat logs, friend lists, and app history. Take screenshots or save evidence without altering it.
- Block and Report the Suspect– Use in-app tools to block the person immediately and report their behavior to the platform.
- Contact Law Enforcement or the National Human Trafficking Hotline– Call 911 if there is an immediate threat, or contact the hotline at 1-888-373-7888 or text “BeFree” (233733) for guidance.
- File a Report with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)– Go to [CyberTipline.org](https://www.cybertipline.org) to report grooming, exploitation, or online abuse.
- Get the Child Support– Seek counseling or trauma-informed support to help the child process what happened and begin to heal.



Helpful Resources

Learn More & Stay Informed



NetSmartz & KidSmartz

Description: Offers NetSmartz for online safety education and KidSmartz for child abduction prevention, plus helpful blogs and Digital Citizenship resources

Website: <https://www.missingkids.org>



Description: Independent reviews and age-based ratings for apps, video games, social media, plus digital citizenship guidance for families

Website: <https://www.commonsensemedia.org>



Description: AI monitors text messages, social media, apps, and email to alert parents to potential issues—cyberbullying, self-harm, adult content, trafficking indicators

Website: <https://www.bark.us>

THORN

Thorn / StopSextortion

Description: Specialized tools and resources combat online exploitation, sextortion, and child sexual abuse imagery.

Websites: <https://www.thorn.org>
& <https://www.stopsextortion.com>

Helpful Resources Continued



Blue Campaign (U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security)

Description: National public awareness initiative providing guidance and reporting tools on human trafficking.

Website: <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign>



Local ICAC & Anti-Trafficking Task Forces

Find local city/county law enforcement sites or state Attorney General pages.

Description: Regional task forces that investigate online child exploitation—often provide training and community awareness.



Description: Offers app and device reviews, practical tips, webinars, and digital safety resources for families. Their focus is on creating safer digital habits through faith-based and family-centered approaches.

Website: <https://protectyouneyes.com>



Polaris Project Hotline

Description: Operates the National Human Trafficking Hotline and provides data, survivor support, and outreach programs.

Website: <https://polarisproject.org>



About Courageous and Free


Courageous and Free Inc. is a nonprofit based in Central Florida working to combat human trafficking through education, prevention, and survivor restoration.

We equip communities to recognize the signs, speak up, and take action—because freedom should belong to everyone.

Learn More or Get Involved

 <https://courageousandfree.org>

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 1-833-ONE-HOPE

Together, we're fighting for freedom. One life at a time.