



How to protect yourself

When setting up an online profile about yourself, be very cautious about the information you are giving, even if the profile is on a site that only lets members view profiles. Sometimes even seemingly innocent or irrelevant facts about yourself can make identifying you much easier. For example, mentioning what position you play on a particular netball team can be enough information for someone to find out more about you, or even come and find you!

Always assume that any information and pics you post about yourself can be viewed by the entire world.

- If you are asked for any personal information or images (pics) about yourself (or about others), think very carefully about what the information might actually reveal, and how it might be used *before* you give it out. For example, think of the repercussions of your email address or mobile phone number falling into the wrong hands. If a website form asks you for details about yourself, such as your name, age, and email address, look for a privacy statement on the site that tells you about the site's policy about who will have access to your personal information, and how the site will use this information (just because a site claims not to 'sell' your private information, they still might 'share' or 'trade' it). If you are struggling with ways to tell people you don't want to tell them something or do something, email NetSafe for some ideas of things you can say.

Sometimes seemingly trivial pieces of information can be used against you. Never feel bad about politely refusing a person's request for information that you are not comfortable giving them.

- If you are using a webcam or phone cam as part of online chatting, or are taking pics of yourself, consider what and who is in the background. Do you really want the whole world seeing the personal stuff in your bedroom or office? It is a good idea to not have your bed in the background, and to spare a thought to what you are wearing when you chat with a cam online. Be conscious that, sadly, some people can make some very wrong assumptions about you based on what you are wearing. While you might feel comfortable going 'live' on a webcam in your pyjamas, some people might misinterpret this, and react in ways you would not like.

Various computer Trojan programs can turn your computer's cam on without you knowing. When you are not using your cam, remember to either cover it with a cloth, turn it to face a blank wall or floor, or disconnect its cable.

- Not only be wary of what you are asked to do or provide, but also be very cautious of what you are being offered. Not only are there many viruses and

Trojan programs that can compromise your security and safety, a groomer might try and send one of these programs to you (sometimes even hidden in a picture) so that they can access your computer.

- There really is no such thing as a free lunch in Cyberspace. Be suspicious of people's offers of gifts, money and favours. Think about what they might want in return. It is far better to feel that you do not 'owe' anything to anyone you are interacting with.

Groomers often get power over their victims by making them feel indebted to their kindness, or via blackmail and bribery.

- Remember to be cautious in your interactions with others in Cyberspace. Try to stay neutral rather than choosing provocative names (e.g. "BoredNsexy" might attract attention online you don't really want!), and be clear in what you mean.

Some people might misunderstand comments that you make, jokes that you tell, insults you make, the kind of pictures that you post and send, and even the name you call yourself.

- Lastly, as much as possible, try to keep your interactions online in healthy and open environments. Even though you can never tell who is in a chatroom with you, stay away from chats and sites that you think will likely have people in them that you do not want to meet (such as sex chatrooms, hate groups, etc).

Look for chatrooms that have good active moderation (where a site official is online supervising the chat) and clear policies regarding obscene or abusive behaviour. Groomers will likely consider well moderated chatrooms as being riskier with regard to possible detection.