

# Making Sense of Relationships

Lesson 3:  
**Safer online relationships**

Key stage 3

**NSPCC**

In partnership with

**PSHE**  
Association



# Lesson 3:

## Safer online relationships

Key stage

3

### Context

This is the third in a series of six lessons that focus on both empowering and supporting young people as they develop relationships. This lesson considers relationships in the online world and on social media, as well as how young people can protect themselves and their personal information.

While PSHE education lessons should be pacy, of course you want to meet the needs of your pupils. Since the activities take one hour to complete, this lesson is planned as a minimum one-hour lesson. But pupils can gain more

from a longer in depth exploration of an activity, so long as you are comfortable leading the discussion and you feel pupils are progressing towards the objectives. If you want to do this, you might want to extend the time to two lessons.

#### Note:

None of the lessons are designed to be taught in isolation. They should always form part of a planned, developmental PSHE education programme. These lessons would fit comfortably within other learning about relationships and sex education or as part of your teaching about online safety.

### Learning objectives

- We are learning about the benefits and challenges of social media for developing and maintaining relationships
- We are learning how to manage online risks

### Intended learning outcomes

- ✓ I can evaluate the benefits and challenges of using social media
- ✓ I can explain the risks and benefits of meeting people online and how those relationships differ to those established offline
- ✓ I can identify safe and unsafe online relationship behaviours
- ✓ I can explain how to minimise and respond to risks online
- ✓ I can seek help for myself or others if I am concerned

### Resources required

- Box or envelope for anonymous questions
- Creative materials for producing a storyboard (paper, pencils, ruler)
- Resource 1: *Talking Heads*
- Resource 2: *Story Stems*

### Climate for learning

Before teaching this lesson make sure you have read the accompanying Resource Guidance. It has guidance on establishing ground rules, the limits of confidentiality, communication and handling questions effectively.

### Key words

Social media, e-safety, online media, responsibility, profile settings

---

## Baseline activity

### Introduction 5 min

Revisit ground rules and remind pupils of the importance of keeping personal stories private. Draw attention to the anonymous question box and remind them that they can submit questions at any time, whether during or after the lesson.

Next share the learning objectives and outcomes with pupils. Explain that today the class will explore online relationships and personal safety when using social media.

### Baseline assessment activity 10 min

Ask pupils to evaluate their confidence about social media and e-safety. Display the learning outcomes on the board (or on printed sheets if you prefer). Then ask them to rate their confidence from 1-10 with 1 being not at all confident and 10 being extremely confident. These numbers should be written in exercise books or on the printed sheet (if provided) to be revisited at the end of the lesson.

- I can explain the benefits and challenges of using social media.
- I can explain the risks and benefits of meeting people online and how those relationships differ to those established offline.
- I can explain how to minimise and respond to risks online.
- I can identify safe and unsafe online relationship behaviours.

You can circulate the room and observe where pupils are identifying their confidence levels are at the start of the lesson. If you consider it appropriate in the classroom environment, you may ask pupils to show their numbers to you (either through holding up the relevant number of fingers, standing in a line representing 1-10, or holding up mini-whiteboards with their confidence number written on it).

## Core activities

### Evaluating social media 10 min

Ask pupils to draw a table with positives and advantages on one side and negatives and drawbacks on the other. Ask them to work in pairs or small groups to reflect on social media as a form of communication. Encourage them to add as many ideas as possible to each side of the table (aiming for at least 5 on each).

Reinforce that to participate in this activity they don't need to be on social media and that they should think of general ideas rather than personal experiences or specific sites.

You might want to support their thinking by giving them headings or prompts:

- Sharing information
- Connecting with people
- Entertainment or distraction?
- Source of support or constant pressure?
- How often and easy is it to use?

Take feedback from the class, asking each pair or group to share one idea in turn until all main ideas have been covered. You may choose to compile a class list on the board to display throughout the lesson.

### **NB You may want to draw out any key positives or negatives that are not mentioned during feedback.**

*Example Positives: you can get information quickly and from different people / sources / experts, connecting with people cheaply and easily from all over the world, getting new perspectives, it provides independence, it's interesting / fun / entertaining, a good way to express yourself or meet new people, boost your confidence.*

*Example Negatives: information can be unreliable / hard to tell if its reliable or not, can lead to negative comments / bullying / hate speech, can have impact on self-esteem, body image and mental health, may see something online that is inappropriate/upsetting (e.g. violent or sexual content), bad to use late at night because it can stop you sleeping, can be distracting when you have to focus on other things (e.g. homework).*

---

## **Talking heads 10 min**

As a class, read the *Talking Heads sheet* about the characters' use of social media. Ask pupils to identify similarities and differences in these people's experiences of social media.

Ask questions to get feedback:

- How do people use social media differently?
- Have these people identified positives and negatives of social media?
- Why do people take and post selfies?
- How might using social media affect someone's self-esteem?
- Are any of these people's opinions concerning? Why?

As a class, return to the list created of the positives and negatives of social media. Ask pupils if any of their ideas were identified by the characters, and if there is anything else they would like to add.

### **For pupils who need support:**

Ask pupils to select one or two characters from the *Talking Heads sheet* and to rewrite or say the comments in their own words. Pupils should then decide if they think the character likes using social media or not and why.

### **For pupils who need a challenge:**

Ask pupils to give advice about using social media to one or two characters from the *Talking Heads sheet*, suggesting how they should change their online behaviour.

## **Recognising and responding to risk 25 min**

Explain to pupils that you are going to tell them a story about a young person who starts a relationship online. Their task will be to finish the story as a storyboard, which should include how they think the young person should respond to the situation, why this would be the best thing to do, what the consequences would be and where they might go to seek further help.

Below are two possible story stems. The first focuses on an instance of cyberbullying, the second focuses on an example of online grooming. Teachers should decide whether they want to present one story to the whole class, to divide the class in half to focus on a separate story each, or (if time allows) for the whole group to consider both stories.

### *Story Stem 1 – Cyberbullying*

George has joined a new anonymous social networking site which allows people to post things without others knowing who it really comes from. He likes it because it means he can explore his interests without being judged by others for his views or what he posts. But recently, he has started receiving lots of really negative comments and questions, some of which are quite personal. He thinks the messages are coming from someone at school, because they know so much about him, but he doesn't know who it could be or what to do next...

### *Story Stem 2 – Online Grooming*

Mariam recently had a friend request from a boy she didn't know. He seemed nice and kept asking her lots of jokey questions and before she knew it, they got into a really long conversation about their favourite books and music and films. They spoke a few more times before she accepted him as a friend, and he has commented on lots of her photos since and gives her loads of compliments. Yesterday, he saw a photo of her in school uniform and sent a private message saying he attends the school down the road. He added 'Do you want to chat on cam later? What time do your parents go to bed?'

---

### **For pupils who need support:**

Before pupils begin to draft their storyboards, discuss as a class the potential risks and positive opportunities in each scenario, and the potential tensions or differences between online and offline relationships, as well as suitable and unsuitable responses to each scenario.

NB: It is particularly important that young people recognise, for example, that the “boy” Mariam has met online may not be who he says he is..

### **For pupils who need a challenge:**

Ask pupils to script a conversation between the characters in their storyboard, demonstrating both what they are thinking and saying. This script should make it clear whom the character has chosen to talk to and should demonstrate how the characters might resolve this situation in the safest way possible.

## **Assessment for and of learning**

Take feedback from the class, asking them to offer suggestions about how they chose to resolve the story in their storyboard. This feedback could be through whole class discussion or through some pupils presenting their work to each other. Ensure that feedback challenges risky or dangerous resolutions to the stories and instead highlights the following points:

*It can be very difficult to know a person online is who they say they are, especially if the relationship began online. Even though it might feel as if Mariam knows and trusts her new online friend, she cannot be sure who she is talking to. Concerns to look out for include controlling behaviour, trying to separate a person from their other friends, using blackmail to manipulate someone, not accepting a person’s boundaries, etc.*

*If a person experiences something online that makes them uncomfortable, there are several ways to respond, including: using the report abuse button, contacting the website administrators, reporting to a trusted adult (e.g. a teacher or a parent), taking a screenshot of the offensive language and saving (but not passing on), never meeting someone you do not know alone (e.g. in a public place, taking a friend or adult with you, telling someone where you are going), telling an adult about the person you have met online, questioning why the person has made contact in the first place, not revealing too much personal or private information online (e.g. where you live or go to school, personal photos).*

Teachers may wish to refer to the school’s anti-bullying and e-safety policies at this point during the lesson.

### **Assessing (demonstrating) progress      5 min**

Ask pupils to return to their baseline assessments from the start of the lesson. Display the learning outcomes on the board (or on printed sheets if you prefer) and ask them to think again about their confidence from 1-10, 1 being not at all confident and 10 being extremely confident.

Ask questions to get feedback:

- *I can explain the benefits and challenges of using social media.*
- *I can explain the risks and benefits of meeting people online and how those relationships differ to those established offline.*
- *I can explain how to minimise and respond to risks online.*
- *I can identify safe and unsafe online relationship behaviours.*
- *I can describe how and where to get help if I am worried about something or someone online.*

If pupils have written their scores at the start of the lesson, they should now write them in a different colour pen to help demonstrate the change in confidence from the start to the end of the lesson. Where possible, encourage pupils to give reasons for their change in confidence levels (either in writing or through verbal feedback, if appropriate). You should circulate the room to promote discussions about progress with pupils.

If you have encouraged pupils to report their confidence at the start (through holding up fingers, standing in a line or mini-whiteboards), the same method should be used at the end of the lesson.

---

### Signposting support

It is important to signpost sources of support for pupils. Begin by explaining whom pupils can speak to in school, if they have concerns about their social media usage or about a relationship they have online (for example their form tutor, head of year, school counsellor). You should also highlight other safe sources of support beyond school, which may include:

**childline.org.uk**

**childnet.com**

**thinkuknow.co.uk**

## Extension activities and home learning

### Extension Activity 1:

Ask pupils to write a letter or a persuasive speech directed at the head of a social media site (encourage pupils to choose their own site rather than providing a specific one). The letter should provide advice to the social media company about how to support young people online, specifically recommending new rules, guidance or boundaries to be put in place.

Ideas and suggestions for rules may need to be discussed as a class first, for example:

*It should be made clear when photos have been edited or changed*

*Privacy settings should automatically be set to maximum unless the user changes them*

*People who are not your friends shouldn't be able to send you a private message*

*Sites should have to reply if you report abuse to explain what they are doing*

*Sites should be stricter about the age limit for joining or there should be specific social media that is user friendly and safe for younger people*

To support this discussion, teachers may wish to share the 5rightscampaign, designed to establish young people's rights online: **5rightsframework.com**

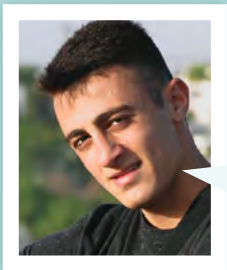
## Resource 1

### Talking heads – social media experiences.



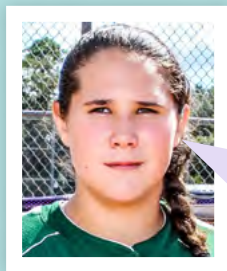
I mostly use social media to get to know new people. I get friend requests all the time and I never reject a request. I have almost 1,000 friends online. I think if you take a good selfie people like you more. Boys definitely like girls who post more selfies.

There's pressure to like and comment on each other's posts. If your best friend posts something on a social network, you have to comment or like it within the first 5 minutes, then they will do it back to you.



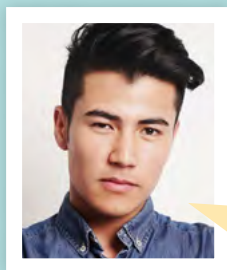
I take at least four or five pictures before I post one to social media. I usually use filters so the light and colour are right, and so any spots or imperfections I have are blurred. You need to take it from a high angle and to get your good side.

I use social media only to talk to my friends. I have really high privacy settings so that people I didn't know couldn't find me or make friends with me. I hate the thought that strangers would pry into my life. I try to avoid posting too much about my personal life and just stick to uploading stuff about my favourite bands and films.



It makes me feel awful if I don't get likes or if people leave nasty comments. I have taken down my posts before, if they don't get enough likes. Sometimes I feel jealous that other people get way more attention than I do on social media. Also, I hate it if someone posts a picture of me without checking first. I just feel so embarrassed if I don't like the way I look. I've fallen out with people about that before, definitely.

When I used to feel down or bad about myself I would go online and look at my friend's pages. But after a while I realised it made me feel worse, to see them all having fun and looking amazing when I felt rubbish. I recognised I get serious FOMO (fear of missing out). So now I go on social media less and I never go on when I'm feeling upset, stressed or angry, because I know it makes me feel worse.



I don't post selfies hardly at all anymore because I can't be bothered with nasty comments. I once posted one wearing my school uniform and my mum freaked out, so I stopped uploading them. I really like social media, but I mostly use it when I'm in gaming communities. Personally, I think posting selfies is really attention seeking and vain.

---

## Resource 2

### Story stems

#### Story Stem 1

##### **Cyberbullying**

George has joined a new anonymous social networking site which allows people to post things without others knowing who it really comes from. He likes it because it means he can explore his interests without being judged by others for his views or what he posts. But recently, he has started receiving lots of really negative comments and questions, some of which are quite personal. He thinks the messages are coming from someone at school, because they know so much about him, but doesn't know who it could be or what to do next...

#### Story Stem 2

##### **Cyberbullying**

Mariam recently had a friend request from a boy she didn't know. He seemed nice and kept asking her lots of jokey questions and before she knew it, they got into a really long conversation about their favourite books and music and films. They spoke a few more times before she accepted him as a friend, and he has commented on lots of her photos since and gives her loads of compliments. Yesterday, he saw a photo of her in school uniform and sent a private message saying he attends the school down the road. He added 'Do you want to chat on cam later? What time do your parents go to bed?' ...



Together we can help children who've been abused to rebuild their lives. Together we can protect children at risk. And, together, we can find the best ways of preventing child abuse from ever happening.

We change the law. We visit schools across the country, helping children understand what abuse is. And, through our Childline service, we give young people a voice when no one else will listen.

But all this is only possible with your support. Every pound you raise, every petition you sign, every minute of your time, will help make sure we can fight for every childhood.

**[nspcc.org.uk](https://www.nspcc.org.uk)**

---

Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is a school subject that supports pupils to be healthy, safe and prepared for modern life. The PSHE education curriculum covers a range of pressing issues facing children and young people today, including those relating to relationships, mental and physical health, staying safe and aware online, financial literacy and careers.

The PSHE Association is the national body for PSHE education. A charity and membership organisation, the Association works to improve PSHE education standards by supporting over 20,000 teachers and schools with advice, training and support. Find out more at **[pshe-association.org.uk](https://www.pshe-association.org.uk)**

© NSPCC 2018. Registered charity (England and Wales: 216401, Scotland SC037717, Photography by Pixabay.com. The people pictured are models. J20171436.

**NSPCC**

In partnership with

**PSHE**  
Association

