TEACHER GUIDE · MODULE 2 · AGES 14 TO 18 · 50 MINUTES

# Fake Profiles & Manipulation

Essential question: How can I tell when an online connection is risky, even when it feels friendly?

## Overview

Module 2 begins with online risk. Not every risk starts in a dramatic way: it often starts with attention, flattery, and someone who seems almost too perfect. The goal is not to make students panic or fear every stranger. It is to help them spot **patterns** early: identity, secrecy, speed and pressure. Module 1 (Healthy Relationships Offline, Online, and Boundaries & Consent) is recommended first.

### Students will be able to

1. Recognize clues that a profile may be fake or misleading, and explain why the pattern matters more than one clue.
2. Identify manipulation tactics: flattery, fast intensity, gifts, constant contact and secrecy.
3. Explain why moving a chat, disappearing messages and small boundary tests can increase risk.
4. Know four steps when something feels off: pause, save it, block or report, tell someone.

### Key vocabulary

| Term | Meaning |
|---|---|
| Fake profile | An account that pretends to be someone else, or hides who is really behind it. |
| Manipulation | Using attention, gifts, guilt or flattery to get you to do things you wouldn't normally do. |
| Red flag | A warning sign that something might not be safe. |
| Secrecy | Being asked to hide a relationship or a chat from friends and family. |
| Boundary test | A small push to see whether you will say no, before bigger requests. |
| Evidence | Screenshots of messages and the account, saved in case you need help. |

### Materials

- Sticky notes, 2 per student
- Wall signs: Lower risk, Warning sign, High risk (wall-signs.pdf)
- Scenario cards, one set per group of 4 (scenario-cards.pdf)
- Student activity sheets, one per student (student-activity-sheets.pdf)
- Quiz, one per student (quiz.pdf)

- Family tips to send home (family-tips.pdf)
- The lesson video, at the top of the lesson web page (about 1 minute 40 seconds)

## Before you teach

- **Tone.** Warm, direct, alert but not scary. Most online contacts are fine. The skill is noticing patterns.
- **Agree on ground rules.** No names, usernames or screenshots of real people. It is fine to pass.
- **Keep it non-graphic.** Card 7 mentions a request for a private photo. Keep discussion at that level.
- **Never blame.** If a student was manipulated, the fault is with the person who did it. Avoid "you should have known."
- **If a student discloses.** Listen calmly, do not promise secrecy, and follow your child protection policy the same day. Never ask to see private images. Take It Down (takeitdown.ncmec.org) can help remove images taken before 18.

## Lesson procedure

| Step | Time | Activity |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Warm up | 5 min | Friends you've never met |
| 2. Learn | 10 min | The video, and the three zones |
| 3. Discuss | 15 min | Scenario cards in groups |
| 4. Create | 12 min | Write a reply that slows it down |
| 5. Wrap up | 8 min | Four steps, quiz and exit ticket |

### 1. Warm up: Friends you've never met (5 min)

1. Hand out two sticky notes per student.
2. > *"On one note, write a place where you talk to people you have never met in person: a game, an app, a group. On the other, write one thing that would make you trust someone online."*
3. Group the notes. Point out that trust online is often built on very little information.

### 2. Learn: Lower risk, warning sign, or high risk? (10 min)

1. Play the lesson video. Pause on the profile and ask: > *"Which clues did you notice? Does one clue prove anything?"*
2. Walk through the three zones on page 1 of the student sheets.
3. Stress the four words: **Identity, Secrecy, Speed, Pressure**. And: *trust your confusion; a healthy person backs off.*
4. Quick check: read each line below aloud and have students point to a sign.

| Message | Zone |
|---|---|
| “No pressure. Talk later if you want.” | Lower risk |
| “Delete this chat after you read it.” | High risk |
| “Can we video call sometime?” | Lower risk |
| “Don’t tell anyone we talk.” | High risk |
| “I feel like we have a real connection already.” (after one day) | Warning sign |
| “Let’s move to another app.” | Warning sign |

### 3. Discuss: Scenario cards (15 min)

1. Put students in groups of 4. Give each group 2 or 3 cards, including at least one Lower risk card (2 or 8).
2. Groups decide the zone and answer the questions on their activity sheet.
3. Each group shares one card. A student stands under the matching wall sign. Ask: *“Which clue moved it from warning sign to high risk?”*

### 4. Create: Write a reply that slows it down (12 min)

1. Remind students that they don’t owe anyone online an explanation. *“I’m not comfortable with that.” “I don’t keep secrets from my family.” “I’m staying on this app.”*
2. For one card, students write a short reply and the next step they would take (save, block, report, tell).
3. Students tick their online safety habits on page 3.

### 5. Wrap up (8 min)

1. Teach the four steps for when something feels off:

**1 Pause**
Don’t rush to keep the conversation going.

**2 Save it**
Keep screenshots of messages and the account.

**3 Block / report**
Use the app’s tools if it crosses a line.

**4 Tell someone**
Talk to a trusted adult or a safe person.

2. Students complete the quiz (4 min), then go through the answers.
3. Students fill in the exit ticket. Hand out the family tips.

## Teacher key: scenario cards

| Card | Zone | Signs to notice |
|---|---|---|
| 1. The new follower | Warning sign | Several clues together: a new account, few photos, no real-life connections, and avoiding video calls. |
| 2. No pressure | Lower risk | They know each other offline, there are friends in common, and Karim has room to leave without guilt. |
| 3. Too much, too soon | Warning sign | Big feelings very early, and constant contact. Fast trust is not the same as real trust. |
| 4. Just between us | High risk | Secrecy is a major warning sign. It cuts Maya off from people who could give her a reality check. |
| 5. Free game credit | Warning sign | Gifts can create a feeling of owing something. Watch what is asked for in return. |
| 6. Disappearing messages | High risk | Moving away from safety settings and deleting messages removes evidence and accountability. |
| 7. Small tests | High risk | Boundary tests that grow step by step. A healthy person backs off when you are uncomfortable. A risky person keeps pushing. |
| 8. The video call | Lower risk | An open, group call is easy to check, and “not this week” is accepted without pushing. |

Cards 2 and 8 show what safer online contact looks like. Point out what makes them different: offline connections, openness, and accepting “not now.”

## Where to get help

Write these on the board, with your school counselor’s name and room.

### 1564

National Lifeline for emotional support, open 24/7

### LARA

Email for support and guidance: laraa@laraa.org

### 112

Internal Security Forces, if someone is in danger or threatening you

**Take It Down** (takeitdown.ncmec.org): Free help to remove private images taken before you turned 18. The image never leaves your device.

# Activity 6 answer guide: Reflect

Students complete three sentence starters. These are examples of strong answers, not the only right ones. Use them to check understanding and to correct the common misconception in each "Watch out for" line. Online, students see the same examples after they finish the activity.

## 1. One clue I will look for in a profile is...

**Strong answers include:**

- How new the account is
- Very few photos, or no tagged friends
- Photos that look like a model or a stock image
- No mutual friends I actually know
- A story that doesn't add up

**Watch out for:** "One clue proves it's fake." One clue proves nothing. When several clues pile up, slow down and look closer.

## 2. One manipulation tactic I can now recognize is...

**Strong answers include:**

- Asking to keep our chats secret
- Moving the chat to a private app or disappearing messages
- Heavy flattery, too much too fast
- Small requests that slowly get bigger
- Rushing me to decide

**Watch out for:** "It's only manipulation if something bad has already happened." Feeling confused or uneasy is often the first signal.

## 3. If something online felt off, I would tell...

**Strong answers include:**

- A parent, carer or another trusted adult
- A teacher or school counsellor
- The app, by keeping the chat, blocking and reporting
- National Lifeline 1564
- LARA at laraa@laraa.org

**Watch out for:** "I need proof before I tell anyone." You don't need proof that it's serious enough. Get a second opinion early.