

# Meeting People Online



Meeting people online is complicated. You have to spend a lot of energy to create your profile. It can be overwhelming.

These tips will help you.

**SARTAC is NOT suggesting you should try online dating. We are providing this information because some people asked us to share information on online dating.**

# Choosing an App

There are many Apps people use for Online Dating. **Most of these Apps cost money to use.** Think about: What ARE You Looking For?:

- Religious Apps (**Jdate** (Jewish adults), **Christian Mingle**, **CatholicMatch**)
- Monogamy, long-term, or marriage-minded? (**eHarmony**, **Match.com**, **SilverSingles**)
- Some dating apps let you **filter people by interests, or background.** **Hinge, Bumble, Match** — you can list your beliefs or interests in your profile or use filters.
- LGBTQ+ Dating? (**Grindr**, **HER**, **OkCupid**)



# Disability-related Dating Apps

There are many choices for dating Apps. If you want to focus on meeting others with disabilities. Here are some examples:



- [Dateability](#)
- [Dating Handicapped](#)
- [Whispers4U](#)
- [Dating4Disabled](#)
- [Hiki](#)
- [Hello-It's Me](#)

# Setting up a profile: Short and sweet

Now that you've settled on a site, it's time to make your profile. **One question is whether or not to disclose your disability.**



Put your best self out there. Highlighting what makes you great.

Write about what you like to do, like your hobbies, and your idea of a perfect date. Include goals you are working toward, like going to college, writing poetry, or learning a new language.

# Setting up a profile: Short and sweet (Continued)



Ask a friend to help you write your profile. A good friend may notice strengths and qualities you do not always see in yourself. It can also make the process easier and more enjoyable. Working on it together — maybe over a relaxed drink or snack — can turn it into a fun activity instead of a chore.

# Setting up a profile: Short and sweet (Continued)



If you include a lot of negativity in your profile, it will turn people off.

Adding pictures is another hard choice to make. Include at least two pictures. A close-up of your face, and one farther away.

# What do we do to help protect ourselves?



- Do not share your home address right away.
- Do not send money or gift cards to someone you met online.
- Be careful sharing private photos.
- If someone refuses to video chat, that can be a warning sign.
- Meet in public places the first time.
- Tell a trusted friend or support person where you are going.
- Use the app's **block and report** features if something feels wrong.
- Confidence: there are over 7 billion people in the world. There will be more to pick from if we move on from this person!

# Common Online Scams & Avoiding Them



Sometimes, people will try to lie to you online.

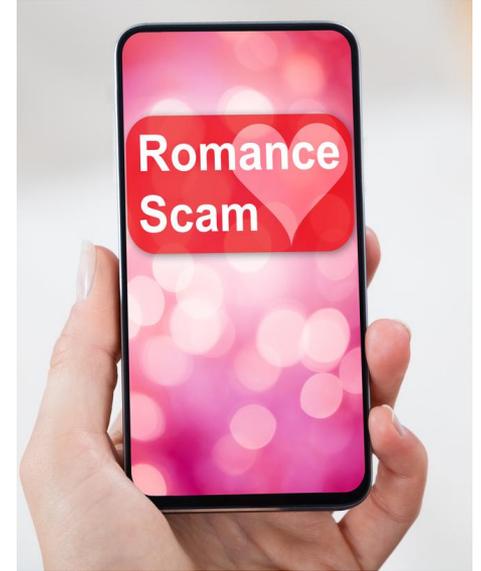
Catfishing is making a fake profile to trick someone. Their picture can be fake.

## Warning Signs of Catfishing

- The photo looks like a model or very professional.
- The person refuses to video chat.
- The photo shows up under another name online.
- They quickly ask for money or personal information.

# Step-By-Step Instructions to Check a Photo Using Google

1. Go to **images.google.com**
2. Click the small **camera icon** in the search bar.
3. Click “**Upload a file.**”
4. Choose the photo from your computer.
5. Google will show you:
  - a. Where else the photo appears online
  - b. Similar images
  - c. Websites using the same picture



If the photo shows up with **different names**, on **model websites**, or on **many social media accounts**, that is a red flag.

# Here are some simple ways to check if someone's profile is real

## 1. Check Their Identity:

- Check Social Media: Look at their social media accounts (like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter) to see if their information (name, photos, job) matches up.
- Ask for Proof: Nicely ask them to prove who they are with a video call or by giving more details that you can check.



# Here are some simple ways to check if someone's profile is real

## 2. Look Them Up Online:

- Google Their Name: Search for their name and other details (like where they work) to see what you find.
- Watch for Red Flags: Be careful if their profile has little information, fake-looking photos, or vague details.



# Here are some simple ways to check if someone's profile is real



## 3. Watch How They Communicate:

- Check for Inconsistencies: See if their answers match what they've said before.
- Ask Specific Questions: Ask detailed questions that need specific answers. Scammers usually can't give good details.
- Check Grammar and Language: Bad grammar or generic answers can be a sign of a scam.

# Here are some simple ways to check if someone's profile is real

## 4. Protect Your Information:

- Don't Share Too Much: Keep your personal info (like your address or bank details) private until you are sure they are real.
- Use Safe Platforms: Talk to them using secure, well-known websites or apps.



# Here are some simple ways to check if someone's profile is real

## 5. Trust Your Gut:

- Be Careful: If something feels weird or too good to be true, it probably is.
- Ask for Help: Talk to friends or family if you are unsure, or look for advice online.

These steps can help you stay safe and know if someone is telling the truth online



# What to do if get a message on a Dating App

**1st: Make sure the person is telling the truth.**

**Make sure to check their profile for online safety.**

If they seem real...decide if you want to write back

- Response Time: Try to get back to people within 24 hours.
- Ghosting: If you haven't heard back from someone you were talking to in 2-3 days, unless there's a very clear reason, move on.
- Ask questions, listen. Do something fun online together.



## 3 examples of first messages. Which one is safe? Why or why not?

**#1:** Hi

**#2:** Hi, I'm Kate. You look like just the person for me. You're hot and you look cuddly and I'm guessing you really like animals because you look like an animal person to me. I'm so lonely. It's been like 10 years and I don't have a girlfriend. I live at 1313 Mockingbird Lane. What's your number?

**#3:** Hi, I'm Melissa. I liked your profile, so I thought I might take a chance and introduce myself, if that's ok? Did I read you're into the Marvel Cinematic Universe? Right now I'm rewatching Loki on Disney. I really enjoy all of the MCU myself! What shows or movies are you currently watching? I'd love to chat about that, and perhaps see what else we might have in common, if you like! Thank you!

# How to Strike Up A First Online Conversation

- Take time to observe how communication works on the app you're using.
- Explore profiles patiently: Note what's actually there - don't tell yourself what you THINK or HOPE is there. Look for profiles that seem compatible...
- If someone messages you, DO NOT just jump into engaging them - they could be a scammer! Or, just not someone you're into.
- **Remember: there are 7.5 Billion people in the world. Some won't work. Take your time.**



# How to Strike Up A First Online Conversation



- When you find a profile you like, try a casual, friendly message to start. Ask a question about interests to help spark conversation.
- Tell them a little something about yourself as well (“I like cats too!”), so that it gives the other person something to ask you a question about in return
- Remember: you may have to try a LOT! Not everyone will respond. That’s normal.
- Keep in mind your emotional tools to deal with frustration!

# Did I Find Someone That's a Possible Match?

You're getting messages from a person that feel kind and make you happy. You seem to like the same things and can have fun together. You've made sure they are who they say they are (see Part 1 for tips on this).

You both have been honest about what you want (a long-term relationship? Casual dating?).

NOTE: Even if you want a long-term relationship, you don't have to pick just one person right away. You might want to settle down quickly, but it's okay to date a few people first to be sure!



# If You Found a Match... Let's Go On a Date!

When you feel ready, tell them you want to go on a date outside of the app. See if they feel the same way. (This is also a good way to make sure they're real and not a scammer!)

Decide together: in-person or online, like a video chat? Either way, choose something you both like to do.



# Safety Considerations for the First Dates

**Safety** If you meet in person, tell someone what you are doing. Tell a friend where you're going and when you'll be home.

**Safety** Don't share personal information like your home address on a first date

**Meet in a public place and do something fun** - Just sitting in a coffee shop can feel awkward. You can still go for coffee, but maybe take it to go and walk around the block instead of just sitting there.

Respect each other's choices! Yours and theirs



**The following slides are extra.**

**They are about dating**

# More Suggestions on Setting up a Profile

Some people may include a photo of them using a wheelchair, as it gives people a better understanding of their disability.

- Use some “action shots”. Profiles that use action shots seem to get more attention. Avoid group photos. They can be confusing
- Tell the TRUTH! Remember your privacy
- Let (kind & positive) others help you
- Not too short, not too long. Maybe 2-4 sentences per question on the profile.
- If you can, look at others’ profiles and take ideas you like. Just make them your own!

# More Ways You Can Protect Yourself...



- Ask for a brand new picture of them touching their nose.
- Ask to FaceTime/video chat.
- Google what information they DO have available to see if it may be true. See if their photos historically are tagged with friends and family.
- Google the text in their profile(s) to see if it's been used anywhere else on the internet.

# Steps to getting a date: Questions to ask yourself

## Reality Check:

- WHY do I want to date? Is my reason based on what I want or am I feeling peer pressure to find a date?

## Rejection:

- Am I prepared to deal with all the FEELINGS that can come up?
- What will I do if I feel sad or mad if someone rejects me?

## Realistic:

- What do I really want to happen if I start dating?





# Disability-related Dating

Our advice: Be open and honest. Talk about your disability in your profile, but it shouldn't be the FOCUS!

Talk about yourself as the whole person you are. Use the positive language about yourself that you deserve. Ask a friend how you could say that in your profile?

- What do you want to tell this person about you?
- What do your friends and family think are the best qualities you have?
- What photo would you like to use?
- What positive language do you want to use to describe yourself?

# Disability-related Dating (Continued)

- What people's profiles look interesting to you?
- What people are attractive, kind, list plenty of detail, and seem to have at least 2 common interests?
- What will you say when you reach out to each person?
- How will you handle negative interactions? Like they don't respond? Or they are mean to you?
- Will you bring up your disability in your profile?



Now that you've met someone and you are "Talking" or "Courting"

# Some Courting Dos & Don'ts



**DO:** Know and be clear about what you're looking for

**DO:** Think about Safety if you meet in person

**DO:** Be willing to let them go if it doesn't work out.

**DON'T:** Worry too much. This can't be forced.

**DON'T:** Violate your boundaries, or those of others!

**DON'T:** Exchange "sexts" (esp video or images) over the internet. It's almost never a good idea socially, or legally.

# How to Respond to Negative Interactions

**Do not to be mean back - you could get kicked off the app yourself.**

**Step One: Let Yourself Feel It** - Feeling sad, angry, or disappointed is okay. Find healthy ways to handle your emotions. Talk to someone, write in your journal, or go for a walk.

**Step Two: Accept It** - Accept being rejected. If the other person isn't interested, you need to respect their boundaries.

**Step Three: Look on the Bright Side** - Being rejected is okay. You are still a good person. Sometimes matches do not work out. We won't always fit with everyone, and that's okay. You are free to find someone else.

**Step Four: Boost Your Confidence** - Rejection can hurt. Ask your friends for reminders of how great you are. Put sticky notes on your mirrors that say, "I am a good person," or "I am worthy of love."

**Step Five: Get Back in the Game** - Don't rush, but when you're ready, try dating again. Think of dating as a way to learn what you like and don't like in a partner.

Adapted by Green Mountain Self-Advocates with permission from [Elevatus](#) Kate Napolitano, MA, LCSW

# If You Found a Match... Let's Go On a Date!

**You've decided to go on a date:** These tips are for any kind of dating, whether you met online or in person.



- Where will you go?
- Somewhere in-person?
- In person: bowling? Picnic in a park? A pottery-painting store?

(Try something that lets you both talk and interact, so you can see if you're a good match. Maybe not a movie or sports game where you just watch and don't talk.)

Think about safety too.

# Let's Go On a Date! Things to Think About...

1. Online? Video chat? In person?
2. What will you do on your date? How will you dress for your date?
3. Will you bring a small gift?
4. What can you do if something awkward happens?
5. How will you decide if you want another date? (Did you feel comfortable, laugh, and were they nice to you?)
6. What will you do to say goodbye if you want to see them again?
7. What will you do to say goodbye if you don't want to see them again?
8. How will you handle it if they don't want another date, but you do?
9. How will you handle it if you don't want another date, but they do?
10. Where can you learn more about dating?

# Why would someone make a fake profile?



- A person might make a fake profile because they are **lonely** (see 2010 documentary “Catfish”; MTV show)
- A person might make a fake profile because they are a **criminal**. They want to steal your money or personal information.

**Sweet Bobby: My Catfish Nightmare** is a true story about a woman who thought she was in a real online relationship. Over time, she learned that the person she trusted was not real and had been lying to her. The film is on Netflix.

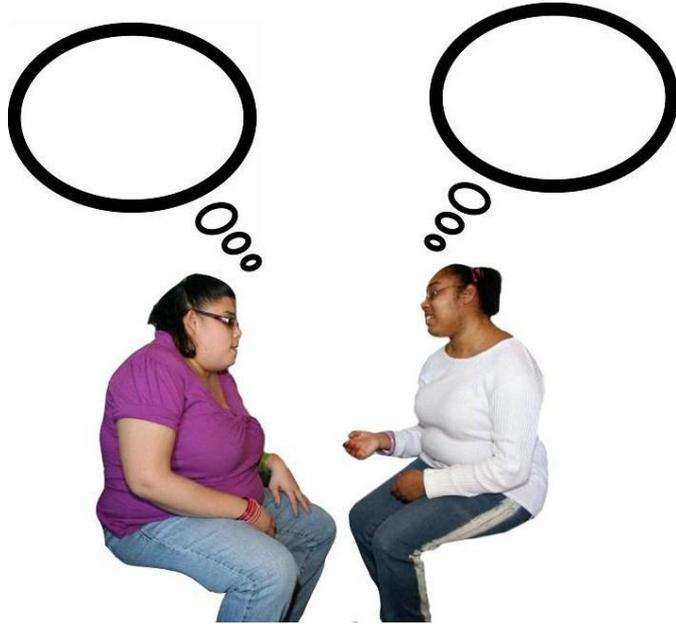
Adapted by Green Mountain Self-Advocates with permission from Elevatus Kate Napolitano, MA, LCSW

# Spotting Trustworthy & Not Trustworthy Behavior Online



- What does trustworthy vs. untrustworthy behavior look like, specifically online?
- A trustworthy person online will **NEVER** ask you to change/break your stated boundaries, no matter how long you've been talking (weeks, months, years).
- Can you help the person you support to think of this as a “fun” first screening step?

# Role Play: Online Safety



## Scenario with a Friend:

“My new online boyfriend is great. It’s my birthday next week. He wants to give me \$500 for my birthday.”  
What should you say?