

Don't Fall for Fake: Activity 2

Who are you, really?

In this activity, your children practice their anti-phishing skills by acting out – and discussing possible responses to – suspicious online texts, posts, friend requests, pictures, and email.

Goals for children



- ✓ **Recognize** that their online audience might be bigger than they think.
- ✓ **Confirm** that they really know the identity of the people they talk with online.
- ✓ **Stop** and think before they “friend” or connect with someone online.
- ✓ **Be careful** about whom they give personal information to and what kinds of things they share.
- ✓ **Ask** questions and/or seek help from an adult if they aren't sure.
- ✓ **Tell** an adult if someone tries to discuss something online that makes them uncomfortable.
- ✓ **Act** with honesty in all their online interactions.

Let's talk



How do you know it's really them?

When you're on the phone with your friend, you can tell it's them by the sound of their voice, even though you can't see them. The online world is a little different, though. Sometimes it's harder to be sure someone is who they say they are. In apps and games, people sometimes pretend to be someone else as a joke, or to mess with them in a mean way. Other times, they impersonate people to steal personal information. When you're on the Internet, people you don't know could ask to connect with you. The safest thing to do is not to respond or to tell a parent or adult you trust that you don't know the person trying to connect with you. But if you decide it's okay to respond, it's a really good idea to see what you can find out about them first. Check their profile, see who their friends are, or search for other information that confirms they're who they say they are.

There are multiple ways to verify someone's identity online. Here are a few examples to get us started.

Educator note

You might consider leading a family brainstorm on the question “How do we verify a person's identity online?” first; then continue the conversation with these thought starters.

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- **Is their profile photo suspicious?**

Is their profile photo blurry or hard to see? Or is there no photo at all, like a bitmoji or cartoon character's face? Bad photos, bitmojis, photos of pets, etc., make it easy for a person to hide their identity in social media. It's also common for scammers to steal photos from a real person in order to set up a fake profile and pretend to be them. Can you find more photos of the person with the same name associated?

- **Does their username contain their real name?**

On social media, for instance, does their screen name match a real name? (For example, Jane Doe's profile has a URL like SocialMedia.com/jane_doe.)

- **Do they have a profile bio?**

If so, does it sound like it was written by a real person? Fake accounts might not have much "About Me" information or might have a bunch of information copied or pulled together randomly to create a fake profile. Is there anything in their bio that you can confirm by searching for it?

- **How long has the account been active? Does the activity you see line up with your expectations?**

Does the activity you see line up with your expectations? Is the profile new or does it show a lot of activity? Does the person have mutual friends with you like you would expect? Fake accounts usually don't have much content or signs of people posting, commenting, and socializing in them.

Activity



Materials needed:

- A copy of the "Who are you, really?" worksheet. Phishing cheat sheet

Pick one or several scenario from this container and talk about how you should respond to this situation. If there's 3 or more of you, you can start by acting out a scenario (one person narrating, a second performing the "message", a third responding, a fourth explaining the reasoning...), then discuss while checking the cheat sheet. Feel free to imagine more messages that you think would be even trickier.

Takeaway

You control whom you talk to online. Make sure the people you connect with are who they say they are!

Who are you, really?

Here are five scenarios of messages anyone could get online or on their phone. Each has a list of ways you could respond, some great and others not so much. See if they make sense to you – or if you think of other responses. If one of these scenarios really happens to you and you're not sure what to do, the easiest response is no response. You can always ignore or block them. It also never hurts to talk with a parent or teacher about it.

Scenario 1

You get this message from someone you don't recognize: "Hey! You seem like a fun person to hang out with. Let's have some fun together! Can you add me to your friends list? – Stan." What do you do?

- **Ignore Stan.** If you don't know him, you can just decide not to talk to him, period.
- **"Hi, Stan. Do I know you?"** If you aren't sure, ask first.
- **Block Stan.** If you've checked who he is and decide to block him, you won't get any more messages from him. On most social media platforms, he won't even know you blocked him.
- **Check Stan's profile.** Be careful – fake profiles are easy to make! Check this guy's friends list and see whom he's connected to. His circle of friends can be another way to tell whether or not he's real – especially if you don't know anyone he knows! If not much is going on on his page, that's another hint that he isn't for real.
- **Add Stan to your friends list.** IF he seems okay. This isn't recommended, unless you've verified who he is and checked with an adult you trust.
- **Give him personal info.** Never give personal information to people you don't know.

Scenario 2

You get a text message on your cell phone from someone you don't recognize. "Hey, this is Corey! Remember me from last summer?" What do you do?

- **Block Corey.** This would feel rude if you actually know her. But if you're sure you didn't meet anyone named Corey last summer or she's sending you too many texts and oversharing about herself, it would be fine to block her.
- **Ignore Corey.** If you don't know this person, you can just not respond.
- **"Hi, Corey. Do I know you?"** This is a safe option if you aren't sure whether you met her and want to figure out if you did by finding out a little more. But don't tell Corey where you were last summer!
- **"I don't remember you but we can still meet sometime."** Really not a good idea; you should never offer to meet with anyone you don't know.

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Scenario 3

You get a direct message from @soccergirl12, someone you don't follow. "Hey! Love your posts, you are SO funny! Give me your phone number and we can talk more!" What do you do?

- **Ignore @soccergirl12.** You don't have to respond if you don't want to.
- **Block @soccergirl12.** If you find this person strange and block them, you'll never hear from them again – unless they start a new fake profile and contact you as a different fake person.
- **"Hi, do I know you?"** If you aren't sure, be sure to ask questions before giving out personal information like your phone number.
- **"Okay, my number is..."** Nope! Even if you've verified who this person is, it isn't a good idea to give out personal information over social media. Find another way to get in touch, whether it's through parents, teachers, or some other trusted person.

Scenario 4

You get a chat from someone you don't know. "I saw you in the hall today. U R CUTE! What is your address? I can come over 2 hang out." What do you do?

- **Ignore.** Probably a good choice.
- **Block this person.** Don't hesitate if you get a bad feeling about someone.
- **"Who are you?"** Probably not. If the message sounds sketchy, it might be better not to answer – or just block them.
- **"Is that you Lizi? U R CUTE too! I live in 240 Circle Ct."** This isn't a good idea, even if you think you know who it is. Before you give someone new your address or any other personal information, check them out, even if you think you know them. Never meet someone in person that you know only from online interactions.

Scenario 5

You receive this message: "Hey, I just met your friend Sam! She told me about you, would love to meet you. What's your address?" What do you do?

- **Ignore.** If you don't know this person but you do have a friend named Sam, the best thing to do is check with Sam first before responding to this message.
- **Block.** If you don't know this person and you don't have a friend named Sam, it's probably best to use your settings to block this person from contacting you further.
- **"Who are you?"** Probably not a great idea. If you don't know the person, it's better not to answer, at least until you've heard back from Sam.