

Sexual abuse in online dating

Prevention advice for young people and parents

Informationen

Until a few years ago, discreet dating was basically only done via print media (classified 'lonely hearts' ads etc). Along with the risks and dangers this entails, the practice has now graduated to the 'virtual' online world. Using social networks to make contact and build trust, potential perpetrators can easily get their victims to open up and agree to meet in person.

Police recommendations:

- > Die Be aware of what personal details you share on social networks.
- > Be careful about sending sexually explicit images, even to your current partner. These could be passed on after the relationship has ended.
- > If you want to meet up with an online acquaintance, bear in mind that your signals could be misunderstood. Don't agree to a meeting if you don't feel comfortable with it.
- > Talk first to someone you trust, for example your parents or a close friend.
- > The meeting should take place in a public and busy place. Plan your arrival and departure independently.
- > Never agree to a change of venue if unsure.
- > Pay attention to your gut feeling during the meeting. If you don't feel comfortable, leave.
- > Never meet alone with a chat partner you do not know personally - not even out of curiosity. Ask a friend to come along if necessary or set up a prearranged phone conversation.
- > Carry a fully charged mobile phone.

In a menacing situation, follow police advice:

- > Get the attention of others by shouting 'Don't touch me!', 'I don't know you, go away!' or using ultraloud personal alarms or whistles.
- > Loudly ask third parties, such as passers-by, for help. Shout things like 'You in the blue coat! I need help!'. That way, others will be better able to recognise your predicament and summon police by calling the emergency number, 110.
- > Even if you think you are not in danger yourself, but witness individuals or groups displaying inappropriate or even threatening behaviour towards others, do not hesitate to call the police on 110!
- > Always file a criminal complaint with the police.



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Some advice regarding defensive weapons:

The police view the use of weapons such as defence sprays with misgivings. If you don't know how to use it, or if you are too slow, any weapon may end up being used against you. You might even be charged if your attacker is seriously injured.

Please note that weapons which are covered by the Weapons Act and which may be carried in public places under certain conditions must not be carried at public events within the meaning of Section 42 of the Act. Contravention is a criminal offence. Ask your local police for more on this (polizei.nrw/wachenfinder).

Find out more:

Police Crime Prevention Programme of the Federal States and the Federal Government (ProPK): „[Swipe-match-meet? Sicherheitstipps fürs erste Date](#)“, current to 23/01/2023

ProPK „[Beim Online-Dating an Herz und Sicherheit denken](#)“, current to May 2024