



Before You Meet Someone in Person

A practical safety guide for dating apps, social media & first dates

Online dating can be a good way to meet people. It can also create opportunities for impersonation, stalking, sexual coercion, financial fraud, and unsafe in-person encounters. The goal is not to make dating scary - it is to make safety planning normal.

THE CORE RULE

Do not give a stranger more access to your life than they have earned. Keep your home address, workplace details, daily routine, financial information, private photos, and other sensitive information limited until trust is established over time.

You do not owe anyone speed, access, secrecy, money, intimacy, or an explanation for leaving.

BEFORE THE FIRST DATE

1**Verify the person - but remember verification is not proof.**

Look for consistent information across profiles. Reverse-image search profile photos. Consider a video call before meeting, while remembering AI and manipulated media mean a video alone should not be treated as absolute proof.

2**Keep communication on the dating platform at first.**

Moving immediately to text, encrypted messaging, or another private app can make reporting harder and may expose your phone number or other identifying information.

3**Protect your home and work location.**

Do not let a first date pick you up at home. Avoid sharing your exact workplace, regular gym, children's school, or other predictable routine until trust is established.

4**Tell someone what you are doing.**

Share the person's name/profile, where you are meeting, when you expect to be home, and when you will check in.

5**Control your own transportation.**

Drive yourself, use your own rideshare, or have another independent way to leave. Do not make yourself dependent on the person you just met for transportation.



FIRST DATE SAFETY

MEET IN A WAY THAT GIVES YOU OPTIONS

RAINN recommends meeting in public, sharing your plans, and setting your own pace.

Choose a public, populated location.

A coffee shop, restaurant, busy park, or similar setting gives you access to other people, staff, lighting, cameras, and transportation.

Avoid isolated locations early on.

Do not make a first meeting at either person's home, a secluded trail, empty parking area, hotel room, or remote location.

Share your live location with someone you trust.

Set a check-in time and decide in advance what your friend should do if you miss the check-in.

Stay in control of your food and drinks.

Do not leave a drink unattended or accept an open drink you did not see prepared. If something tastes or feels wrong, stop drinking it and get help.

Stay sober enough to make decisions and leave safely.

Alcohol or drugs can reduce situational awareness and make it harder to recognize pressure, make decisions, or get yourself home.

Keep your phone charged and accessible.

Have emergency contacts available and enough battery for a rideshare, navigation, a call, or location sharing.

Have an exit plan before you need one.

A simple 'I'm leaving now' is enough. You do not need permission to end a date because you feel uncomfortable.



ONLINE RED FLAGS

SLOW DOWN WHEN THESE PATTERNS APPEAR

FBI and FTC romance-scam guidance emphasizes rapid intimacy, moving off-platform, refusing to meet, and requests for money.

THEY BECOME INTENSE VERY QUICKLY

Excessive affection, talk of destiny or marriage, constant contact, or pressure to commit before you really know one another can be a manipulation tactic.

THEY PUSH YOU OFF THE APP IMMEDIATELY

The FBI specifically warns about people who quickly ask to leave a dating or social platform to communicate directly.

THEY CANNOT OR WILL NOT MEET IN PERSON

Repeated emergencies, overseas work, military stories, oil rigs, business trips, or last-minute cancellations are classic romance-scam patterns described by the FBI and FTC.

THEY ASK FOR MONEY OR FINANCIAL HELP

Do not send money, gift cards, cryptocurrency, payment-app transfers, banking information, or verification codes to someone you met online.

THEY WANT INTIMATE PHOTOS OR VIDEOS

Sexual content can be saved, copied, used for humiliation or blackmail, or shared without consent.

THEY TRY TO ISOLATE YOU

Be cautious if someone discourages you from talking to friends or family, becomes angry when you seek outside opinions, or insists the relationship remain secret.

THEIR STORY DOES NOT STAY CONSISTENT

Different names, ages, jobs, locations, family stories, accents, schedules, or explanations deserve verification.

THEY PRESSURE YOUR BOUNDARIES

Pressure around sex, alcohol, location, money, meeting quickly, staying longer, going somewhere private, or sharing passwords is information about the person's respect for your boundaries.



WHEN THE PROBLEM IS NOT A SCAM

PERSONAL-SAFETY WARNING SIGNS MATTER TOO

Not every dangerous dating situation involves a fake identity or financial scam.

CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR

Demanding passwords, constant location access, immediate replies, proof of where you are, or explanations for every person you talk to can be an early control pattern.

DIGITAL MONITORING

Watch for unexplained account logins, tracking devices, location-sharing changes, shared cloud accounts, repeated 'coincidental' appearances, or pressure to install monitoring apps.

ANGER AT NORMAL BOUNDARIES

Someone who reacts aggressively when you say no, slow things down, end the date, or refuse access is showing you something important.

SEXUAL PRESSURE

Consent must be ongoing and voluntary. Pressure, guilt, intoxication, threats, persistence after a no, or ignoring withdrawal of consent are not healthy behavior.

STALKING OR REPEATED UNWANTED CONTACT

Repeated messages, showing up unexpectedly, contacting friends/family, monitoring social media, creating new accounts after being blocked, or threats should be taken seriously.

THREATS, BLACKMAIL OR DOXXING

Save evidence. Do not negotiate alone. If someone threatens violence, sexual exposure, or release of private information, consider contacting law enforcement and the platform.

YOUR DISCOMFORT IS ENOUGH REASON TO LEAVE

You do not need to prove that someone is dangerous before ending a date, blocking contact, asking staff for help, calling a friend, or changing your plans.



IF SOMETHING FEELS WRONG

WHAT TO DO IN THE MOMENT

Prioritize getting to a safer place over being polite.

1

MOVE TOWARD PEOPLE.

Go to staff, security, a front desk, cashier, bartender, crowded area, or another place where you are not isolated.

2

CALL SOMEONE YOU TRUST.

Tell them where you are and that you want help leaving. Use a prearranged code word if that makes it easier.

3

LEAVE USING YOUR OWN TRANSPORTATION.

Do not get into the person's vehicle because you feel awkward about leaving.

4

CALL 911 IF YOU ARE IN IMMEDIATE DANGER.

If the person follows you, threatens you, blocks your exit, becomes violent, uses a weapon, or you believe you are in immediate danger, contact emergency services.

5

PRESERVE EVIDENCE AFTERWARD.

Save messages, voicemails, screenshots, account names, dating profiles, dates/times, payment requests, photos, and witness information when safe to do so.

6

REPORT WHERE APPROPRIATE.

Report threatening or abusive behavior to the dating platform. Romance fraud can be reported to the FBI's IC3 and FTC. Stalking, assault, threats, or other crimes can be reported to local law enforcement.

IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING ABUSE OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The National Domestic Violence Hotline offers 24/7 support and personalized safety planning. RAINN provides 24/7 confidential support for sexual assault and abuse. If you are in immediate danger, call 911.



FIRST DATE SAFETY CHECKLIST

SAVE THIS PAGE OR SCREENSHOT IT

Use this before meeting someone you first met online.

- ☐ Reverse-image search the profile photo and look for inconsistent names/details.
- ☐ Keep early communication on the dating platform when possible.
- ☐ Do not share your home address, exact workplace, children's school, passwords, financial details, or verification codes.
- ☐ Tell a trusted person who you are meeting, where, and when you expect to return.
- ☐ Send a screenshot or link to the person's dating profile to someone you trust.
- ☐ Meet in a public, populated place.
- ☐ Use your own transportation and have enough battery/money to leave independently.
- ☐ Share your live location and set a check-in time.
- ☐ Keep control of your food and drinks.
- ☐ Do not let pressure, embarrassment, or politeness keep you somewhere you want to leave.
- ☐ Never send money, gift cards, cryptocurrency, banking information, or account codes to an online love interest.
- ☐ If the person's behavior changes when you set a boundary, treat that as useful information.

OFFICIAL RESOURCES

FBI Romance Scams: <https://www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/common-frauds-and-scams/romance-scams>

FBI Online Safety for Adults: <https://www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/online-safety/stay-safe-online-simple-tips-for-adults>

FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center: <https://www.ic3.gov>

FTC Romance Scam Guidance: <https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/what-know-about-romance-scams>

RAINN Safer Dating Guidance: <https://rainn.org/strategies-to-reduce-risk-increase-safety/tips-for-safer-dating-online-and-in-person/>

RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline: <https://hotline.rainn.org/>

National Domestic Violence Hotline: <https://www.thehotline.org/get-help/>

**MORE FREE SAFETY
RESOURCES**

OfficerNaeNae.com

