Remember...

- You have no way of checking that the person is who they say they are.
- **Avoid answering any personal questions.**
- Check out your Facebook or other social networking sites. What information are you giving away there that someone might use.
- **You can keep yourself safe online by following the “Zip it, Block it, Flag it” steps.**
- No one should be asking to meet you and encouraging you not to tell your parents or carers. If they do, that alone is suspicious.
- **You will not be in trouble for reporting a suspicious conversation to the police.** They would rather investigate and find it is harmless than let someone who is out to harm young people get away with it.
- You are in a powerful position. You make the decisions as to what you say and do online. Make SMART choices.
- If something has gone wrong, it is far better to tell someone early.
- Any adult working in your school, as well as your parents and carers want to keep you safe and will help.
- Together, we can make E-Sussex, E-Safe.

Zip it, Block it, Flag it.

**Zip It** reminds you not to give out personal information over the internet, in chat rooms or by any other means. Personal information includes photographs of you, your name, address, telephone numbers, bank account details, or anything else that is personal to you. Make a list of the things you should not give out.

**Block It** reminds you that you have the ability to block users in chatrooms, or websites that upset you or that you do not like. Ask your parents or your teachers how to do this.

**Flag it** means, in short, tell someone. The reporting button is available and more and more websites are including it as standard. You can also download a version of Internet Explorer 8 with the zip it block it flag it buttons on. Flag it can also mean just talk to someone about it.

The more responsibility you take, the safer you are. Set yourself standards of behaviour that you expect from yourself and others and review them regularly.

- You do not have to put up with abuse....
- ....EVER.
First things first…
NEVER meet anyone you have met online, in fact, never meet anyone without telling your parents or carers first, no matter how “nice” the person seems. This is a “First Division” rule. **Never break it.**

Then.....
You need to step back and take a look at what is happening. Where did you meet this person online? Did you meet them in a chat room?

**What are the danger signs?**
If the person concerned is asking you personal questions such as:-
- How old are you?
- Where do you live?
- Can we chat in private?
- What are you wearing?
- Where do you go to school?

These are just not appropriate questions and you should not reply to them. If the questions are even more personal than this then you should report them.

But this person sounds so nice, and they know so much about me. They like the same things I do. What’s the harm?
They may or may not like what you like. The point is, you do not know them. They may have already tricked you into giving away information that they are now using to make it seem like you both like the same things. Do you have a Social Networking site? How much information is on that that someone else could use?

**But I have talked to them in an internet chat room. They sound just like me.**
That is no guarantee. Voice synthesizers are freely available and they can disguise voices and even genders. It is quite possible for a middle-aged man to sound like an eight year old child.

**But they are pesterling me and saying that something bad will happen if I don’t meet with them.**
Then this has GOTT to be reported. You are being bullied and possibly groomed. You must under no circumstances meet with this person and you should report the conversations to an adult immediately. You can even go to the police directly.

**But what if it IS someone I know?**
If you are being asked to “go private”, or meet someone, even if you know (or think you know) them, this is not a good idea.

**But my friends have met up with people they meet online. They’ve been ok.**
So far. Unfortunately, it is easy for people to disguise who they really are and what they really want on the internet. It is a bit like tossing a coin. Heads its fine, tails something bad happens.

**Isn’t this all only a scare story?**
Unfortunately, no it isn’t. While the majority of people you meet on the internet are likely to be exactly who they say they are, you have no guarantee. Anyone asking you to do something secretly, or behind your parent’s back is suspicious. The same goes for you, of course. You should not be talking about anything online that you would not be happy for mum or dad to know about.

**What if I have been having “private” conversations?**
Depends what you have been talking about. If by that you mean “private” conversations, then just remember, once you hit that enter key anything you send over the internet leaves your control. You may not be keeping copies of online chats, but the other person may. Once you have sent a photograph of yourself, it is out there forever and there is nothing you can do to get it back. The secret is “Think twice, click once”.

**So the bottom line is?**
Do not meet anyone, anywhere or anytime without your parents or carers knowing, and never agree to meet up somewhere that is out of the way. You should not be going to private houses you have never been to before and where you do not know who lives there. If you are being pressured into doing that then tell someone. You may be surprised at how quickly it stops. If you are asked to chat “in private” ask why and if you agree to do so, then leave the moment the conversation takes a turn that you do not like. You can be in control if you make the right decisions.