

Lesson two: Healthy online friendships

Ages 11-12

+ Lesson overview

This is the second of three lessons that focus on protecting and empowering young people as they enter new stages of their lives and form new friendships. This lesson explores the differences between online and offline friendships and ways to manage healthy friendships online. It also explores some of the potential risks and benefits of communicating with others online, including as part of online forums and groups.

Learning objective

To learn how to manage online friendships positively.

Learning outcomes

Young people will be able to:

- Identify how communicating with friends, or others, online differs from face-to-face friendships and relationships
- Describe ways to keep friendships safe, positive, and healthy when communicating online
- Explain risks associated with meeting new people online
- Identify steps to take if an online relationship feels unhealthy, unsafe, or negative.

Resources

- Box or envelope for questions
- Flipchart and plain paper
- Post-it notes (two different colours) for baseline and assessment activity
- Resource 1: *Features of online communication* (1 per pair)
- Resource 2: *Impact cards* (1 per pair, cut out and mixed up)
- Resource 2a: *Answers* (1 copy for the teacher)
- Resource 3: *Friendship issues storyboard* (1 per group enlarged to A3)

Lesson summary

Activity	Description	Timing
Baseline assessment	Young people identify steps people can take to keep online friendships positive and safe.	5 mins
Introduction	Introduce the learning objective and outcomes and reinforce ground rules.	5 mins
Online Communication	Young people work together to match the positive and negatives associated with features of online communication and friendships.	15 mins
Rules for friendships	Pairs create rules for keeping friendships safe, happy, and healthy when communicating online.	10 mins
Friendship issues storyboards	Groups analyse scenarios where there has been an issue between friends and suggest ways to resolve it.	15 mins
Reflection and endpoint assessment	Individuals revisit the baseline assessment, adding new ideas about how to keep online friendships healthy and safe.	5 mins
Signpost support	Remind the class whom to talk to and where to find information about keeping safe online.	5 mins

Climate for learning

Make sure you have read the accompanying teacher guidance notes before teaching this lesson. These include guidance on ground rules, the limits of confidentiality, relevant subject knowledge, communication, and handling questions effectively.

Keywords

Friendship, online, face-to-face, online forum, chatroom, social media, age restriction

Baseline assessment

➤ Baseline assessment – 5 mins

Ask: What steps can people take to help keep online friendships positive and safe?

Ask everyone to write their ideas on to post-it notes. Next, working together in small groups, encourage them to compare their ideas and group their notes into different themes.

Discuss ideas as a class, highlighting methods such as: using kind words, blocking or reporting unkind posts, using sites intended for young people, checking age restrictions for different apps, asking adults for support or advice, use forums with common interests, thinking how posts might affect others before sharing.

➤ Introduction – 5 mins

Share the learning objectives and outcomes. Explain that today the class will be learning how to maintain safe, healthy friendships online, and the differences between these and communicating with friends and others, face-to-face. Make clear that not everyone communicates with other people online and that whilst some children their age do, others do not. Remind young people that many social media apps have an age restriction of 13+ and for some it is age 16. A trusted adult can help young people to understand the terms and conditions of any apps they choose to use now and in the future.

Core activities

➤ Online communication – 15 mins

Explain that there are differences between communicating online and face-to-face. Ask the class to suggest what they think these differences are. They might say: not always being able to see each other, not always communicating at the same time, speaking to people who are far away.

Share *Resource 1: Features of online communication* and read through as a class. Explain that while online communication comes with many exciting opportunities, there are also some risks or challenges. Ask the class to work in pairs to think about each example and match the positive and negative impacts from *Resource 2: Impact cards* to each feature of online communication.

Ask pairs to share their answers with the class and explain how they decided to match the positives and negatives to the features. As a class go through the answers using *Resource 2a: Answers*.

Using slide 11, show the dilemma: People can say hurtful or nasty things to others online. Ask, "How could this be tackled and managed? What could someone do or say if they experienced this?" Discuss as a class and take feedback.

Suggestions may include: don't reply to their comment, tell a parent or other trusted adult, speak to them face-to-face if you know them, ignore the comment, report or block them, talk to a friend.

Support: Individuals can focus on matching between 2-3 features to positive and negative impacts.

Challenge: Ask those who are finished to decide whether overall, they think online communication is positive or negative for children their age, using the impact cards to explain their answer.

➤ Rules for online friendships - 10 mins

Refer to the previous activity and ask: 'What might help children experiencing the negatives of online communication?' Working in pairs, young people create a list of rules to keep online friendships and communication safe, positive and happy. They record their list of rules on paper then share one rule from their list with the class. Collate their ideas to create a class list.

Next, ask: 'Are there any additional rules needed if someone is communicating with someone they haven't met before?'

Suggestions may include: remember people may not be who they say they are online, don't share personal information or photos, keep privacy settings high, tell a parent about the friend, take time away from the conversation if unsure what to say/do, consider why someone might be asking certain questions, let someone know if the online friend suggests something that makes them feel uncomfortable, or worried, or asks them to keep a secret.

➤ Friendship issues storyboard - 10 mins

Organise the class into groups and hand them one scenario each from *Resource 3: Friendship issues* storyboards. Ask groups to consider:

1. What has caused the issue?
2. How are the characters feeling?
3. Which of the rules for online communication have been broken?
4. What would help resolve the issue now?
5. What should the character do if they feel the friendship is unhealthy, unsafe, or negative?

Groups discuss the questions and complete their storyboard. Encourage them to share their completed storyboard and explain why they chose to resolve the issue in the way they did. Ensure the class understands that if someone feels a friendship is unhealthy, unsafe or negative online, that they can speak to a trusted adult, block or report the person/post, take a break from online communication or seek further support from trusted online sources eg Childline.

Support: Young people could choose from the following list of possible ways to resolve the issue: explain why they are upset; say what was inappropriate and wrong; stay calm and explain why their actions hurt their feelings, agree to treat each other more respectfully online in future.

Challenge: Young people write a diary entry from the point of view of one of the characters from the storyboard, explaining what they think went wrong and how it has made them feel.

Plenary/assessment for end of learning

➤ Reflection and endpoint assessment – 5 mins

Using slide 18, display the original question from the baseline assessment: 'What steps can people take to help keep online friendships positive and safe?'

Ask the class to think about everything they have learnt during this lesson and write new ideas on different coloured post-it notes. These can be added to the original post-it notes allowing the young people, and you, to see how their understanding has developed.

Signposting support – 5 mins

Remind the class of sources of support at home and school, using slides 20-22, if they have worries or questions about online friendships. Support listed includes parents, trusted adults in school, and online support services for children such as www.childline.org.uk and www.thinkuknow.co.uk.

Extension activity

Ask the class to think about what advice they might give to a younger sibling or friend who has just started using the internet to communicate with friends.

Using www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/staying-safe-online ask young people to create a factsheet or leaflet explaining how to use the internet to communicate with friends safely and respectfully.