

Tips for Online Safety

Before you begin to chat:

- Pick a screen name that appropriately conveys who you are and what you're looking for online. Set up a new account if necessary.
- Review what's in your profile. Remove any information that you don't want to share with a stranger.
- Investigate available chat sites. Pick a site that caters to the type of people you are looking to meet.
- Set your own limits about how much personal information you are willing to disclose. Set up a non-school e-mail account, if necessary, to maintain your anonymity when communicating outside a chat venue.

As you interact with people:

- Trust your instincts. As you read profiles, respond to emails, have phone conversations, and meet in person your instincts help tell you if something is "right" or if something doesn't feel right.

Planning your meeting:

- Pick a public place to meet. Make sure it's an easy place to depart from, if you need to.
- Provide your own transportation or have someone you trust provide transportation.
- Make sure you have a clear idea of what is going to happen when you meet this person.
- Decide if anyone is going to accompany you.
- If it's clear that your meeting will include sexual activity, consider how you want to discuss HIV and STD status and safer sex options.

Preparing to go out:

- Let someone know you're going out to meet someone you met online.
- Arrange an emergency contact.
- Leave all of the contact information you have for the person you are meeting (i.e. screen name, e-mail address, name, etc.) with someone you trust or somewhere in your room where it could be found.

If you think you might engage in sexual activity:

- Set your limits before going out.
- Have a clear understanding of how different sexual activities put you at different risks for contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.
- Don't let alcohol or other drug use cloud your decision making and affect your behavior.
- Be prepared. Take safer sex supplies with you.

Adapted from the Center for LGBT Life at Duke University

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