

A FREE GUIDE FOR PARENTS

10 Warning Signs Your Child May Be Talking to a Predator

Grooming almost never starts with anything scary — that's exactly what makes it hard to spot. Here are the early signs, in plain language, and what to do if you see them. You don't need to be a tech expert. You just need to know what to look for.

- 1 A new online "friend" who gets close fast**
Knows their interests instantly, mirrors everything, becomes a best friend in days.
- 2 The chat moves to another app**
"Let's talk on [X] instead" — off the platform you can see, onto one you can't.
- 3 Secrecy around the phone**
Tilting the screen away, quick-switching apps, jumpy when you walk in.
- 4 Being told to keep it secret**
"Don't tell your mum, she'll overreact." Isolation is the whole tactic.
- 5 Gifts, game credits, or money**
From someone they only know online. Often the first step toward obligation.
- 6 Excessive flattery**
"You're so mature for your age" — a grooming line, almost word for word.
- 7 Constant contact, odd hours**
Messaging late at night; anxious when they can't reply quickly.
- 8 An "older friend" who's vague**
New account, few real photos, a story that doesn't quite add up.
- 9 Requests for photos**
Or your child sending them. This is a serious escalation — act on it.
- 10 Mood tied to the screen**
Withdrawn, secretive or distressed around device time.

If you see these — what to do

- **Stay calm.** Don't grab the phone and explode — it only teaches them to hide better.
- **Open a conversation, don't interrogate.** "I'm not angry, I want to help."
- **Don't confront the predator** or post publicly — it tips them off and can wreck a police case.
- **Report it.** In the US, the NCMEC CyberTipline (report.cybertip.org). Save what you've seen.

HagStone watches for these signs on your child's device — and alerts you early.

So you catch it in week one, not month six. Installed with your child's knowledge. Encrypted so even we can't read it.

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