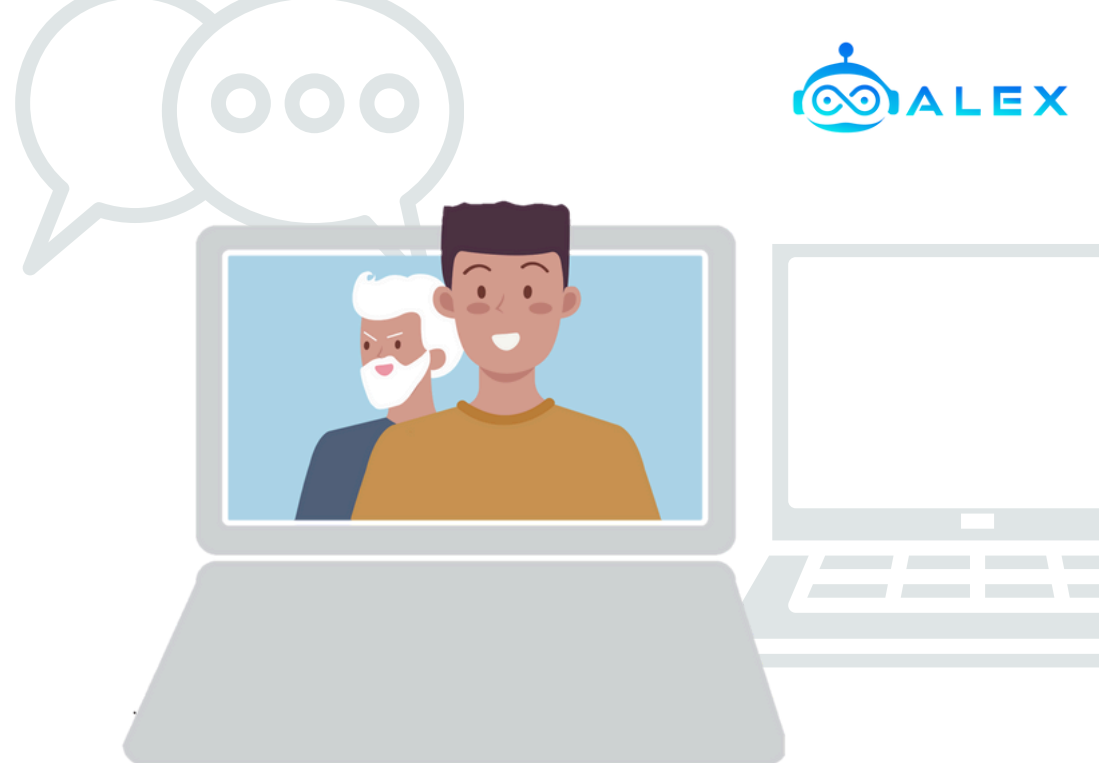# How can people trick me online?

KEY WORDS

pornography | online content | sex | consent

Digital tools are an integral part of our daily lives. On the one hand, they help us navigate the online world, but on the other hand, using them without caution can open us up to deceit.

What dangers can we face in the online world?

One of the major risks is the potential for users to be tricked, especially those who, due to their age and limited knowledge and experience, may be particularly vulnerable to such situations.
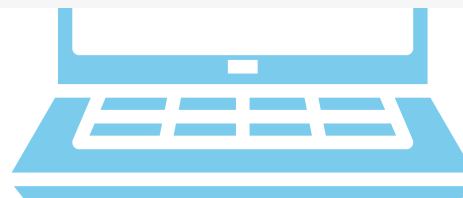
This can look like:

Someone **impersonating a user you've already communicated with** or someone else, like a peer, to create a safe space and gain trust. On the other side of the screen could be an adult with bad intentions (such as someone trying to blackmail you for intimate photos, which is called sexual coercion).

Online trickery can also look like **catfishing**. This refers to the practice of crafting a fictitious online identity with the intention of misleading or deceiving others. Catfish establish contact with young users in the following way:
- they take advantage of the anonymity and openness of the internet to approach their targets
- they may use a range of tactics to engage their targets in conversation, including flattery, sharing personal stories, and mimicking the interests and behaviours of the users they are targeting

In addition, users can come across other harmful behaviour online such as:

- Someone spreading **disinformation** on social media. If you're seeking sensitive information, especially related to sexual and reproductive health, you may come across platforms where untrue content is presented, as well as content that stigmatises certain groups like sexual minorities.

- Someone **sharing sensitive personal information**. They may try to assure you that the personal data/photos/videos you post online will not be shared with others, but blindly trusting such promises can expose you to privacy breaches and blackmail.

The most important consideration when surfing the web is to:
- improve your media literacy when looking for internet resources and trying to verify information ie. how to distinguish real from 'fake' news
- do not blindly trust online interactions by keeping your personal information to yourself, as you can never know who is really behind a screen.

Remember, staying cautious and informed is your best defense against trickery. If you ever feel unsure or suspect something fishy, trust your instincts and take a step back.

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