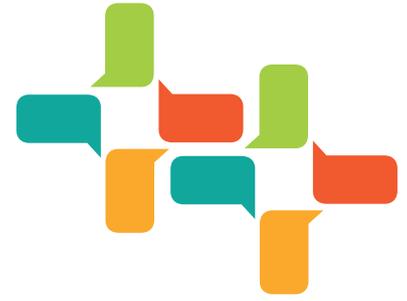


Fact Sheet

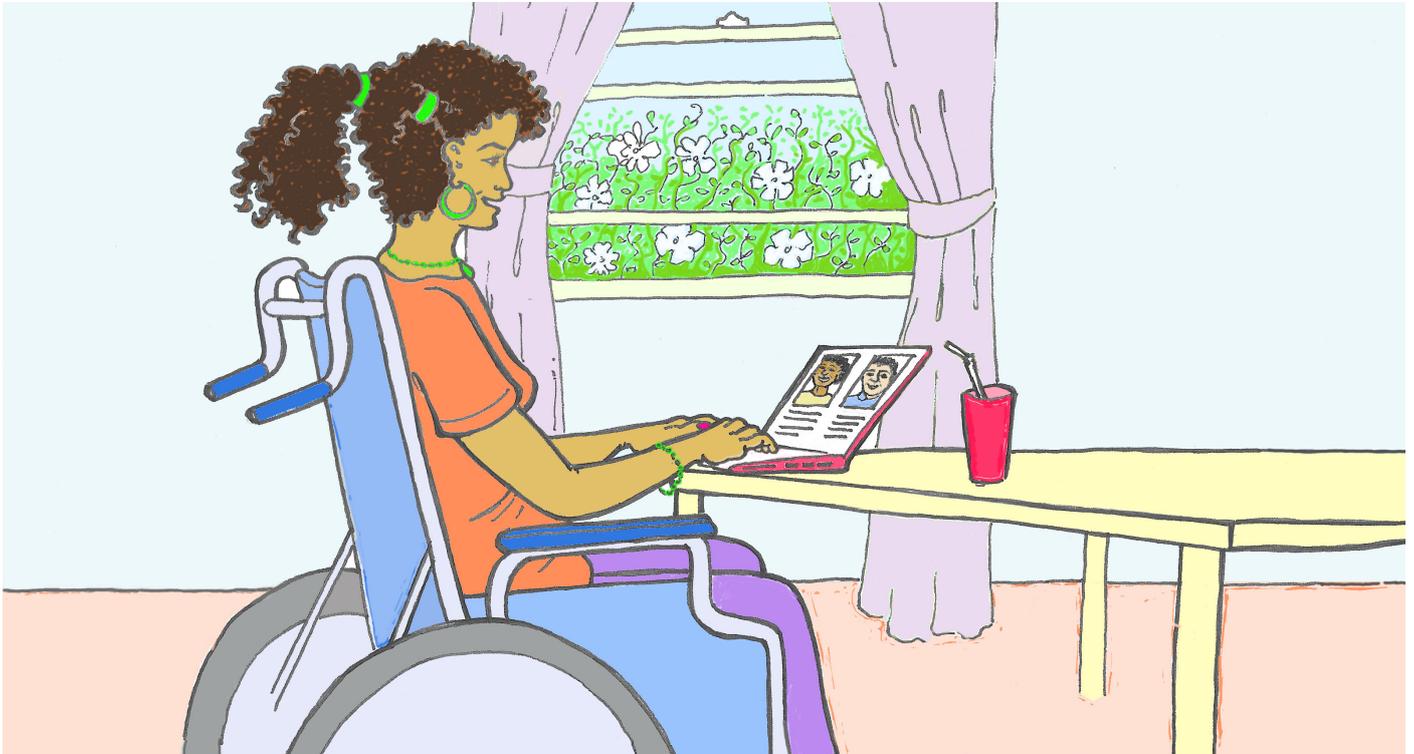
Online Dating and Safety



If you want to find a boyfriend or girlfriend there are different ways to meet new people. You might join a new club or hobby group. You might ask your friends or family to introduce you to somebody. You might also use special websites or apps on your mobile phone to meet people. This is called online dating.

Some people like to use online dating. That is OK. Online dating can be a fun way to meet new people. Some people do not like to use online dating. They might prefer other ways to meet people. That is OK too. You can decide for yourself if you want to try online dating.

Before you try online dating, it is important that you know how it works and how to keep yourself safe.



In this picture, the woman is looking at an online dating website on her computer. She is in her home.

How online dating works

Online dating websites and apps let you find other people you might be interested in dating. This is called meeting people online. There are many online dating websites and apps you can choose from. Some are free to use. Others cost money to use. You must be 18 years or older to use them.

Making your profile

Everybody who uses an online dating website makes a profile. A profile has information about who you are and what you like.

A profile will usually include:

- Your first name
- Photos of yourself
- Your hobbies
- Your favourite movies or music
- Things you would like in a boyfriend or girlfriend

Finding people you are interested in

You can look at other people's profiles to see if you find anybody interesting. You might like the way they look or you might have the same interests.

If you find somebody's profile interesting you can contact them by sending them a message using the online dating website or app.

If that person is interested in you they might message you back. If they are not interested in you, they might not reply to your message at all. That is OK. You can try contacting somebody else you find interesting instead.

It is not OK to keep contacting somebody if they do not reply to your message or if they tell you not to contact them.

Other people might be interested in you

Other people who use the online dating website or app will look at your profile too. They might like the way you look or have the same interests as you.

If they are interested in you they might send you a message. You should look at their profile and then decide if you want to reply to their messages or not. It is up to you to decide.

Getting to know people you meet online

You should get to know somebody you meet online before going on a date with them. You can do this by messaging them using the online dating website or app.

After a while you might ask them for their phone number or ask them to go out on a date. They might ask you for your phone number or ask you to go out on a date. You do not have to give somebody your phone number or go out on a date with somebody if you do not want to. They do not have to give you their phone number or go out on a date with you either. Both people have to say "Yes".

After going out on a date, you might decide that you want to see that person more often. They might decide they want to see you more often. The two of you might decide to be in a relationship together. You might call each other boyfriend or girlfriend or partner. Or you might decide that you are not interested in seeing them anymore. They might decide that they are not interested in seeing you anymore. That is OK. Both people have to say "Yes" to being in a relationship.

Online dating does not always work

You might meet many people online before you find somebody to be your boyfriend, girlfriend or partner. Sometimes you might not find anybody online to be your boyfriend, girlfriend or partner. That is OK. There are lots of other ways to meet people.

How much does it cost?

Some online dating websites and apps are free. Some cost money. The more things you want to do on an online dating website or app, the more expensive it will probably be.

How much it costs depends on:

- Which online dating website or app you use
- How long you want to use it for
- The things you want to do on it. For example it might be free to look at one photo on somebody's profile but it might cost money to look at more photos

Before using an online dating website or app, you should check how much it costs and what you can do on the website. Family, friends or a support person can help you to do this.



In this picture, the man is getting his support worker to help set up his online dating profile on his tablet.

What to expect

There are good things and hard things about trying online dating.

Some of the good things are:

- You can meet lots of different people quickly
- You can meet people who you wouldn't normally see in your daily life
- It can be fun
- It can be less embarrassing or scary than meeting new people in real life
- You might find somebody to be your boyfriend, girlfriend or partner

Some of the hard things are:

- You might not find a person to be your boyfriend, girlfriend or partner
- You might find it confusing or hard to know what kind of person you are interested in
- You might find it difficult to write messages to somebody using an online dating website or app
- You might feel uncomfortable talking about yourself to people you don't really know
- It can be expensive
- Some people lie on their profile. They might say things that are not true or use photos of themselves that are not real. They might try to trick you into giving them money, private information or photographs of yourself
- Some people you meet might not know about disability or they might not like people with disability. They might say things or ask you questions which are not very nice

What to expect

There are things you should do and should not do when using online dating to keep yourself safe.

When using online dating **you should**:

- ✓ Ask somebody you trust to help you set up your online dating profile
- ✓ Take your time when getting to know somebody you meet using an online dating website or app. Do not rush to meet somebody in real life. Try talking to them on the phone first
- ✓ Always log out of the online dating website or app when you have finished using it

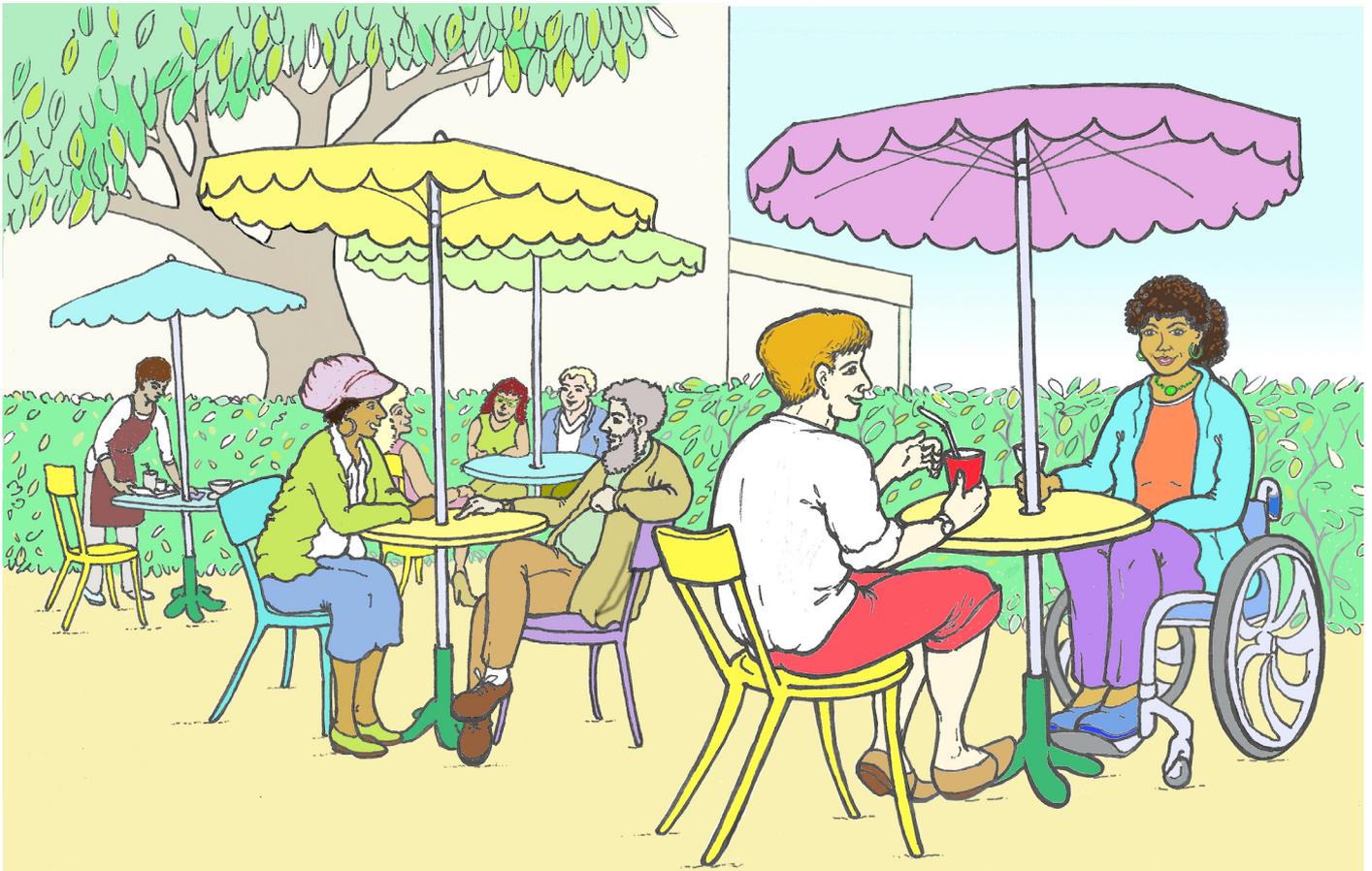
When using online dating **you should not**:

- ✗ Include your full name, address, workplace, phone number or bank details on your profile. You should not answer questions about these things either. This information is private and should only be shared with people you trust
- ✗ Give money to somebody you met online
- ✗ Click on internet links sent by somebody you met online
- ✗ Send sexy pictures to somebody without asking that person first. It is against the law to send sexy pictures to somebody unless both people say it is OK. If somebody asks you for sexy pictures and it makes you uncomfortable, do not send them. If somebody sends you sexy pictures and it makes you feel uncomfortable, delete them. Tell somebody you trust
- ✗ Trust everybody you meet online. Remember that you do not know somebody until you meet them in real life

When meeting somebody for a date **you should:**

- ✓ Organise to meet in a public place
- ✓ Let somebody you trust know when and where the date is
- ✓ Plan your travel – make sure you both have your own form of transport to and from the date
- ✓ Plan what you will do if you want to leave the date early or do not feel safe

If you are unsure about online dating you can go to someone you trust for help.



In this picture the woman is meeting a man she met online in a public place. They are being safe.



What you need to know about online dating:

- You can decide for yourself if you want to try online dating
- It is OK to use an online dating website or app if you are over 18 years old
- Some online dating websites or apps are free. Some cost money
- You can ask a friend, family member or support person to help you with online dating
- You should never share private information on an online dating website or app
- You should never send money to somebody you met online
- You should get to know somebody you met online before going on a date with them. It is a good idea to speak to them on the phone first
- You should always arrange to meet somebody you met online in a public place
- You should always let someone know when and where the date is
- It is OK for you to stop online dating at any time if you do not want to use it anymore
- You might meet many people online before you find somebody to be your boyfriend or girlfriend or partner. You might not meet anybody online to be your boyfriend or girlfriend or partner. That is OK