



Paedophiles and online grooming

What is a paedophile?

A paedophile is an adult who is sexually attracted to a child or children.

Why do paedophiles find the internet so attractive?

Paedophiles find the internet attractive because they can remain virtually anonymous while participating in a range of paedophilic activity, such as making contact with children. They pretend to be people other than themselves and find a sense of security by operating from the confines of their own homes. They often set up bogus email accounts and chat handles which protect their identity online.

Paedophiles can also erase the history of what they have done online from their personal computers, making it a lengthy task for authorities to charge them with an offence.

What do paedophiles do on the internet?

There is a range of activities that paedophiles conduct online including:

- swapping child porn pictures in chat rooms or through email;
- swapping personal information of children that they have collected;
- participating in online communities such as chat rooms with the intention to groom children up
- for personal sexual gratification or to meet them in person;
- forming networks with other paedophiles; and
- trading techniques on how to avoid the authorities.

What is online grooming?

Online grooming is 'a course of conduct enacted by a suspected paedophile, which would give a reasonable person cause for concern that any meeting with a child arising from the conduct would be for unlawful purposes'. Normally, paedophiles will search for children who are isolated from society in some way. They then engage in a range of grooming activities, including:

- the friendship-forming stage, where the paedophile gets to know the child;

- the relationship-forming stage, where the paedophile forms a sense of trust with the child;
- the risk assessment stage in which the paedophile gathers information to calculate the risk of forming a closer relationship with the child;
- the exclusivity stage, where the paedophile forms an exclusive best friend bond with the child; and
- the sexual stage, where the paedophile moves the conversation to sex and tries to entice the child in some kind of online sexual activity.

As the definition of grooming implies, it is often the intention of paedophiles to meet children in person. Any number of the grooming stages identified may be used to achieve this.

How do I report suspicious behaviour online?

A special team—the Online Child Sex Exploitation Team (OCSET)—has been established by the Australian Federal Police to deal with online child exploitation matters, specifically in chat rooms, on websites and through instant messaging. Issues may include pornography, abuse, grooming and procurement of children. If you know a child is in immediate danger, you should always call 000 or contact your local police.

To report suspicious behaviour for further investigation, contact OCSET at:

Email: National-OCSET-OMC@afp.gov.au

Tel: (07) 5553 8717

About NetAlert

NetAlert is the Australian Government's online safety program, set up to protect Australian families online. NetAlert is part of the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). It offers independent, sensible, helpful and reliable advice and information about potential problems, dangers and threats on the internet and ways to minimise or avoid these problems.

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