



ONLINE GROOMING:

The stages and the
signs to look out for

TARGETING

Exchanges information with the child or parent to get contact information, such as **email addresses or usernames for social media sites**.

GAINING TRUST

Risk assesses and may **ask questions** like, *“Are your parents around?”* and *“Who else uses the computer?”* or *“Can you delete your chats?”*

FILLING A NEED

Child may receive gifts from other adults, especially **electronic devices**. Could be used, and pre-set to specific settings.

ISOLATING

May use **private lessons**, tutoring offers, **1:1 message chains**, other apps or games, excessive compliments.



SEXUALISING

Sharing images to normalise, introduce **porn sites**, links, **ask for nudes** and sexual text messages.

MAINTAINING CONTROL

Requesting to meet up in person, **recording evidence**, **threatening to share** evidence (messages/images/videos) with parents, teachers, peers.

Source: <https://www.bark.us/blog/online-grooming/>

WHICH SIGNS MIGHT SUGGEST ONLINE GROOMING?

- Wanting or asking to **spend more time on the internet**
- **Being secretive** about the sites they visit or who they are talking to online
- **Switching screens** when you come near them when they are on their computer or phone
- **Possessing new items** you haven't given them, especially electronic devices
- **Sexual language/imagery** you don't expect them to know or that is **not age-appropriate**
- **Emotions** that become more volatile, unexplained distress

A predator does not necessarily move sequentially through the stages. **The relationship forming stage is the most dominant online grooming stage.** More than one stage can be in process at once, and predators do not necessarily go in any particular order. (*Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology*)

If you suspect a child is **being groomed**:

- **Stay calm, respond positively** and reassure them
- **Encourage them to talk** openly
- Advise that they **don't respond or delete**
- Use **online blocking & reporting** mechanisms
- Check out **privacy settings** on their online accounts
- **Talk to the Gardai** if involving serious harassment, threat of harm or indecent images or videos
- Use **expert helplines**:

www.childline.ie (Free Phone 1800 66 66 66/Free text 501 101)

(*NI Freephone 0800 1111)

www.parentline.ie (Phone (01) 8733500)

(*Northern Ireland 0808 802 0400)



CYBERSAFE **KIDS**

www.cybersafekids.ie