

## Online Dating

Welcome to this training lesson on **Online Dating**. In this lesson, we'll look at some of the dating scams commonly employed by predators online.

**Estimated Completion Time:** 7 minutes.

## Online Dating

**Introduction.** Online dating is a very popular online pastime, and successfully results in millions of people getting together.

However, online dating has a very dark side - one which results in millions of dollars being scammed from innocent users.



## Online Dating

**Fake Accounts.** Central to the online dating scammer is the creation of a fake account. A tremendous amount of effort is put into this by scammers - using fake information, fake photos, and fake stories.

These are designed to appear genuine, of course, and will play on the weaknesses and wishes of other users.





## Online Dating

**The Scams.** Many of these fake accounts are fully monitored by scammers. They will respond to messages, engage in live chats, even make phone or video calls. Sometimes the scam will go on for some time, but, in most scams, a face to face meeting is generally avoided with a variety of excuses.

The goal, of course, is to obtain your trust. The more you talk to someone - hear their stories, see their photos, know their history - even know the names of their dogs, cats, or kids - the more likely you are to trust them. Scammers know this, and count on it.



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**The Request.** Before too long, the request will come. This may take one of several forms, but are designed to obtain gifts or money from you.

They may need money so that they can visit you. Maybe they have fallen into some financial crisis and need some help out of it. Maybe their current partner controls their money. They, or a family member may need money for some medical treatment.

Alternatively, they may require your bank account details so you can help them get some money out of their country.





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**The Tricks.** Remember, these scammers are often professionals. They work on this full time, with dozens, or hundreds of other innocents on the hook at the same time. They know how to obtain your trust. If they think you are a good potential target, they may even send you inexpensive gifts or flowers to help cement your trust.

When the money request comes, they will generally explain, of course, that they normally have the money themselves, but it is tied up somehow, and they cannot get their hands on it.



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**What to Watch For.** Many dating apps have a secure infrastructure that allows you to communicate with other users via the online dating app itself. Staying within this infrastructure gives you a little extra protection.

For this reason, a scammer will often suggest that you and they continue your communication via email, or some other chat program. This allows them to avoid any scrutiny the online dating app may be employing to detect and remove fake accounts.

If this is suggested - don't do it.





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**Playing on Vulnerabilities.** There are a couple of other red flags to watch out for.

Obviously, the fake accounts will be of very attractive, very rich, or very exciting people. Quite often, it will be a very attractive young person looking for a relationship with a much older person (whom they hope is also rich), playing on the vulnerabilities of older users, who are perhaps returning to the dating world after the breakdown of a marriage or relationship.

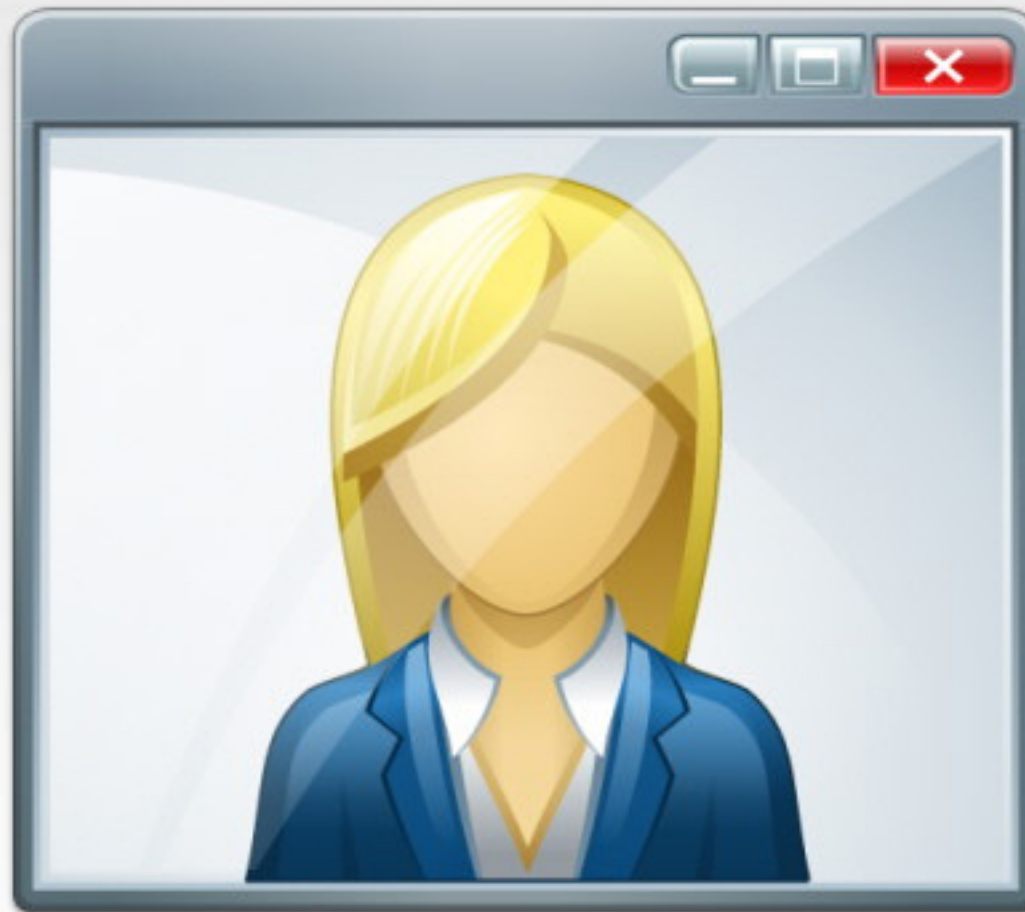




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**Can't Appear in Person.** If you find that a person you are communicating with via a dating app cannot meet you in person - at least not yet - or has technical difficulties whenever a video or audio chat is suggested or organized - this is another red flag.

Because they are not the person in the photo on the site - they will clearly be unable to appear in person.



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**Travelling / Out of the Country.** Quite often, the scammer will claim they actually live rather near you, but are currently out of the country. On a business trip perhaps. Serving in the military is also a popular one - as it inspires trust, and provides good excuses about why not too much information can be shared by the scammer - or why video chats cannot be used.

This serves three purposes - one, it makes you think you will be together, two, it provides a reason why you cannot yet meet, and three, provides an excuse for why they cannot access their money at the moment.





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**Quick Profession of Love.** Professions of love generally come *very* quickly with these sorts of scams - so this is clearly another red flag.



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*"Scammers are experts at preying on people's vulnerabilities, particularly around sentimental times of the year such as Valentine's Day"*

**Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Deputy Chair Delia Rickard.**

The ACCC found, that in 2013 alone, over \$25 million dollars was lost in online romantic scams - with many losing over \$100,000 each - just in Australia. Worldwide, the figures are staggering.





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**What to Do.** If you think you are being scammed on a dating website, report the account to the dating website themselves.

If you are not sure, talk to a trusted friend or family member. You may be a little too emotionally close to make a rational observation about whether you are being scammed or not.



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You've now completed this training lesson on **Online Dating**. In this lesson, we looked at some of the dating scams commonly employed by predators online.