



## LESSON 2

# Online Predators: The Pattern

Quick reference — print this page and keep it nearby.

## THE FOUR-STEP GROOMING PATTERN

- 1 Step 1 — Contact**  
A friendly, low-stakes message, often in a game chat or on Discord, often from an account that looks like another teen.
- 2 Step 2 — Trust building**  
Over days or weeks they become a regular: compliments, remembering details, “you’re so mature,” “I understand you.” It looks like a friendship forming.
- 3 Step 3 — Isolation and secrecy**  
“Don’t tell your parents.” “Your friends wouldn’t understand.” “Let’s move to Snap so it disappears.” The push for secrecy is the warning.
- 4 Step 4 — Escalation**  
They ask for a photo, a video, your address, or to meet — after steps 2 and 3 have made saying no feel like rejecting a friend.
- 5 Spot it early**  
A stranger overly interested fast, heavy compliments, questions about your relationships and home life, pushing secrecy or a private app. Three signs together is the pattern.

### IF YOU TAKE ONE THING FROM THIS LESSON

If a conversation with someone you’ve never met in person matches more than two warning signs, end it tonight — block, report, and tell one trusted adult. Tonight, not “when it gets worse.”

*Already happened? It’s not your fault — their job was to make sharing feel safe. Tell a trusted adult. For images of minors, [takeitdown.ncmec.org](https://takeitdown.ncmec.org) removes them for free.*