

Name _____ Date _____

Savvy Online Talk and Messaging

Kaylee is 12 and on a Web site talking about her favorite hip-hop artists. Someone with the screen name HipHopMike really seems to know his music. After some time, the talk wanders from music to other topics. Kaylee and HipHopMike begin to flirt.

HipHopMike says, "What do you look like?"

"I'm cute," replies Kaylee.

"Well, what color is your hair?" HipHopMike responds.

Kaylee answers, "Light brown. I wear it in a ponytail with longish bangs."

A few minutes later, HipHopMike asks, "Wanna cyber?"

Kaylee begins to feel uncomfortable. She knows that to *cyber* means to send sexual messages over a computer network such as the Internet.

Soon HipHopMike says, "I've got to go. My old college roommate just arrived."

Kaylee gets a sick feeling in her stomach.

What's the Problem? What made Kaylee feel uncomfortable?

Jason is 13 and enjoys playing a multiplayer online role-playing game. The game involves players from all over the world. Sometimes while playing, he messages other players, usually swapping game strategies. He frequently runs into one particular player, whom he recognizes by his character. The player offers to send Jason a book about gaming tips. Jason wonders if he should give his address.

What's the Problem? Is it okay for Jason to give his address?

At what point should alarm bells go off in Jason's head? What are some ways Jason might respond to stay safe?

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Think About It Online talking and messaging is a great way to keep in touch with friends and family. It's also a great way to talk to other people about music, sports, games, and hobbies. However, when you talk with people you don't know face to face, you have to stay alert.

Flirting is normal among middle school kids. When it is done face to face, it might feel comfortable. But it can quickly become uncomfortable online—even when it's with kids you know. That's because kids say things online to one another that they might not say if they were face to face. So if it feels uncomfortable to you, just don't do it.

When you talk online with people you don't know face to face, flirting and other sexual talk is risky behavior. For one thing, they might be adults, not kids. If you've been flirting with someone you haven't met in person and are asked for your address, you should hear that safety alarm ringing in your head. Giving out your address in situations like Jason's might be okay, but always ask a parent or guardian for permission first.



Be CyberSmart![®]

- Stick to monitored chat and messaging for kids and stay away from private, unmonitored talk.
- Save private messaging for family and friends.
- Don't flirt or talk about sex with people you don't know face to face.
- Don't answer questions online that make you feel uncomfortable.
- Tell a trusted adult if someone bothers you online.
- Never plan a face-to-face meeting with someone you met online without taking a trusted adult along.