CATCHING A CATFISH
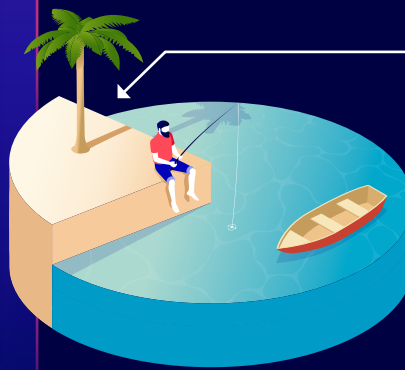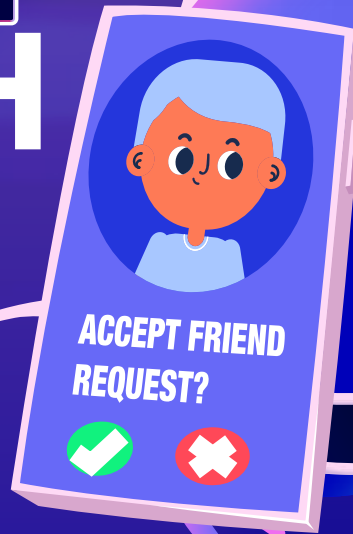
ACCEPT FRIEND REQUEST?

How to Avoid Being Baited

You can't trust everything you see on the internet. But what if you meet someone online and the connection seems *undeniable*?

What is Catfishing?

Catfishing is the contemporary label applied to the online activities of a person who masquerades as someone else for the purpose of exploiting others. In reality, this relates to financial and sexual exploitation, and very often both.

In 2023, a study showed that **22% of people had experienced catfishing**, and 40% knew someone who had been catfished.
– *Statista Research Department, 2024.*

Everyone can be susceptible to catfishing, but some groups can be particularly vulnerable, such as those who feel isolated, disconnected or lonely and young people who mistakenly see the online environment as a safe place to experiment, engage and explore their sexuality.

Red Flags to Look Out For

- If it's too good to be true, **it probably is!**
- **They mirror** your interests, likes and dislikes.
- There is **no trace** of them online.
- Conversations get personal **very quickly**.
- They ask for **money**.
- There are **inconsistencies** in their stories.
- Photos are **blurry** or **grainy** and look **dated**.
  - Their only photos are **professional ones**.
  - The photos appear to be **AI generated** or **heavily edited**.
- They want you to **keep the relationship a secret**.

Top Tips
What Should You Do if You Think You're Being Catfished?

Check Their Images
Using tools like Google's Reverse Image Search, Pimeyes and FaceCheck, you can use the images from the person's profile to check if they are who they claim to be - these will not pick up if the image is AI generated.

Screenshot, Block and Report the Account
Take screenshots of the profile as evidence, report the account to the platform and block it as well. You should never screenshot or share a sexualised photo of a child, instead protect yourself by reporting it immediately to the police and / or the Internet Watch Foundation.

Talk to Someone
It can feel embarrassing to admit that you might have been catfished, and you might even feel afraid. Remember, it can happen to anyone! If you're under 18, go to your trusted adult who will listen to you without judgement and help you!

If you're over 18, call Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 to report it.

Report them to the Police
If you have been victimised by a catfish through acts such as extortion, harassment or fraud, call 101 to report it to your local police, or 999 if you are in immediate danger.