DIGNORA TELLS YOU ABOUT CATPHISHING

Grannie Geek
Keeping You Safe in CyberSpace

BY:
GRANNIEGEEK

INTRODUCTION

Catphishing is when someone pretends to be a different person on the internet to trick others. Imagine you're playing a game of make-believe, but instead of it being for fun, the person who is pretending tries to fool other people to believe they are someone they are not. This can happen on social media, chat rooms, or gaming sites.

People do catphishing for different reasons. Sometimes, they might want to be friends and get to know you by pretending to be someone else who seems nicer or more interesting. Other times, they might want to get secret information from you, like your full name, where you live, or even passwords!

It's important to remember that while the internet can be a fun place to explore and make friends, we should always be careful. If you're talking to someone you've never met in real life, it's like talking to a character in a story—they might not be real. So don't share personal things with them, and always tell a grown-up if something or someone online makes you feel uncomfortable or seems fishy. Just like in the sea, there are some fish that are good, but there can also be fish that we have to watch out for!

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Dignora, a brilliant graduate student in my cybersecurity program. Her passion for internet safety and educating the young minds inspired the creation of this book. May her dedication to protecting the virtual playground lead many children to safer online adventures.

DIGNORA'S STORY

In her cozy room with walls painted in soft colors, 14-year-old Dignora sat quietly in front of her computer night after night, its screen casting a glow in the dim room. She was busy typing away, deep in conversation with a new friend she had made online—someone she had never met in person, but felt a special connection to.

Dignora had made this friend, who went by the name 'MidnightRambler', while exploring the wide world of social media. He seemed really nice, always there to chat with her about her day and listen to her stories and worries.

They shared many messages filled with little pictures and secrets. But Dignora noticed something unusual: MidnightRambler never shared any photos or called her, even when she asked. It was as if this friend was a mysterious figure hiding behind the keyboard, a puzzle waiting to be solved.

One day, all of a sudden, MidnightRambler stopped replying to her messages. Dignora felt worried and sent many messages, but got no replies. This silence made her curious to find out who her friend really was. She used her smarts and the information available on the internet to look for clues. After some determination and a bit of detective

work, Dignora finally found a big clue that shocked her—a news story that mentioned MidnightRambler as someone who wasn't telling the truth, pretending to be a friend to trick others.

Everything made sense now—the pictures that seemed a little too perfect and the friendly chats that never became phone calls or video talks. Dignora felt hurt knowing that someone she trusted was not who they seemed. But inside her, a small flame of courage began to burn.

Determined to do the right thing, Dignora gathered all the proof she had found and told her story to the people in charge of keeping the internet safe. Her bravery helped to stop MidnightRambler from tricking more people.

This experience was tough for Dignora, but it also taught her to be more careful and wise when talking to people online. She learned that even though the internet is very big and you can't see everyone's face, being brave and standing up for what's true is always important.

WHAT IS CATPHISHING?

Catphishing is when someone pretends to be someone else on the internet to make friends. Imagine when you dress up like a superhero or princess and play pretend— that's fun, right? But some people do that in a not-so-nice way by using computers and pretend to be other people to trick them. They create fake profiles and try to become friends with other people for the wrong reasons.

It's like if an octopus, which is really good at blending in, pretended to be a fish but was actually trying to play a mean trick.

So remember, just like you wouldn't talk to strangers at the playground, it's important not to talk to people you don't know online, even if they seem friendly!

HOW DOES CATPHISHING WORK?

Imagine you have a friend online who seems really nice and fun, but you've never met them outside of games or chats. If this person starts asking lots of questions about you or your family, like where you live or if your parents have important jobs, that could be catphishing. They might not really be who they say they are! Unlike other scams that might make you think you won something (but really you didn't), catphishing people pretend to be your friend to find out secrets.

Always remember:

- **True friends** - Real buddies are friends you know and trust, not just someone you just met online.

- **Super Secrets** - Keep family stuff and personal things a secret, especially from online people you don't know in real life.

- **Talk to Grown-Ups** - If an online friend starts asking weird questions, tell a parent or a grown-up you trust right away!

HOW TO RECOGNIZE A CATPHISHER

Imagine you're playing a game of make-believe. Someone might pretend to be something they're not, like an astronaut or a wizard, right? Well, on the internet, some people pretend to be somebody else, and we call that 'catphishing'. They might use pictures that aren't theirs or tell stories that aren't true to trick you into being their friend.

Here's how you can be a smart detective and recognize these tricks:

1. **Super-Secret Identity**: If someone online is super mysterious about who they are and you can't find out much about them, your detective senses should tingle!

2. **Copycat Tricks**: Sometimes, these catphishers copy other people's photos or stories to seem real. If something feels like a repeat, it could be a clue.

3. **Gifts Galore**: Watch out if a new online buddy wants to give you lots of gifts or prizes, especially if they

ask you for personal info first. Remember, real friends don't need to do that to be kind!

4. **Fast Friends**: If someone wants to become besties super-fast, more super than even a superhero can fly, it's good to wonder why and maybe slow down a bit.

5. **Secret Missions**: A catphisher might ask you to keep your chats a secret, but secrets like that are not cool. Always tell a grown-up you trust about things like this!

So remember, while playing games and having fun on the internet, keep your eyes open for these signs. And when in doubt, talk to a parent, teacher, or a trusted adult.

THE DANGERS OF CATPHISHING

Catphishing might sound like it has something to do with our furry feline friends, but it's not about catching fish or playing with cats. Imagine you're playing an online game and you make a new friend who seems really nice and wants to know all about you. That's fun, right? But sometimes, people pretend to be someone they're not, just like when you dress up for Halloween. They might ask you lots of questions to learn things about you that are private, like your full name, where you live, or where you go to school.

This kind of pretending on the internet is called "catphishing." It's important to know that sometimes, behind the screen, the person might not be who they say they are — they could be wearing a disguise you can't see! They might be trying to trick you into telling them things that are meant to be secret or just for your family and friends to know. It's like they're fishing for information with a fake worm!

Remember, just like we don't talk to strangers in the park, we shouldn't talk to strangers on the internet or tell them our secrets. Always chat with your parents, teachers, or a grown-up you trust about any new friends you make online and what you can safely share. That way, the internet can

stay a fun place to play and learn, without the danger of catphishes swimming around!

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM CATPHISHING

I want to make sure you know how to spot these tricky folks and keep yourself safe. So here are some super tips fit for a superhero like you!

🕵️ Be a Detective

Imagine you're a detective, like in the cartoons. If someone you don't know tries to chat with you online or asks for your personal information – like where you live or your school name – that's a clue! Real-life friends and family will never ask you that out of the blue, so be like Sherlock Holmes and don't share your secrets!

🔒 Keep Your Super Secrets Safe

You know how superheroes have secret identities? Just like that, you have important secrets that should be kept safe and sound. Things like your full name, where you live, or your passwords are your super secrets. Keep them locked away like a treasure!

👷‍♀️ Double-Check with Grown-ups

Do you know how superheroes sometimes work in teams? It's always a good idea to double-check with your grown-up sidekicks, like Mom, Dad, or your big sister when you get messages from new people online. They can help make sure it's safe to talk to someone new.

🛑 Stop and Think Before Clicking

If you get a message with a link (like a door to another place on the internet), stop and think before you click! Some links can take you to a baddie's hideout. Only click on links from people and places you trust – kind of like only opening your front door for friends and family, not strangers.

🏃‍♀️ Tell a Grown-up if Something Feels Funny

Have you ever felt that something just wasn't right, like when a puzzle piece doesn't fit? If you ever get a funny feeling about someone or something online, run to your grown-up team as fast as you can and tell them. They know how to handle these kinds of puzzles.

❤️ Remember, Online Friends Should be Real Friends

Just like your friends from school or the playground, online friends should be real friends, not catphishers in disguise. You should have met them in person, or they should be friends of your real-life friends. If they're truly your friends, they won't ask you to keep secrets from your family.

Go out and enjoy the internet – it's an amazing world, especially when you know how to protect yourself like the smart superhero you are!

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOUR ENCOUNTER A CATPHISHER

1. **Tell an Adult**: If anyone online makes you feel uncomfortable or asks you for private information (like your name, address, or passwords), tell a trusted adult right away.

2. **Don't Share Personal Info**: Never share personal information. This includes your full name, address, school name, or phone number.

3. **Don't Click on Unknown Links**: Even if they say it's a game or a prize, don't click on links from people you don't know in real life. Those links could lead to a trick!

4. **Use Nicknames**: When playing online games or chatting, use a nickname that doesn't give away your real name or other personal details.

5. **Friend Only Real Friends**: Online, only be friends with people you know in real life, like classmates or family.

6. **Skip the Downloads**: If someone you don't know tells you to download something, don't do it without asking an adult you trust.

Remember, it's okay to be friendly, but always be safe and protect your personal information online just like you would protect your toys or your diary.

And if something feels fishy, always swim to an adult to help you out!

ADVICE FROM DIGNORA

I may only be fourteen years old, but when it comes to catphishing, I'm an expert.

The internet can be an exciting place to meet new people and explore creative ideas but it's essential to be cautious, especially regarding catphishers—people who create fake profiles to deceive others online. Here's some advice to help protect yourself:

1. **Never Share Personal Information:** Keep your personal details private. Don't share your phone number, address, school information, or any financial details with people you've only met online.

2. **Think Before You Click:** Be skeptical of links sent to you by people you don't know well; they could lead to malicious websites or download harmful software onto your device.

3. **Protect Your Photos:** Think twice before sharing photos online, especially if they can be used to determine your location or other personal details.

4. **Check Profiles Carefully:** Look for signs of authenticity in profiles. Often, catphishers won't have many photos or their images will look like stock photos. Check if their stories add up and if they have friends or social proof that seems genuine.

5. **Ask Questions:** If someone's demeanor or story seems suspicious, don't be afraid to ask questions. If they become evasive or give inconsistent answers, it's a red flag.

6. **Use Video Calls:** A video call can prove that the person is who they claim to be. However, be aware that even video can sometimes be faked, so this isn't foolproof.

7. **Trust Your Gut:** If something feels off about an interaction, trust your instincts. It's better to be safe and cut off communication.

8. **Report Suspicious Behavior:** If you encounter a catphisher or feel uncomfortable, report the profile to the website or app administrators.

It's great that you're thinking about these issues and seeking advice, Jodi. Always remember, real friends won't pressure you to do things that make you uncomfortable. Stay smart, stay safe!

GrannieGeek.com

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