

Online Friend?

Written by Kelly Hashway

Sergio flung his backpack onto his bed and sat down at his desk. He turned on his computer and checked his email. He had three new messages. Two were from his friend Jason, and the third was from someone named Mary. Sergio couldn't remember anyone named Mary in his class. Curious, he clicked on the message.



"I really like you. Please send me a picture of yourself."

That was the entire message. Sergio still couldn't figure out who Mary was. When he'd signed up for the email account, he promised his mother that he'd never reply to a message from someone he didn't know. But if Mary was from his school, then it must be okay to respond to her email. Maybe she was new or just really shy. What could it hurt to send her a picture?

Still, Sergio wasn't sure what to do.

Things to Discuss:

1. Should Sergio send a picture to Mary? Why or why not?
2. Should Sergio reply to the messages without a picture? Should he ask, "Who is this?" Why or why not?
3. List a few reasons why Mary's message is suspicious?
4. Do you have an e-mail account? If so, what rules do your parents have for e-mail use?

Teacher's Discussion Guide

Internet Safety Story: Read and Discuss

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Things to Discuss:

1. Should Sergio send a picture to Mary? Why or why not?

No! Sergio should never send a picture (or other personal information) to someone he does not know.

2. Should Sergio reply to the messages without a picture? Should he ask, "Who is this?" Why or why not?

No! The e-mail could be a phishing scam, or someone bad, trying to get personal information from him. The best thing to do is to show a parent, ignore, and delete the message.

3. List a few reasons why Mary's message is suspicious?

- **It's from someone he doesn't know.**
- **It's unusually short.**
- **A friend wouldn't ask for a picture on their first message to you.**
- **There's no last name. (But even if there was, he shouldn't reply.)**

4. Do you have an e-mail account? If so, what rules do your parents have for e-mail use?

Answers will vary. Some answers may include...

- **Do not reply to any messages from people you don't know.**
- **Do not download any files without a parent's permission.**
- **Kids must give all passwords to parents.**
- **Kids must allow parents to read all incoming and outgoing e-mails.**