

Maintaining a safe environment



Key dos and don'ts for maintaining a safe environment in your Alpha online small groups.

Dos

- For Alpha hosts: Use a leadership style which will suit the needs of the whole group and remember to model the good practice in your own online behaviour
- Keep your video on for the whole session, and strongly encourage your group to have their videos turned on for the whole meeting
- Be aware of your surroundings and what and who can be seen in your video screen. Make sure your background is welcoming without too much visual stimulus
- Be the first person to arrive at your Alpha session and the last to leave
- Ask permission from each person before you create a text or Whatsapp group and make sure you keep calls and messaging to appropriate times of day
- Think before you post: once the information is online it can be difficult, if not impossible, to remove
- Communicate clearly and unambiguously, and use social media for information rather than conversation (for example: for group reminders)
- Share only what you feel comfortable to share and do not allow yourself to be pressured into doing or sharing anything you do not want to

Don'ts

- Promise confidentiality you can't guarantee
- Allow your Alpha courses to be recorded
- Allow guests to be in the online space without a host or helper present
- Write or post anything that you wouldn't be happy for others to read
- Share contact details without permission.
- Take photos, post photos or tag people in photos, unless they've given you permission
- Pressure others into sharing anything they may regret later
- Get into deep and meaningful chats with individuals online or by text – keep conversations within a group setting
- For Alpha hosts: Don't video call alone, or follow young or vulnerable people back on snapchat or private message or share your story personally with young people

If you feel uncomfortable about any communication or behaviour, whether it be online or offline, contact your safeguarding or protection for vulnerable people lead, or a senior leader at your church, school, or organisation.