

# ***6 Perpetrator Grooming Patterns Every Parent Needs to Know***

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90% of children who are sexually abused know their perpetrator. Almost every perpetrator uses certain patterns to groom a child for abuse. These patterns are methodical, gradual, and intensify over time. Knowing grooming patterns helps lower the risk of your child being sexually abused.

## **01 FORMING RELATIONSHIPS**

Perpetrators seek to form relationships with children. Many times they single out one child as “special” and give them extra attention or gifts as a way to form a bond.

## **02 TESTING BOUNDARIES**

Perpetrators test the boundaries of a child’s comfort level with certain behaviors. They see how a child reacts when privacy is violated. They tell off-color jokes or play sexualized games like strip truth-or-dare to see how a child responds.

## **03 TOUCHING**

Perpetrators move from innocent forms of touch and progress to more sexual touching. For example, they start with high fives and then slowly progress to hugs that last too long or “accidentally” grazing genitals.

## **04 INTIMIDATING**

Perpetrators use intimidation to stop a child from telling others about abuse. They may threaten a child with danger to keep them from disclosing or use statements like, “No one will believe you.”

## **05 SHARING SEXUAL MATERIAL**

Perpetrators share sexual material in order to normalize sex. They will use sexual terms freely in the presence of children. They will show sexualized pictures or videos that aren’t appropriate for the age of the child.

## **06 COMMUNICATING SECRETLY**

Perpetrators look for ways to communicate with a child secretly. Often these interactions begin electronically through tools like email or text. Perpetrators thrive in secrecy; it’s how they continue without being caught.

Just because you see a behavior in isolation doesn’t automatically mean that someone is a perpetrator. Knowing these patterns allows you to strengthen your intuition as a parent and watch for a concerning pattern of behavior.