

FACT SHEET

Vetting Partners



What is vetting?

It is checking the suitability and safety of a potential partner to do kink or have a relationship with¹. This is very similar to how a business does a background check and interview on a new hire to see if they are the 'right fit'², or how you check your compatibility with a match on a dating app³.

Before vetting you need to think about *your preferences*^{1,4,5}. Think about what characteristics and skills you want in another person⁴, and what kind of relationship you are looking for (casual, friendship, romantic, other)⁶.

What do I vet for?

Vetting is mostly about what *you* are looking for in a person. No one can tell you that that is as it is your preferences. Two minimum things you should think about though are:

- (1) How competent the person is at communicating regarding negotiation and ongoing consent^{5,7}. Effective communication is a foundation for a healthy partnership and creates emotional and psychological safety⁴.
- (2) How skilled (or willing to learn) the person is at the activity you want to do with them, especially if there is risk involved⁸.

How do I vet?

Vetting is all about seeking the information you need to understand if the person matches your preferences⁹. There are three main sources of information: personal observation, checking their reputation with others, and meeting up and chatting with the person⁹.

If you can, **observe the person** playing with others⁹. Perhaps do this at a public (kink) event to help understand their style and skills. You can also check out their social media to find out what they are interested in and if their interests align with your own¹⁰.

Check their reputation with other people who do kink. Anyone who is especially unsafe tends to be known about¹¹. Also, finding out more about how others have seen this person play will help you ask better questions if/when you meet up¹⁰. Connecting with others who do kink can serve as a safety mechanism as it widens the base of information you have⁴.

Arrange to **meet up and chat** before playing. This can be done online or in person¹. A good conversation can help you know more about the person's life and how they navigate different spaces/experiences¹. Meeting up is also a chance for you to develop a mutual understanding of each other before introducing any type of dynamic¹⁰. The first time you meet it may be best to meet in a (kinky?) public setting. The social norms among kinky people at events can provide some additional safety while getting to know someone^{5,11}. It is often best to establish basic trust before playing together to help manage risk⁸.

Vetting can sometimes lead straight into negotiation and play, with people eager to do kinky things together even the first time they meet. Other people may meet several times before playing together. Both are valid choices depending on what *you* want to do.

<i>Source of Risk</i>	<i>Ways to Mitigate Risk</i>
The person has a good reputation but I'm not sure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputation is extremely flawed, it often confuses popularity and visibility with being 'good'¹². Some people are good at impression management too, so may be well respected because of how they present themselves more than by who they are⁶. A good reputation does not mean a person is right for you. It is about your preferences^{1,4,5}, so follow your instincts and find the person that is the right fit for you.
I don't want to give away too much about myself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal security/privacy needs to be balanced against disclosure. Some disclosure is needed to build trust¹⁰, everyone needs to be at a little open. But weigh the risks. Only disclose those things that you wouldn't mind being spread more widely until you have built up some trust¹³
Someone got past my vetting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't judge yourself if you get it wrong. Evaluating people is complex and we are all subject to our own biases². Remember too that the other person is likely putting forward their best self not their actual self¹⁴. • Use a wider set of sources and stay connected to others to get more perspectives and insight^{4,5}. Checking a person's online presence can help you see if what they are saying in person aligns with other sources of information, but remember that no source of information is perfect¹⁰.
<p><i>If you are being coerced or manipulated by a person, or have had a consent violation, then go somewhere safe. It's your choice to talk about it; if you want to, try speaking to friends/family, a counselor, medical practitioner or support service^{4,15}.</i></p>	

Sources

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