

What can I do to prevent cyberbullying?

If You Wouldn't Say It In Person... Don't Type It! This is like the golden rule of digital communication; it helps us remember to treat others the way that we'd want to be treated. If you wouldn't say it in person, why text or post it? Sure, it might be an easy way for you to vent your frustrations, but it will hurt the other person just the same. Plus, research shows that people who are nasty and aggressive online are more likely to be harassed themselves!

Think Before You Send! All too often, cyberbullying happens in the heat of the moment. Think about it... someone is frustrated with their friend so they jump on facebook to tell the world. After hundreds of people have read the post, the sender might regret their actions. If you are feeling jealous, angry or frustrated with someone, it's a good idea to put down the phone for a while. If you take the time to cool off, you'll make better choices. It's also important to remember that people can take sarcastic comments, rude jokes and capital letters the wrong way. So, to avoid accidental problems, re-read your messages before you hit send!

Don't Forward or Participate! Even if you didn't write that mean text, forwarding it on can make you a cyberbully. Don't ever forward harassing messages or participate in hurtful surveys.

Protect Your Password! Pick a password that no one can guess and keep it private. Don't share your passwords, even with your closest friends!

Don't Talk to Strangers! Don't text, email, IM or "friend" someone that you don't know and keep all online profiles private. If someone claims to be a friend online or over text but things seem fishy, check it out with friends and family before communicating online.

Assume Everything You Post is Public! Posting information about embarrassing events, your secret crush or frustrations with classmates is just asking for trouble. Remember, you might intend the message for your best friend, but once you send or post something you lose control of it. You don't know who is really going to read it. So, before posting... ask yourself "does everyone need to know?"

Start your Search Engines! Typing your name into an internet search engine is a quick and easy way to keep tabs on what other people could be reading or typing about you online.

Do Something! Increase your awareness by visiting websites devoted to dealing with cyberbullies. Talk to your friends and family, write a report or give a speech about this important topic!

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Cyberbullying: A Guide to Prevention

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What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying sounds like something that happens only on computers, but there's more to it. Cyberbullying happens when a child or teen is threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted by another child or teen using interactive technologies, the internet or mobile phones. Cyberbullying takes many different forms. You might receive rude texts from unknown phone numbers, a bully might post threats on your personal message board or they could break into your facebook account, change your password and lock you out.

A Parent's Role:

Be Informed

Do you know what instant messaging is? Do you know how Facebook, My Yearbook and Twitter work? Ask your child to show you how it all works. Your child will likely enjoy the chance to teach you about their world. You can also check out helpful websites like www.wiredsafety.org and <http://stopcyberbullying.org> for parent information, quizzes and tips.

Communicate

Do you know your child's screen name for instant messaging? Who does your child text message? Has he or she ever been harassed online? Does your child play interactive games online? Ask your kids, and ask them often.

Set Limits:

Just like any other area of life, your kids need to know their limits when it comes to technology. Consider the following options:

- **Be a Friend:** Remind your kids how many people can see their online actions by being their 'friend' on Facebook or 'follower' on Twitter.
- **Limit Time:** When kids and teens use technology for hours on end or late into the night, it can easily lead to problems. Set a limit for total 'screen-time' each day and enforce a 'digital curfew', setting a time when all devices are turned in for the night.
- **Keep it Public:** Keep home computers and laptops in public spaces. Be aware that your child's smartphone or media player may allow them internet access at any time and in any place.
- **Website Rules:** let your teen know what websites and online behaviors you will and won't allow.
- **Get Help:** Explore the use of parental controls with your wireless retailer and consider filtering and monitoring software for your home computer.

Is your child a victim...Or a bully?

Remember that your child could just as easily be a cyberbully as they could be a victim. Other kids play both roles and don't even realize it. They may not recognize or label their inappropriate behavior as cyberbullying. Remind your kids that online jokes and pranks can easily be misinterpreted and they should never type something they wouldn't say in person.



Know how to respond

Make sure your kids know that you want to hear about any cyberbullying they might encounter. Tell them that you do not support retaliation online or over the phone. Encourage them to stop, save, block and tell. The privacy and parental control options with instant message programs and social network sites allow you to restrict contact with specific individuals. Visit websites like <http://stopcyberbullying.org> for more tips on how to respond to cyberbullies.

Start early

Talk about safety and responsibility from the very start, supervise their habits and insist on moderation when using phones and computers. Developing positive habits early will help protect them as they get older!



What Can I Do If I'm Being Cyberbullied?

It's simple: **stop save block** and **tell!**

Stop! The first thing you need to do is stop! Step away from your phone or computer. A reaction is exactly what the bully wants to get a sense of power. Resist the urge to retaliate. If you respond with a rude or threatening message the situation will likely escalate.

Save! Keep the evidence. Messages can usually be saved, printed and shown to someone who can help.

Block! Use your phone preferences or privacy tools to block the person from sending you messages.

Tell! Get an adult to back you up. Find a parent or school official to confide in, they can help you figure out the best way to stop the bullying.

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TELL