



## Cyberbullying, Social Networking, and You

When your girlfriend broke up with you, you thought that was pretty rough. But that was nothing compared to what happened next: teasing, name calling, taunting, and worst of all, spreading lies on the internet.

At first they called you a loser on Facebook, and then they texted their friends, calling you a stalker. The bullying continued at school, but mostly it happened when you were online through instant messages. If that wasn't bad enough, the bullies made a web page where they wrote the top ten reasons why they hate you.

What would you do if this happened to you?  
Who would you tell?  
How would you feel?

Unfortunately many of you or your friends may already have been cyberbullied. The good news is that most youth do *not* cyberbully. Only about 20%—one out of five—kids take part in some type of cyberbullying. Learning to be responsible online might help shrink that number further.

### Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can look like a lot of things, even like the example above. In his book, *Keeping Foster Children Safe Online*, John DeGarmo defines cyberbullying as, “the use of technology to embarrass, threaten, tease, harass, or even target another person.” It’s

done on purpose to hurt others using things like social network sites, text message, emails, cell phones, chatrooms, and websites.

Another form is targeting a person on a web page, group, or using a fake identity and can also be stealing passwords, spreading harmful comments, and photoshopping pictures.

The truth is that cyberbullying, just like “regular” bullying, hurts everyone. (You can find our [Bullying Hurts Everyone](#) tip sheet on the website.)

### What to Do if You're Cyberbullied

If you're ever cyberbullied, remember that it's never okay. Being cyberbullied isn't your fault, and no one deserves to be treated that way.

**Tell an adult you trust.** That might be a really hard thing for you to do, but it really does work. Adults will want to help.

**Get evidence.** The only real “advantage” for you is that with email, Facebook, texting, etc. you can save what someone wrote. Print out those offensive words so you have evidence—just like on those crime shows. Also, keep a log of who sends you offensive messages and on what day and time.



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**Block it.** Most social networking and instant messaging services have the option to block someone. Be sure to use it.

**Leave.** Another way to beat cyberbullies is to leave the place where the cyberbullying happens, like on a game or chat room. They can't bully you if you're not there.

**Name Calling:** If you don't respond to online name calling, most of the time it will stop. That's because all the cyberbully really wanted to do was hurt your feelings and make you feel upset.

**Threats.** If you have a cyberbully that's getting worse or threatens to hurt you, be sure to tell an adult so that the police can be called. It's never okay for someone to threaten to physically hurt you and the police should be able to help.

### Your Feelings Matter!

If you ever feel really sad or depressed about being cyberbullied, ask for help from an adult. You're *not* alone! Lots of other kids have felt the same exact way and have gotten help. You are not "tattling." Cyberbullying is wrong and it takes courage to speak up. There is hope.

### Password Safety

Ever worry about having one of your accounts hacked or your cell phone stolen? You're not alone. Many people your age worry about this—and with good reason! So what can you do?

**Keep it Private.** It's probably one of the best things that you can do to prevent any of your accounts from being hacked, including your email, social networking, gaming networks, and forums. Don't ever write your password down or give it to a friend because papers get lost and friendships change.

## Cyberbullying Terms and Acts

A **Bash Board** is an online board where people post mean and hurtful comments.

**Cyber vandalism** is an attempt to hurt others online by doing things like hacking or creating and spreading viruses.

**Cyber stalking** is frequent harassment or threats online that are usually very personal and invasive.

**Email Bombs** are meant to disable an account and server with tons of emails.

**Flaming** is sending mean, rude, or hurtful comments to someone. A **flaming war** is when those mean comments go back and forth between people or groups.

**Hacking** is breaking into and taking over someone's account or computer.

**Happy Slapping** is recording someone being assaulted and then sending it to others or posting it online.

**Phishing** is pretending to be someone else to gain personal information and then use that information in hurtful ways.

**Photoshopping** is changing pictures using computer programs and applications.

**Sexting** is sending sexually inappropriate photos or videos as text messages.

**Trolling** is posting something anonymously just to get people angry and respond.

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**Make Good Passwords.** When you make a password use a mixture of upper of lower case letters, numbers, and symbols. Skip passwords that are based on your personal information like your birthday, pet's names, address, town, or school. Some password ideas are to use the zero (0) like the letter "O" and the @ symbol for the letter "a." Other people have made passwords from phrases with acronyms using the first letter of each word—like "Taco Tuesdays for lunch at school" would be "TTforL@S"

**Use Security Questions.** Once you have your password figured out; answer the security question if there is one. If you can make up your own question, choose a question that only you know the answer to.

**Use One Password for Each Account.** It might seem like a pain, but it really is a good idea to have different passwords for each online account. That way if someone *does* hack into one of your accounts, like your email, she won't be able to hack into *all* of your accounts.

**Change it up!** After you've had a password for a while, change it. Another good idea is to only type passwords on computers that you trust or belong to you. Computers have a better memory and are pros at remembering passwords and other private information, even when you don't want them to.

### What is Personal Publishing?

Online personal publishing is posting information in a place where the public can see what you wrote, like a blog, forum, or sites like YouTube and Facebook.

Everything you post matters, even on sites that you don't think are public. Think that it's private? It's not. A person only needs to copy, paste and forward to someone or to print it out and distribute it . . . and then it's not private.

So what can you do? Before you write or post anything, ask yourself some questions:

- When you use a forum, would people be able to know who you are? Identifying information on your post or profile like your name, picture, school, age, and city can put you at risk.
- How long will what you post now be available to the public? Will you feel the same way about what you say or post now in ten years? Can you delete what you wrote at any time or does someone else control that aspect? Think about future jobs, bosses, and colleges.
- Do you want what you write to be part of your digital footprint? Your *digital footprint* is like your human footprint only it's on the internet. Did you know that nearly everything published online can be traced back to whoever wrote it?



### Safe and Responsible Social Networking

When you signed up on your Facebook or gaming account, you agreed to their *Terms of Services*, but did you really read it? If you're like most of us, you didn't. Normally it doesn't make a difference, but it does when you do something that may be violating the terms of your account. Or you might have given the site permission to use your information without really realizing it.

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It's also a good idea to know what your school policies are. Don't think that your actions at home won't be punished at school. Some kids have gotten into big trouble for stuff that they've posted on websites, forums, and social networking sites about their teachers and classmates.

Try to always be more safe than sorry. Assume that everyone has access to your information, even if most of them don't. How would you feel if your relatives or foster family sees something? Would you be comfortable or embarrassed?

Think about a post or picture before you hit "share." Even though you probably know all your friends, how much identifying information are you sharing on your profile and posts? How well do you really know all your friends? Most people are friendly and only want the best for us. But it only takes *one* person who will use you against you.

### How Can You Help?

Even if you're not a cyberbullier, you probably know somebody who has done it or someone who has been cyberbullied. Maybe you've been cyberbullied before and don't want other kids to be cyberbullied like you were.

The good news is that you can help. You can tell others that cyberbullying is never okay. You can also call out cyberbullying when you see it happen, especially if you're on a group chat, board, or webinar training or other digital forum.

Another idea is to help make your home and school bully-free zones. Most importantly, remember that the majority of youth don't cyberbully and post respectfully. Choose to be part of the majority!



### Online Resources

- <http://www.cybersmart.org>
- <http://www.cyberbullying.us>
- <http://www.eyesonbullying.org/>
- <http://www.wiredsafety.org/>
- <http://www.safeteens.com/>
- <http://cyberbully411.org>



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