

# Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying or harassment that happens online. It can happen in an email, a text message, a game, or on a social networking site. It might involve spreading rumors or images posted on someone's profile or passed around for others to see, or creating a group or page to make a person feel left out.

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## Help Prevent Cyberbullying

### **Talk to your kids about bullying.**

Tell your kids that they can't hide behind the words they type and the images they post. Bullying is a lose-lose situation. Hurtful messages not only make the target feel bad, but also make the sender look bad. Often they can bring scorn from peers and punishment from authorities.

Ask your kids to let you know if an online message or image makes them feel threatened or hurt. If you fear for your child's safety, contact the police.

Read the comments. Cyberbullying often involves mean-spirited comments. Check out your kid's page from time to time to see what you find.

### **Recognize the signs of a cyberbully.**

Could your kid be the bully? Look for signs of bullying behavior, such as creating mean images of another kid. Keep in mind that you are a model for your children. Kids learn from adults' gossip and other behavior.

### **Help stop cyberbullying.**

Most kids don't bully, and there's no reason for anyone to put up with it. If your child sees cyberbullying happening to someone else, encourage him or her to try to stop it by telling the bully to stop and by not engaging or forwarding anything. Researchers say that bullying usually stops pretty quickly when peers intervene on behalf of the victim. One way to help stop bullying online is to report it to the site or network where you see it.

## What to do About a Cyberbully

### **Don't react to the bully.**

If your child is targeted by a cyberbully, keep a cool head. Remind your child that most people realize bullying is wrong. Tell your child not to respond in kind. Instead, encourage him or her to work with you to save the evidence and talk to you about it. If the bullying persists, share the record with school officials or local law enforcement.

### **Protect your child's profile.**

If your child finds a profile that was created or altered without his or her permission, contact the site to have it taken down.

### **Block or delete the bully.**

If the bullying involves instant messaging or another online service that requires a "friend" or "buddy" list, delete the bully from the lists or block their user name or email address.

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