

Preventing Cyberbullying

Top Ten Tips for Teens



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1. Educate yourself

To prevent cyberbullying from occurring you must understand exactly what it is. Research what constitutes cyberbullying, as well as how and where it is most likely to occur. Talk to your friends about what they are seeing and experiencing.

2. Protect your password

Safeguard your password and other private information from prying eyes. Never leave passwords or other identifying information where others can see it. Also, never give out this information to anyone, even your best friend. If others know it, take the time to change it now!

3. Keep photos "PG"

Before posting or sending that sexy image of yourself, consider if it's something you would want your parents, grandparents, and the rest of the world to see. Bullies can use this picture as ammunition to make life miserable for you.

4. Never open unidentified or unsolicited messages

Never open messages (emails, text messages, Facebook messages, etc.) from people you don't know, or from known bullies. Delete them without reading. They could contain viruses that automatically infect your device if opened. Also never click on links to pages that are sent from someone you don't know. These too could contain a virus designed to collect your personal or private information.

5. Log out of online accounts

Don't save passwords in form fields within web sites or your web browser for convenience, and don't stay logged in when you walk away from the computer or cell phone. Don't give anyone even the slightest chance to pose as you online through your device. If you forget to log out of Facebook when using the computer at the library, the next person who uses that computer could get into your account and cause significant problems for you.

6. Pause before you post

Do not post anything that may compromise your reputation. People will judge you based on how you appear to them online. They will also give or deny you opportunities (jobs, scholarships, internships) based on this.

7. Raise awareness

Start a movement, create a club, build a campaign, or host an event to bring awareness to cyberbullying. While you may understand what it is, it's not until others are aware of it too that we can truly prevent it from occurring.

8. Setup privacy controls

Restrict access of your online profile to trusted friends only. Most social networking sites like Facebook and Google + offer you the ability to share certain information with friends only, but these settings must be configured in order to ensure maximum protection.

9. "Google" yourself

Regularly search your name in every major search engine (e.g., Google, Bing, Yahoo). If any personal information or photo comes up which may be used by cyberbullies to target you, take action to have it removed before it becomes a problem.

10. Don't be a cyberbully yourself

Treat others how you would want to be treated. By being a jerk to others online, you are reinforcing the idea that the behavior is acceptable.

Sameer Hinduja, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor at Florida Atlantic University and Justin W. Patchin, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Together, they lecture across the United States and abroad on the causes and consequences of cyberbullying and offer comprehensive workshops for parents, teachers, counselors, mental health professionals, law enforcement, youth and others concerned with addressing and preventing online aggression. The Cyberbullying Research Center is dedicated to providing up-to-date information about the nature, extent, causes, and consequences of cyberbullying among adolescents.

For more information, visit <http://www.cyberbullying.us>.

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Responding to Cyberbullying

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1. Talk about it

Tell someone if you're the target of cyberbullying. Whether it's your parents, a teacher, or another trusted adult, or even your best friend, never keep the fact that you're being bullied to yourself. We know it's not fun and it's hard to talk about it, but you should give others a chance to come through for you. It could help make the problem go away, which is the ultimate goal.

2. Ignore them

If there is an isolated incident where you are being bullied, don't respond to the instigator. Cyberbullies who do not get a response from their target may just move on. They are looking for a response—don't give it to them!

3. Never retaliate

Be the bigger person and never retaliate against a cyberbully. Retaliation only further perpetuates the cycle of violence, and does nothing to solve the problem. Plus, if you retaliate you could get into trouble for what you are doing or saying to them!

4. Tell them to stop

For repeated bullying, if ignoring the bully doesn't work, tell them to stop. Let them know that what they are doing is hurtful and, more importantly, lame and uncool. Be respectful in approaching them and never come off in an aggressive manner.

5. Laugh

If someone says something funny about you, try to laugh it off. Maybe they really are just trying to be funny and not hurtful. Sometimes we say funny things or make fun of a friend as a way of fitting in. Of course this can be taken too far. If it is not funny at all, and you really are hurt by what was said, try one of the other responses listed here.

6. Save the evidence

Record all instances of cyberbullying. Print out Facebook messages and emails, save text messages, and capture screen shots when cyberbullying occurs. Then turn these documents over to an adult who you believe can help.

7. Block access to cyberbullies

Block cyberbullies from contacting you. Most websites and software programs have the ability for you to block certain users from messaging you or even being able to "see" you online. Newer phones have the capability to block preset phone numbers, and you can also contact your cell phone service provider (for example, AT&T or Verizon) to help. If certain people simply cannot reach you, it will be more difficult for them to bully you.

8. Report it to the content provider

If you don't know who the cyberbully is, contact the content provider of the site where the cyberbullying is occurring and make a report. The most popular web sites (like Facebook, YouTube, and Google) make it pretty easy to report cyberbullying. Harassment is a violation of the terms of service of all reputable web sites.

9. Never pass along messages from cyberbullies

If you receive a hurtful or embarrassing messages or photos of someone else, delete it and refrain from forwarding it to others. Don't be part of the problem, be part of the solution. You can stop cyberbullying by letting your friends know that is simply isn't cool.

10. Call the police

If you feel your safety (or the safety of someone else) is in danger, call the police immediately. Any time there is a threat, tell an adult. They can help you make sure that your safety is protected.

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