

Preventing Cyberbullying

Top Ten Tips for Teens



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January 2012

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 ordered 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.org>.

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