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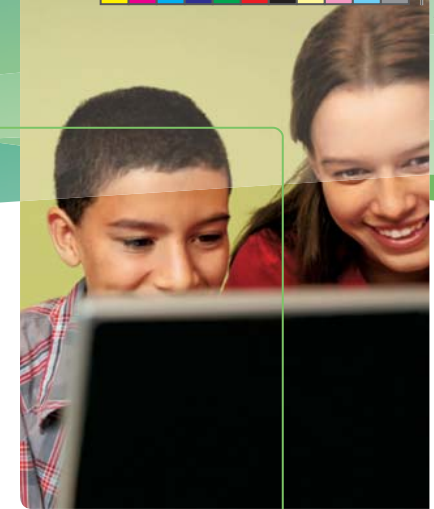
How Cyberbullying Works

Unlike physical bullying, where the victim can often walk away, the Internet is always "on" and kids are always connected. Though most victims know the bully, cyberbullies can be anonymous. And cyberbullying can be virtually invisible to parents and other adults. A cyberbully may:

- > **Deliberately shut someone out of an online group**—an instant messaging (IM) buddy list, for example.
- > **Send hurtful, threatening, or non-stop messages** to a victim's cell phone, harass a person in an online game, post embarrassing pictures or be cruel in other ways on a social networking site (like MySpace or Facebook), or share a humiliating video on a site such as YouTube.
- > **Disclose secrets or private information**—for example, by forwarding a confidential e-mail or text message.
- > **Impersonate the victim** and then post hateful comments or belittle the victim's friends on a blog.
- > **Pretend to befriend someone**, gain his or her trust, and then turn on the victim.

More Helpful Info

- > For other advice from Microsoft about how to help protect your family online, go to microsoft.com/protect/family.
- > For more background on cyberbullying, visit iLOOKBOTHWAYS.com.



Smarter Online = Safer Online

Protecting Kids from Cyberbullying

- > How cyberbullying works
- > Help kids avoid cyberbullying
- > What to do if someone is cyberbullying your child

Bullies are notorious for tormenting their victims face to face—at school, on the playground, in sports. But now, cyberbullying (or online bullying) opens the door to 24-hour harassment through computers, cell phones, gaming consoles, or other Internet-enabled means.

The full scope of cyberbullying—using the Internet for repeated, unwanted, or cruel behavior against someone—is difficult to measure. However, we do know that nearly one in six U.S. children grades six to 10 (that's 3.2 million students) report having been a victim of online bullying each year.*

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* Source: National Council of Juvenile Court Judges



Cyberbullying hurts

Cyberbullying methods may be virtual, but the pain is real—anger, embarrassment, fear, confusion, betrayal. Cyberbullying is particularly devastating because the social lives of many “tweens” (kids age nine through 12) and teens are dependent on their online and cell-phone connections with others.

Victims of cyberbullying may withdraw from friends, skip school, experience depression, consider—or even commit—suicide. And, the bully’s abuse can echo forever—college administrators, employers, friends, and others who search the Internet for a name years later may find the lies and insults.

Cyberbullying hurts bullies, too. They are more likely to be disliked by teachers, find it hard to make or keep friends, and face a future with higher rates of unsuccessful relationships, failure at work, substance abuse, or imprisonment.

Bullying is not “a phase,” nor is it a normal part of growing up. The repercussions of cyberbullying can be so grave that many U.S. states have passed or are proposing laws to make it a crime.

Help Kids Avoid Cyberbullying

Encourage children to make friends and to look out for each other

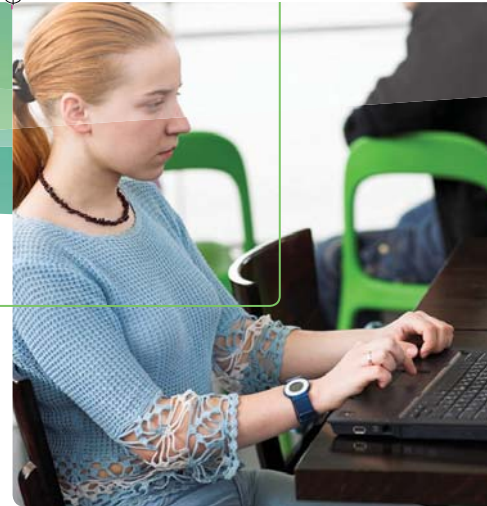
Cyberbullies are less likely to target those who have plenty of friends who will rally around them.

Watch over kids

- > Ask children what they’re doing online. What may have started as a simple argument with a friend can slide into repeated online assaults with others joining in.
- > Look for signs of online bullying—for example, getting upset when online, when talking or texting on the phone, or a reluctance to go to school.
- > For the youngest kids, it’s still a good idea to put the family computer and Internet-connected game consoles in a central location at home.

Talk with kids about cyberbullying

- > With older kids, it’s especially important to have frank discussions. Teenagers have so many ways to access the Internet that putting the computer in a central spot isn’t effective.
- > Encourage kids to report bullying to you. Promise that you will help, and explain what you will do. Reassure them that you won’t take away their game, phone, or computer privileges.
- > Let children know they should never, under any circumstances, bully someone. One strong guideline: Never say something online or in a text message that you wouldn’t want someone to say to you. Make the consequences for cyberbullying clear.



Urge kids to protect themselves

- > Create strong passwords, and DO NOT SHARE THEM with anyone—not even best friends. (Few bullies actually “hack” into accounts; in many cases, they already know, or can easily guess, the password.) Learn how at microsoft.com/protect/yourself/password/create.mspx.
- > Do not loan cell phones or laptops—not even to friends.

Get help from technology

- > Turn on the safety features available in most programs and services such as those in Windows Vista®, Xbox LIVE®, and the Zune® digital media player. (Check out the details at microsoft.com/protect/family/safetysettings/default.mspx.)
- > Explore different tools to help keep kids safer. You’ll find a comprehensive list at kids.getnetwise.org/tools.

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What to Do If Someone Is Cyberbullying Your Child

Children need to know that you can and will provide positive, active, and predictable support.

Act immediately. Don’t wait to see if the abuse will stop. If you feel that your child is physically at risk, call the police at once.

Acknowledge the pain. It’s important for kids to hear you affirm that what happened wasn’t fair or right. Make sure they understand that:

- > It is a myth that only “weaklings tattle.” Those who get help are the ones who are not willing to be bullied.
- > They are not at fault. The bully is not attacking because of some flaw—“I’m fat, a nerd, wear glasses...” The bully is simply justifying his or her actions.

Tell kids not to respond or retaliate because bullies are looking for a response. Don’t answer a bully’s calls, or respond to (or even read) text messages or online attacks. Save the evidence in case the authorities need it.

Block anyone whose behavior is inappropriate or threatening in any way. Check with the service—social networking, IM, cell phone—to find out how.

Report the problem. Every effort should be made to hold the cyberbully accountable.

- > If the bully is a student, consider reporting it to the school for disciplinary action.
- > Report bullying to the Web site or service where the abuse occurred. For example, look for the **Report Abuse** link as available in Microsoft® services or software, or contact us at abuse@microsoft.com.