



# CYBERBULLYING AND ONLINE HARASSMENT

# WHAT IS... CYBERBULLYING AND ONLINE HARASSMENT



**Cyberbullying** is any form of bullying which takes place online. This can be done over smartphones, tablets, online gaming, chat forums, social and other media. Cyberbullying itself is not against the law but if the content is threatening then it could be illegal.

**Online harassment** is the act of sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages and being abusive. If someone purposefully keeps sending you offensive messages that make you feel scared, it could be illegal.

## Concerned about online bullying or harassment?

What people call 'bullying' is sometimes an argument between two people. But if someone is repeatedly cruel to you, that's bullying and you must not blame yourself. No one deserves to be treated cruelly.



**Screenshot any offensive or harassing messages**



**Make sure your privacy settings are set so only people you know and trust can see what you post**



**Avoid further communication with or retaliation to those sending the messages**



**Report the incident(s) to internet service providers' websites and/or social media sites**



**Talk to a parent, carer, teacher or friend if you are concerned or contact victim support**

## SCREENSHOT ANY OFFENSIVE OR HARASSING MESSAGES

If you receive offensive or harassing messages make sure you screenshot them or save them so you have a record of what was said.

This will show what is going on and will allow the police to take action. You can look up online how to take a screenshot if you're not already sure. Make sure you know how to do it on all your devices, including laptops, phones, tablets, PCs and games consoles.

If you get emails or text messages, don't delete them but make sure they are saved and can be retrieved.



## MAKE PRIVACY SETTINGS STRONG

Your privacy settings are there to help. If you have good privacy settings it prevents people seeing information you don't want them to see.

Good privacy settings could include, for example, only allowing family members and chosen friends to see your content.

Make sure you look at all your social media accounts when reviewing privacy settings.

This will help to stop any unwanted messages coming through or people using information on social media against you.



# SOCIAL MEDIA HELP WITH PRIVACY SETTINGS



**Facebook**  
[facebook.com](https://facebook.com)



**Twitter**  
[support.twitter.com](https://support.twitter.com)



**Instagram**  
[help.instagram.com](https://help.instagram.com)



**LinkedIn**  
[linkedin.com](https://linkedin.com)



**Google+**  
[support.google.com](https://support.google.com)



**Pinterest**  
[help.pinterest.com](https://help.pinterest.com)



**Tumblr**  
[tumblr.com](https://tumblr.com)



**Snapchat**  
[support.snapchat.com](https://support.snapchat.com)



**YouTube**  
[youtube.com](https://youtube.com)



If you are using a public computer (eg. at a library, internet cafe, computer shop, or even a shared computer at home or school) make sure you sign out of the device and any accounts each time you finish your session. That will help you protect your privacy.



## DON'T SHARE YOUR PASSWORD WITH ANYONE

Even your closest friends, who may not be close forever. Password-protect your phone so no one can use it to impersonate you.

**Avoid further communication** - If you are getting messages that are offensive, don't reply or retaliate to the comments. Sometimes a reaction is what aggressors are looking for because they think it gives them power over you - you don't want to empower a bully. If you do this it might only make things worse or get you in trouble.

**Report** - It is important that you report any messages you do get. If you are receiving messages via social media you can report the messages directly to the site itself. Most social media platforms give you options for reporting or flagging content that breaches their user guidelines.



The website ThinkuKnow has guidelines on how to block, report and change privacy settings on social media.

[thinkuknow.co.uk](http://thinkuknow.co.uk)

If you are receiving messages by text, instant messaging service or games console you can often block a phone number or block a contact/person. This will prevent them being able to message you.

You can also find out your internet service provider and report the content to them.



## HELPING A FRIEND

Things you can try to help a friend who is being bullied or harassed online:

- 1 Listen to them** - it can be really helpful for them to have someone to talk things through with.
- 2 Support your friend** - offering to go with them to report the bullying and help them think about what they want to say.
- 3 Write supportive comments** - this may help them feel like they aren't so alone when other people are posting negative messages.
- 4 Do things together** - this may help to take their mind off things for a short while. You could watch a DVD, play sports or go to the cinema.



## TELLING SOMEONE

Bullying and harassment can be hard to talk about but you should not deal with it alone. If you think you are being bullied try and talk to a trusted adult such as a parent, family member, carer or teacher or a friend. They will be able to help and support you.

For confidential help and advice:



NSPCC [nspcc.org.uk](https://www.nspcc.org.uk)



Bullying UK [bullying.co.uk](https://www.bullying.co.uk)



Kooth [kooth.com](https://www.kooth.com)



Internet Matters [internetmatters.org](https://www.internetmatters.org)



Kidscape [kidscape.org](https://www.kidscape.org)



Childline 0800 1111 [childline.org.uk](https://www.childline.org.uk)

Your local West Mercia Victim Support Team

01905 726896 Mon - Fri 8am - 8pm and Sat 9am - 5pm

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE BULLYING SOMEONE

If you use digital technology to upset, anger or embarrass someone on purpose, this means you're involved in online bullying. It might be as simple as 'liking' a mean post on Facebook or spreading a rumour on Twitter. The person being bullied could feel like you're part of the bullying.

Bullying can really hurt someone. It can make the person feel upset and hopeless. Sometimes it can make people self-harm or lead to them feeling suicidal. It's important to think about how we might feel if someone said the same thing about us.

**THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE DOING**



## SOME THINGS YOU CAN TRY

The first step is realising that you've been involved in bullying. We all make mistakes.

- 1 Tell someone you trust**, like a parent, carer or teacher. They may be able to offer you some advice about what to do.
- 2 Go back and delete any upsetting or nasty posts**, tweets or comments you've written.
- 3 Be the one to make a stand**, talk to others involved and encourage them to stop the bullying. It only takes one person to start making a big change.
- 4 Apologise** to the person who was bullied and offer them support. This can mean a lot to the other person.
- 5 Sometimes we do things without really thinking them through but the important thing is to learn from it and change the way you act in the future.**

# WHAT CAN THE POLICE DO?

The police can look at messages and content to decide if they are potentially criminal.

Appropriate action will be taken which could mean getting an apology from the person concerned, or for more serious matters, arresting the person responsible or interviewing them under caution.

Cases involving sustained abuse or where someone's life is threatened will be treated seriously.

If you are ever threatened with physical harm you should let the police know.

If it's not an immediate emergency, phone 101.  
If it's an immediate emergency, phone 999.

For more information about online safety visit  
[www.westmercia.police.uk/becybersmart](http://www.westmercia.police.uk/becybersmart)

