

# HOW TO STOP A CYBER-BULLY

## What You Should (and Shouldn't) Do

You don't have to be big and strong or popular to become a cyber-bully, and anybody can become the target of a cyber-bully. Some cyber-bullies use social media to settle scores with former friends; some use the Internet to get even with ex-boyfriends or ex-girlfriends.

Here are a few things you should do if you're ever harassed by a cyber-bully:

- **Tell someone right away.** If you've been getting mean or threatening text messages or emails, don't wait – show them to a trusted adult right away, even if the messages are embarrassing.
- **Don't delete!** Your first instinct might be to "delete" a hateful message – but don't do it. Some cyber-bullying and cyber-stalking cases end up in court. You might need proof that you are being targeted by a cyber-bully.
- **Change your account settings.** Most social media sites – like Facebook and MySpace – allow you to control who has access to your page. Change your privacy settings so that only your friends have access to your information or block them entirely. You should also change your e-mail address. If you're having problems with text messages, change your cell phone number, too.

Making a few simple changes can make a big difference. If a cyber-bully can't get to you, they'll probably get sick of trying and move on. Never respond to a cyber-bully's taunts or add fuel to the fire by striking back at them.

Most importantly, remember that you should NEVER hurt yourself because of something a cyber-bully does or says. If you're feeling bad, talk to your parents or a trusted adult about what's going on and focus on the things you enjoy.



## TEST YOURSELF!

What do you know about cyber-bullying? Take this quiz and find out!

1. Which is an example of cyber-bullying?
  - a. Posting a mean comment on somebody's Facebook page.
  - b. Sending threatening emails and text messages
  - c. Posting embarrassing pictures of someone online
  - d. All of the above
2. If a girl in your class sends you threatening text messages, you should delete them right away.
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. Some states are passing laws that make cyber-bullying a crime.
  - a. True
  - b. False
4. Victims of cyber-bullying experience emotional and psychological issues, including:
  - a. Depression
  - b. Anxiety
  - c. Suicidal thoughts
  - d. All of the above
5. Cyber-bullying is just as harmful as regular, face-to-face bullying.
  - a. True
  - b. False

Answers: 1. d, 2. b, 3. a, 4. d, 5. a



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# CYBER BULLYING



## DIGITAL DANGER



# TROLLS, HATERS AND MEAN GIRLS

## How to Spot a Cyber-Bully

When you hear the word “bully,” you probably picture a big, tough guy who likes to stuff smaller kids into lockers, or your school’s clique of “mean girls,” the ones that like to stand in the hallway and make fun of other people’s clothes or hair-styles. Those kinds of bullies are pretty easy to spot.

But how do you identify the kids who use technology to ridicule, harass and spread rumors about others?

In some cases, a cyber-bully may be these same kids. Some cyber-bullies are “trolls” who think it’s funny to post offensive pictures and hateful comments on social media sites.

Because cyber-bullying happens online, though, anyone with a computer or a cell phone can be a cyber-bully: Jocks. Cheerleaders. Band members. Quiet kids. Popular kids. Honor students.

Maybe one of your friends has been the target of a cyber-bully, or maybe you’ve even been the person doing the cyber-bullying.

It doesn’t leave scars or bruises, but cyber-bullying is no joke – and it can be just as painful as face-to-face bullying.

## HIGH-TECH HARASSMENT

### What Exactly is Cyber-Bullying?

Cyber-bullying is different than regular, face-to-face bullying, and it can happen anywhere. Because cyber-bullying doesn’t involve physical abuse, it’s sometimes harder to recognize. Cyber-bullies use technology and social media to ridicule, harass, or say threatening things to other people.

For example, instead of hitting, kicking, or yelling, a cyber-bully might:

- Post nasty comments on someone’s Facebook page
- Upload embarrassing photos or videos to a social media site
- Send threatening emails or text messages



## WORDS HURT

Cyber-bullying might not involve physical injuries, but that doesn’t mean that it’s any less serious than regular bullying. The truth is that virtual harassment can be just as painful as face-to-face bullying.

If you had a choice, would you rather:

A. Get punched in the face by someone on your school’s football team.

or

B. Let a cyber-bully post a picture of you in your underwear on the Internet.

Neither choice is that appealing, right? A bruise can heal in a few days, but it can take months – even years – to get over the pain of being humiliated in front of other people.

It doesn’t matter if you’re throwing punches or hurling insults. Bullying is bullying.

## VIRTUAL HARASSMENT = REAL PAIN

### The Long-Term Effects of Cyber-Bullying

Imagine waking up in the morning and dreading going to school. You know people will be laughing at you. You know that by the end of the day, cyber-bullies will have posted more mean comments on Facebook. You know that your inbox will be full of nasty messages. You wish you could just hide in your room for the rest of your life.

That’s how it feels to be the victim of a cyber-bully. That’s why victims of cyber-bullying often develop some of the same problems as kids who have problems with face-to-face bullies, including:

- Anxiety
- Low self-esteem
- Depression
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Drug and alcohol abuse

That’s not all, though: Some victims of cyber-bullying end up attempting suicide, just to make the pain stop.

## CYBER-STALKING IS A CRIME

Did you know that cyber-bullying can lead to criminal charges? Several states – including New York, Rhode Island, Missouri and Maryland – now have laws against cyber-bullying, and more states are considering passing legislation to outlaw cyber-bullying.

A girl in England recently became the first person in the world to go to jail for cyber-bullying. The 18-year-old was using Facebook to threaten one of her classmates.

Cyber-bullying isn’t harmless, and if you get caught, you might just end up in jail.

## CYBER-BULLIED TO DEATH

### Riley’s Story

Riley was an average teenager and like most teens, Riley also spent a ton of time on Facebook, chatting with friends.

Riley also had several learning disabilities – he struggled with reading and writing, and he had a hard time keeping up with the rest of the class. By the time he reached 8th grade, some of the kids in his class started teasing him and calling him names.

That summer he started chatting online with Alyssa, a popular girl from school. By the time summer was over, Riley was looking forward to school again. He was excited about seeing Alyssa.

When Riley found Alyssa at school, though, she laughed in his face. She’d only been chatting with him as a joke, she told him. She’d made copies of their chats and shared them with half the school.

Riley tried to just ignore the teasing, but eventually he couldn’t take it anymore. A few weeks into his freshman year, Riley shot himself.

At first, Riley’s parents were shocked. Eventually though, Riley’s mom logged on to his Facebook page and found messages from Alyssa and other kids who had been harassing Riley at school and online. If Riley had told them what was going on, they might have been able to help.

