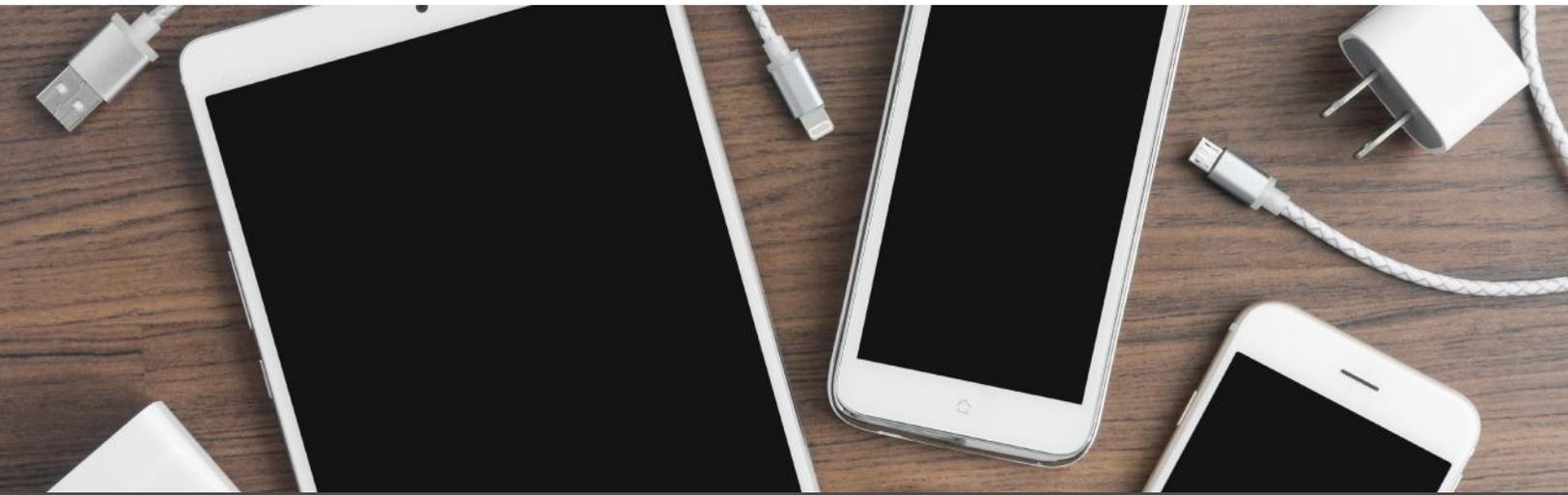# Cyberbullying:
A Guidebook for Parents.

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What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying using electronic technology, which can include cell phones, tablets, computers, social media sites, text messages, chats and websites.

With the rapid advancement of mobile technology and the increased demand, many children are being given access to mobile devices at a young age. According to The American Academy of Pediatrics, kids in third through fifth grades are experiencing an increase in cyberbullying – and children with smartphones given to them at a younger age are more susceptible to being bullied.

Parents are sometimes unaware that access to these devices at an early age has the potential to create a dangerous scenario for children and teens – cyberbullying.

Did you know...

38% of kids reported being a victim of cyberbullying them-selves or having a close friend who was a victim.

According to a new survey from the British anti-bullying organization Ditch The Lable, and as reported in Tech Crunch:

50% of kids report having been bullied.

1 in 10 report being bullied within the last week.

**50%** report being bullied about their appearance.

24% had their private information shared online.

27% had photos & videos shared against their will.

Up to **43% of children have been victims of cyberbullying** at some point in their lives. And up to **58% of those kids have NOT told their parents.** –The National Crime Prevention Council

Who's at Risk of Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying by Gender.

31% — **36%**

13% — **11%**

Have been bullied.   Have bullied others.

■ Male   ■ Female
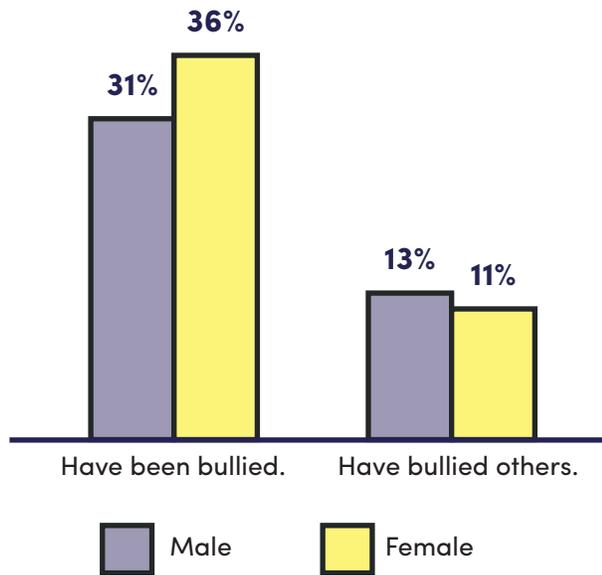
Source: Cyberbullying Research Center
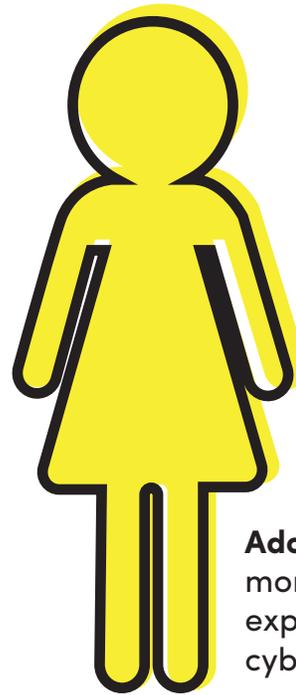
Adolescent girls are more likely to experience cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying and Social Media

Parents need to understand the reality of the social platforms, both good and bad, that impact all of our lives – and most importantly – impact their children. Unlike schoolyard bullying, where one can pinpoint the bully, cyberbullying can be a crime with no known aggressor.
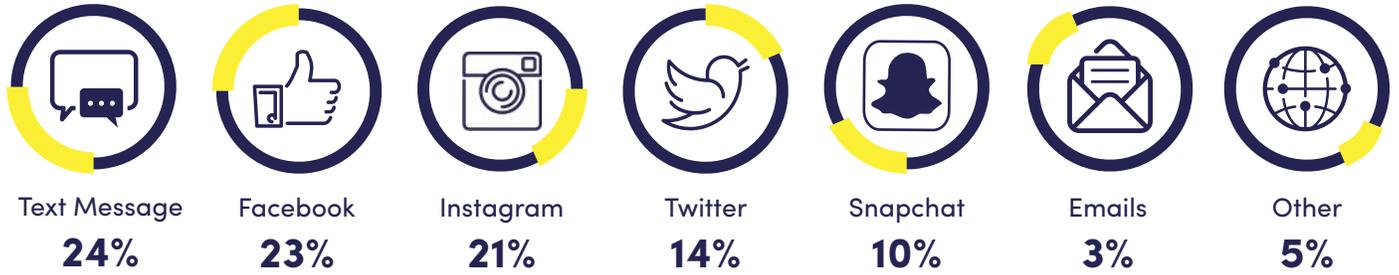
Anonymity is key for cyberbullying.

The ability to hide behind a fake profile picture or private account can make it easy for a bully to launch personal attacks and not face the repercussions for their actions. Some social media sites offer ways to report harassment and inappropriate images.

> **Social media has become a space in which we form and build relationships, shape self-identity, express ourselves, and learn about the world around us; it is intrinsically linked to mental health.**
> –Shirley Cramer CBE, RSPH

Where is cyberbullying mainly occuring?

Text Message	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	Snapchat	Emails	Other
24%	**23%**	**21%**	**14%**	**10%**	**3%**	**5%**

Facebook.

While Facebook is no longer the most popular social media site among kids, most kids still have access to it. Cyberbullying is easy on this site, as there are a lot of conversations happening every day, and many friends and school kids use it for keeping in touch. However, it is also easier to report harassment and inappropriate photos, or block profiles that might be causing the bullying on this site, as moderation has been made easier.

Instagram.

In a study by the Royal Institute of Public Health, Instagram was deemed the most negative social media platform for users aged 16-24 and therefore can be harmful to teens' mental state. Cyberbullying is prominent on this platform, with trolls and negative comments on many posts. However, most concerning are the body image expectations from seemingly flawless photos of celebrities and Instagram stars.

Twitter.

Twitter has been popular in the cyberbullying world for celebrity fights, trolling and mean-spirited comments. Since tweets are short thoughts shared in 280 characters or less, it's easy to type a quick comment that will land you (or someone else) in hot water.

Snapchat.

Snapchat is a particularly difficult social medium for parents to keep track of. Messages and images disappear a few seconds after opening and users are notified if a screenshot is taken. This can make it difficult to get proof of cyberbullying, especially if your child is unwilling to report the person doing the bullying.

Types of Cyberbullying.

Harassment.

Harassment is fairly self-evident, and can take many forms – private messages, texts and emails – mean, malicious and harmful in intent.

Flaming.

Flaming is much like harassment, but is done in a public forum, such as an online group, chat room or mass email.

Exclusion.

Exclusion is the online version of being kicked from the lunch table, and involves leaving a targeted child out of a messaging or group forum, and subsequently harassing them through messages and texts.
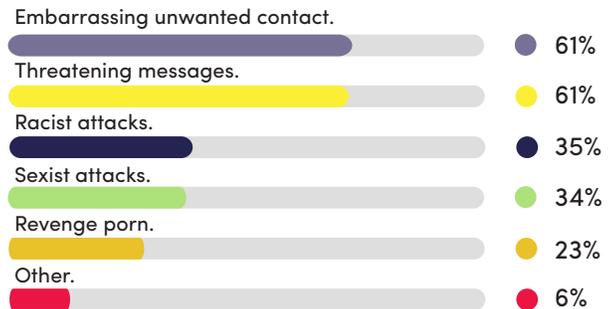
Outing.

You're probably already familiar with the 'outing' form of cyberbullying, as it happens frequently to celebrities. Outing involves the release of personal information, and often private photos, of a targeted person, and distributing it online.

38% Yes

Have you ever been cyberbullied?

62% No

Source: ReportLinker

What kind of cyberbullying did you experience?

Embarrassing unwanted contact. — 61%

Threatening messages. — 61%

Racist attacks. — 35%

Sexist attacks. — 34%

Revenge porn. — 23%

Other. — 6%

Masquerading.

Masquerading is one of the most harmful and personal types of cyberbullying. When someone bullies another through masquerading, they create a fake profile or identity with the sole purpose of harassment. Masqueraders often create a false profile in order to assume the identity of the target, and posting inflammatory or harassing comments as the victim.

Roasting.

A roast is when a person subjects themselves to public ridicule and insults from their peers under the guise of joking. While this may seem like an easy way for some laughs on TV, it's becoming a dangerous and harmful new form of cyberbullying among kids, especially young girls.

Trolling.

A troll is someone who deliberately instigates conversation online, typically in comments. The goal of trolling is to upset, insult or otherwise inflame a situation and can happen on websites or social media sites.

Happy Slapping.

Pulling a mean prank with the intention to embarrass, hurt or torment a victim. Most times, happy slapping is filmed or documented and posted online to further embarrassment.

Fraping.

Fraping is an insensitive term, meaning to hijack someone's Facebook account. Essentially, it is when a bully forces their way into a victim's Facebook account (or other social media platform) and can be done in jest or as a way to post harmful things.

Denigration.

Spreading false, malicious or embarrassing rumors with the aim to hurt someone's reputation.

Text Wars.

Text wars, or text attacks, are incessant messages sent to a victim's phone as harassment. This can happen via text message or even through chats, emails or incessant posting.

10 Signs to Help You Spot Cyberbullying.

As a parent, it can be hard to recognize the signs of cyberbullying. One or two of these signs may not be suspect, but if your child begins to display a multitude of the signs below, take a moment to talk to your child about their new behavior.

1. Uneasy, nervous or scared about going to school or outside.

This is a major warning sign that your child is uncomfortable in their school environment or being around their classmates. Some other signs to look out for are if your child continuously asks you if they can skip school and stay home or if they make calls asking to come home early during the school day.

2. Nervous or jumpy when receiving a text, or while using social media on their device.

Does your child become anxious about their phone, tablet or laptop, especially if you are in view of the device? Maintaining a watchful eye and keeping devices in common areas is an easy way to help prevent this.

3. Upset or frustrated after going online.

Have you ever witnessed your child get so angry at what is happening on-screen that they slam their device shut or throw it mid-use? This outburst of anger can be a red flag when it comes to what others are saying to your child, as they do this out of frustration, and to distance themselves from the bullying.

4. Unwilling to discuss or share information about their online accounts & activity.

Increased secretiveness is another big warning sign when it comes to online bullying. Children will try to hide what is going on because many kids are afraid to speak out, especially to parents.

5. Unexplained weight loss or gain, headaches, stomachaches, or trouble eating.

Health related symptoms like these are one of the many ways bullying can take its physical toll on a child.

6. Trouble sleeping at night or sleepy during the entire day.

Restlessness is a huge factor when it comes to cyberbullying. Bullied children are unable to sleep because they are tormented by what the cyberbullies are saying about them. This fatigue can then affect the child throughout the rest of the day, making their school day even harder, as they attempt to deal with schoolwork and classmates.

7. Loss of interest in hobbies or activities.

If your child has always loved a sport or hobby and has suddenly lost all interest, it may be a warning sign of their being a victim of cyberbullying. They may be trying to distance themselves from something that others are making fun of them for, or are making an attempt to fit in.

8. Child seems newly depressed or anti-social.

If your child seems to be severely unhappy, or only wants to be in their room by themselves, it could be a warning sign. To boost their mood, try planning a family outing or even a game night to get them out of their room and being social in a positive way. This will also help them feel supported and let them know you're there for them.

9. Withdrawn from close friends and family.

This withdrawal could be an attempt to push people away and distance themselves from everyone in their life, especially those doing the bullying. Make sure they know you are there for them if they want to talk about anything.

10. Making passing statements about suicide or making a suicide attempt.

This is an immediate red flag when it comes to being a victim of cyberbullying. These signs should never be taken lightly! Make sure to involve a professional or school counselor as soon as possible.

What if Your Child is the Bully?

Online bullies have a target audience—most often their friends and acquaintances. Most victims are known to the perpetrator and many perpetrators will shrug off an attack as "just a joke." However, the "jokes" continue and often become more abusive over time. There are some interesting characteristics about the bully that parents should know:

1. The bully may target others online because it can be anonymous. They can avoid facing the victim and believe they will not get caught.

2. However, the bully often sabotages their anonymity as they seek attention, hoping that others will find the teasing as "funny" as they do. The bully may be looking to find rank within a group of others who may encourage their behavior.

3. Bullies often have difficulty empathizing with those on the other side of the "joke," which may stem from their own difficulty fitting in. Many of these kids have less involved parents or their parents may not see much wrong with a "silly online joke" which is interpreted as harmless juvenile behavior.

4. Bullies fall on both ends of the social spectrum—the kids on the fringe and the "cool kids" who are popular among their peers. Each end of the spectrum finds kids who are vulnerable—those who lack "status" and those who are afraid to lose the status they believe they have. Taking advantage of another gives these vulnerable bullies social currency as they jockey for position.

How to Take Action Against Cyberbullying.

With the aid of technology, kids today can be bullied anytime – and anywhere. By sharing proven ways to stop cyberbullying, we want to provide you with the information you need to help you take charge, should your child ever become a target.

Educate Yourself.
If you want to know how to prevent cyberbullying, arm yourself with information; learn about the social media platforms your child is using and educate yourself about the different forms of cyberbullying.

Communicate.
Not only should you communicate your electronic and online expectations with your child, but you also need to check in with them on a regular basis. Engage your child in conversations about their time online. Remember, the more comfortable they feel coming to you when a threatening or uncomfortable online situation arises, the better. And if they do tell you they're being cyberbullied, don't let your emotions get the best of you (that's a surefire way for them to build a wall between you in the future). Calmly discuss the situation, saving all related evidence, and proceed from there.

Keep Computers in Common Areas.

If your child doesn't have a smartphone, the best way to stay on top of their online activity is to set up your computer in a common area. Without spying, you can check in on your child while they are online, and can also look for signs if they're involved in cyberbullying.

Be a Friend.

Make sure to "friend" or "follow" your child on social media. Without actively logging into your child's social media accounts, you can monitor activity and keep track of who your child is friends with. More importantly, you can ensure that your child is keeping their account private and that their profiles do not give out identifying information. You still won't know if your child is being sent malicious messages privately, but you can see how people are interacting with your child on the platform.

Practice S.T.O.P.

If your children are younger, use the acronym **S.T.O.P.** to remind them what to do if they become the victim of a cyberbully.

Stop using the device.

Tell an adult about the incident.

Get the **O**k from parents to go back online.

Play with children not involved in the bullying.

Parent to Parent.

If your child becomes the victim of cyberbullying, block the bully and save everything as evidence; take screen shots, print out text or IM conversations. Your next step is to contact the bully's parents and set up a time to talk. Not only do the child's parents need to know about the behavior, but involving the parents can immediately stop cyberbullying. If speaking with the parents is not effective, do not hesitate to contact your school (if the bully attends the same school as your child); most schools have a no-tolerance policy with cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying Checklist for Kids.

If you're not sure what to do when you encounter a bully, don't worry – this checklist can help you! Remember: **always** tell an adult if someone is bullying you or a friend.

How to Prevent Cyberbullying:
- [ ] Don't share personal data, like passwords, addresses, phone numbers or private photos.
- [ ] Use the "Grandma Rule" – If you wouldn't want your grandma to read it, then don't post it!
- [ ] Never post when you're emotional. Take a moment to calm down before posting, whether you're angry, sad or upset about something.
- [ ] Put yourself in their shoes. Before posting, imagine how it might make your friend or school mate feel. Would you be upset if someone posted it about you?

What If It Happens to You?:
- [ ] Tell your parents, teacher or another adult you trust.
- [ ] Check your social media profiles and report any inappropriate comments, photos or fake profiles.
- [ ] Save all communication from the bully.

What If You See Cyberbullying?
- [ ] Report any cyberbullying you see to a trusted adult, parent or teacher.
- [ ] Do not participate in sharing harassing messages, embarrassing photos or anything that might make the bullied person feel bad.
- [ ] Respond with kindness – show your support for the bullied person by posting a nice comment or offering help.

Sources:
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