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Cyberbullying
by the School Internet Safety Initiative

What is it? Cyberbullying is the act of making fun of, teasing, or scaring someone using any type of electronic device (like a computer, tablet, smart phone; email, social media, etc.). It is a type of peer harassment that is more subtle and secretive than traditional face-to-face bullying. Cyberbullying has quickly spread throughout schools across the US.[1,2] Anywhere from 9 to 34 percent of adolescents are victims of cyberbullying and 4 to 21 percent are perpetrators.[3] With such consequences as poor academic performance, school dropout, physical violence, low self-esteem, depression, and suicide, cyberbullying is a problem among young students.[4]

How is it done? Primarily involving name-calling, threats, false accusations, and social isolation and exclusion, cyberbullying is related to verbal aggression or relational bullying and could be combined with forms of physical bullying. Cyberbullying can occur through many different types of technology. These can include cellular phones (e.g., calls, texts), chat rooms, email, Instant Messenger (IM), blogs, massive multiplayer online role-playing games, social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Kik, etc.), and multimedia broadcasting sites/apps (e.g., YouTube, Vine, Snapchat, etc.).[5]

A lack of empathy. Often, cyberbullies feel less regret, sympathy, or concern toward their victims than face-to-face bullies.[6] This lack of concern could be due to the impersonal nature of digital communication, which can leave cyberbullies bolder as well as less aware of the extent of emotional or psychological harm they may be causing the victim.[7] Consequently, victims may often feel more alone, helpless, frustrated, scared, or embarrassed.[8] About 90 percent of students do not tell their parents or other adults that they are being cyberbullied.[9] The fact that many children remain silent about their involvement in cyberbullying adds to the continuation of this problem.

What can be done to reduce cyberbullying? Students could benefit from cyber ethics courses to increase their awareness of cyberbullying and encourage positive and proactive ways to deal with online issues. Parents and educators should also try to keep up with the most current technological trends and should have an open dialogue with children about cyberbullying and

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[2] Brydolf, C. (2007). Minding MySpace: Balancing the benefits and risks of students' online social networks. *Education Digest, 73*(2), 4–8.

[3] David-Ferdon, C., & Hertz, M. F. (2007). Electronic media, violence, and adolescents: An emerging public health problem. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 41*(1), 1–5.

[4] Willard, N. (2006a). *Cyberbullying and cyberthreats: Responding to the challenge of online social cruelty, threats, and distress.* Retrieved from http://cyberbully.org

[5] Willard, N. (2006b). Flame Retardant: Cyberbullies torment their victims 24/7: Here's how to stop the abuse. *School Library Journal, 52*(4), 54–56.

[6] Strom, P. S., & Strom, R. D. (2005). When teens turn cyberbullies. *Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed for Quick Review, 71*(4), 35–41.

[7] Peckham, C. (Interviewer) & O'Keeffe, G. S. (Interviewee). (2010). *Cyberbullies and cybervictims: What's the clinician's role?* [Interview transcript]. Retrieved from Medscape Pediatrics: http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/730961

[8] Winter, R. E., & Leneway, R. J. (2008). Cyberbullying - Terror in the classroom: What can be done? [Electronic Version]. Retrieved from http://www.chaminade.org/cyberbullying.htm

[9] Juvonen, J., & Gross, E. F. (2008). Extending the school grounds: Bullying experiences in cyberspace. *Journal of School Health, 78*, 496–505.

general Internet safety.[10] There is a need for school-wide anti-bullying policies, prevention programs, laws at state and national levels, and more community awareness of this social issue. Parents, teachers, and
students need to work together in the endeavor to promote respectful, responsible, safe, and ethical technology use.

For more information and to learn how to protect yourself from cyberbullying, check out these suggested readings and resources:

- FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin: *Cyberbullying and Sexting: Law Enforcement Perceptions* https://leb.fbi.gov/2013/june/cyberbullying-and-sexting-law-enforcement-perceptions
- Common Sense Education: *Cyberbullying Toolkit – Standing Up, Not Standing By: A Free Cyberbullying Toolkit for Educators* https://www.commonsensemedia.org/educators/cyberbullying-toolkit
- StopBullying.gov: *What Can You Do* https://www.stopbullying.gov/what-you-can-do/
- Scholastic: *Cyberbullying: What Teachers and Schools Can Do* https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/cyberbullying-what-teachers-and-schools-can-do/
- Cyberbullying Research Center http://cyberbullying.org/resources

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[10] Belsey, B. (2008). Are you aware of, or are you supporting someone who is the victim of cyberbullying? In *What Can Be Done?* Retrieved from http://www.cyberbullying.org