

A guide to responding to Cyberbullying

The issue of cyberbullying is more than just getting the content taken down—there are emotional, sometimes physical, and definitely social implications for the young person involved. This is the case regardless of whether they are the target, a bystander or perpetrator of cyberbullying behaviour. As parents, it can be hard to understand how to respond to it all. Try some of these approaches.

Don't panic

Learning that your child is being cyberbullied can make you feel angry, hurt, scared—or, if you have your own experience with bullying, it may even trigger your trauma. It's important to respond calmly rather than to react in a negative way. Try not to respond until you've had time to process your emotions. This can help you think more clearly and figure out an appropriate response.

Listen, connect, gather information, pause

Empathise with your child—they may be hurt, frightened and angry. Let them know that these feelings are normal. Gather information about the severity of the bullying. Does it exist in a peer group or is it more widespread? Collect any screenshots of the cyberbullying to show what's been happening. Reassure your child that once you've had some time to think, you will come together again and talk through some options. If they feel like they need to talk in the meantime, let them know you are there.

Stay connected to family, trusted friends and activities

These are the things that will remind your child that they are loved and lovable.

Show that you care

Check in with your child from time-to-time about how they are going. Keep an eye on their eating and sleeping habits, their ability to concentrate and make decisions and their overall mood. If you notice any marked, sustained changes, seek help from a psychologist or other mental health professional.

Protect

If your child is being threatened, or if they indicate a wish to harm themselves, they need to be protected. Call the police immediately if their physical safety is at risk. If you see the marked changes in behaviour, get help. A good place to start may be your child's school, which is likely to have a policy in place to help manage the issue. Cyberbullying can be reported to the social media service and complaints of serious cyberbullying can be reported via our [online complaints form](#).

Talk over the options

Help guide your child in their decision making rather than telling them what to do. Wherever possible, try to empower your child, and help them to make wise decisions for themselves. If you feel they may be struggling to open up to you, Kids Helpline can also provide confidential advice and support.

Always remember...

The Internet speeds everything up, including the bullying process. Online, people can reply from anywhere, immediately. Slowing down your own response times will encourage your child to at least slow, or stop, their responses too.

How do I know if my child is cyberbullying others?

If your child is treating others badly, is dismissive of their feelings or targeting or intentionally excluding a particular child or group, they could be seen as someone who bullies. If they also socialise online there is a chance they may also be bullying that person or group online too.

How can I stop my child from cyberbullying others?

Finding out your child is bullying others can be very painful but you can help them to change as it is an early warning. We find that many children who target others may need help and guidance and positive engagement with you.

Strategies you can adopt include:

- Talking to the school about your child's academic achievement, learning style and abilities and whether they need additional support. Ensure you praise strengths.
- Helping develop their social skills - your school can help support your child's social skills development.
- Talking about how it feels to be left out or teased in a manner that they can relate to.
- Encouraging your child to be honest about their behaviour and apologise to those they have bullied.
- Talking about accepting differences and how to better deal with annoying people.
- Modelling appropriate ways of dealing with people with examples from your life such as a difficult colleague—younger children can learn about being a good winner and loser in games.
- Talking about the consequences of treating others badly and following it through, i.e. if they are rude they need to apologise and lose access to something they enjoy. Remember to also praise any change for the good so they start afresh.
- Identifying activities where your child can be successful or feel good about themselves such as membership of a sports club or an art class.
- Praising your child's strengths and any behaviour changes they try to make and practice treating others well at home.
- Spending one on one time with your child such as watching a movie, playing sport together or cooking with them.

Office of the Children’s eSafety Commissioner

Is there an age limit for kids on social media?

Most social media services and apps require users to be 13 years old to join.

Why 13? This is usually to comply with the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998 (COPPA)—a US law preventing the collection and storage of personal information from a child under 13.

What about APPS? App stores set their own age ratings based on the app’s content.

Table: Age Guide to Social Media

Social Media	Terms of Use – Minimum Age Requirements	App Store Rating	Google Play Rating
ASK.fm	13+	12+	12+
Club Penguin	All ages (directed at 6 – 14 year olds)	4+	G - General
EA (Electronic Arts)	18+ (with parental permission up to 17 yrs)	n/a	G - general
Facebook	13+	4+	12+
Facebook Messenger	13+	4+	3+
Flickr	13+	12+	12+
Foursquare	13+	4+	12+
Google+	13+	17+	12+
Instagram	13+	12+	12+
Keek	13+ (with parental permission up to 17 yrs)	12+	12+
Kik	13+ (with parental permission up to 17 yrs)	12+	12+
Linkedin	14+	4+	3+
Minecraft	All ages (parental permission required to create a mojang account if user is under 13 yrs)	n/a	M – Mature (Pocket Edition)
Moshi Monsters	All ages (Directed at 6 – 12 year olds. If user is under 13, parent’s email is required)	4+	G - General
Pinterest	13+	12+	12+
Skype	18+ (With parental permission up to 17 yrs)	4+	3+
Snapchat	13+	12+	12+
Spotafriend	13-19 yrs only	17+	16+
Steam	13+	17+	12+
Tinder	18+ (Facebook account required to register)	17+	18+
Tumblr	13+	17+	12+
Twitter	13+	4+	12+
Vimeo	13+ (With parental permission up to 17 yrs)	17+	12+
Vine	13+	17+	12+
WhatsApp	16+	4+	3+
Yellow	13+ (With parental permission up to 17 yrs)	12+	12+
YouTube	13+	17+	12+

* Age guide based on published Terms of Use and app store ratings as at April 2016.