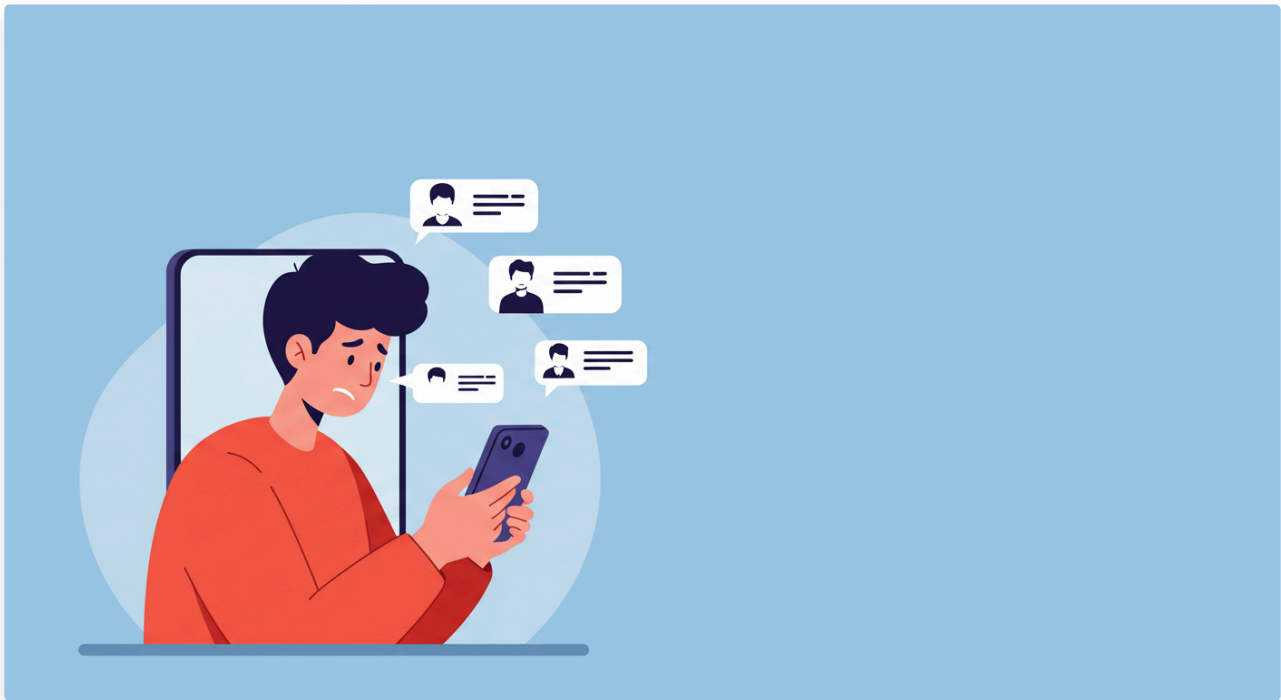


# Cyberbullying

## Textbook

# Cyberbullying



The Internet is a powerful tool for connecting, but sometimes, people use it in harmful ways. Just like bullying can happen in person, it can also happen online. This is called [cyberbullying](#), and it's important to know what it is, how to deal with it, and how to protect yourself and others.

## What is Cyberbullying?

[Cyberbullying](#) is the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating, embarrassing, or threatening nature. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying can happen anywhere, anytime, and the messages can spread very quickly to a large audience. It can involve mean texts, hurtful comments on social media, embarrassing photos or videos, or even creating fake profiles to spread rumors.

## Strategies to Deal with Cyberbullying

If you experience cyberbullying, it's crucial to know that you're not alone and there are effective ways to handle it. Your safety and well-being are the most important things.

- **Seek Assistance from a Trusted Adult:** This is the most important step. If you are being cyberbullied, talk to a parent, guardian, teacher, school counselor, or another trusted adult immediately. They can offer support, advice, and help you take necessary actions.
- **Be Assertive (Not Aggressive):** While it's natural to feel angry or upset, it's best not to respond to the cyberbully aggressively, by fighting back, or teasing them back. This can often make the situation worse or draw you deeper into the conflict. Being assertive means standing up for yourself calmly

and clearly, often by simply not engaging.

- **Avoid Unsafe Websites:** If certain websites or platforms are where the cyberbullying is happening, try to avoid them if possible. Your safety comes first, and sometimes stepping away from the source of the bullying can help.
- **Use Positive Statements to Maintain Positive Self-Esteem:** Cyberbullying can make you feel bad about yourself. Remind yourself of your strengths, talents, and positive qualities. Surround yourself with friends and activities that make you feel good and confident.
- **Avoid Getting Emotionally Upset:** While it's hard, try not to show the cyberbully that their words are affecting you. Bullies often seek a reaction. If you don't respond or show emotion, they might lose interest. Remember that their actions reflect on them, not on you.

## Steps to Report Cyberbullying

Reporting cyberbullying is a vital step in stopping it and protecting yourself and others. Here's how you can do it:

- **Don't Respond and Don't Forward the Cyberbullying Messages:** Your first instinct might be to argue back or share the messages, but don't. Responding often fuels the bully, and forwarding can spread the hurtful content further.
- **Keep Evidence of Cyberbullying:** This is extremely important. You need proof of what happened.
  - **Record dates, times, and descriptions of each instance** when cyberbullying occurred. This creates a clear timeline of events.
  - **Save and print screenshots, emails, and text messages.** These are concrete pieces of evidence that can be used by parents, school officials, or even law enforcement. Do not delete them.
- **Block the Person Who is Cyberbullying:** Most social media platforms, messaging apps, and email services allow you to block users. Blocking prevents them from contacting you or seeing your profile.
- **Tell a Trusted Adult:** Once you have gathered evidence and blocked the person, share everything with a trusted adult. They can help you decide the next steps, which might include contacting the school, the platform where the bullying occurred, or even the police if it involves threats or illegal activities.

## Consequences of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying has serious and lasting consequences for everyone involved, both the person doing the bullying (perpetrator) and the person being bullied (victim).

### For the Perpetrator:

- **Criminal Record:** Depending on the severity and nature of the cyberbullying (especially if it involves threats, harassment, or illegal content), the perpetrator could face legal charges that lead to a criminal record. This can impact their future education, jobs, and travel opportunities.
- **Internet or App Restrictions:** Schools or Internet service providers can suspend or ban perpetrators from using certain apps, websites, or even the internet entirely.
- **Negative Digital Footprint:** Their actions online leave a permanent negative digital footprint that can be discovered by colleges, future employers, and others, damaging their reputation.

- **School Discipline:** Schools take cyberbullying very seriously. Perpetrators can face disciplinary actions ranging from suspensions to expulsion, and may even be required to attend counseling.

## For the Victim:

- **Anxiety/Depression:** Being a target of cyberbullying can lead to significant emotional distress, including feelings of anxiety, sadness, loneliness, and even depression.
- **Changes in Appetite:** Stress from cyberbullying can affect physical health, leading to changes in eating habits, either eating too much or too little.
- **Stress of Being in a Constant State of Fear:** The "always on" nature of the Internet means victims can feel like there's no escape from the bullying, leading to chronic stress and a constant feeling of being on edge or in danger. This can affect sleep, concentration, and overall well-being.

## Conclusion

Cyberbullying is a serious issue that affects many young people. By understanding what it is, how to respond, and the importance of reporting it, you can protect yourself and contribute to a safer online environment. Remember, your well-being comes first, and there are always trusted adults who can help. Both victims and perpetrators face significant consequences, highlighting the importance of using electronic communication responsibly and kindly.

## Critical Thinking Questions

1. If you are being cyberbullied, why is "keeping evidence" such a crucial step, and what kinds of evidence should you collect?
2. Besides legal or school discipline, how might having a "negative digital footprint" impact a cyberbully's future?