

Cyberbullying

Textbook

Cyberbullying



The internet provides powerful tools for communication, but it also introduces risks. One of the most serious risks is **cyberbullying**—using digital devices, platforms, or networks to harass, threaten, or harm others. This lesson explains the technical and legal consequences of cyberbullying, why reporting unsafe online behavior is essential, and what strategies users can apply to protect themselves and others.

What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying that happens online or through digital devices such as phones, computers, and gaming systems. Unlike traditional bullying, it can be constant, anonymous, and reach large audiences very quickly.

Examples include:

- Sending threatening or offensive messages.
- Sharing embarrassing photos or private information.
- Spreading false rumors online.
- Impersonating someone through fake accounts.

Consequences of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying has **technical, social, and legal consequences** for everyone involved:

- **For the cyberbully**
 - Accounts may be suspended or permanently banned.
 - Devices may be confiscated by schools or authorities.
 - Schools may impose discipline such as suspension or expulsion.
 - Severe cases (threats, hacking, sharing private images) can lead to legal charges, fines, or jail time, which may affect future opportunities.
- **For the victim**
 - Loss of privacy and digital security.
 - Stress that impacts school performance and online participation.
 - Withdrawal from digital platforms due to repeated harassment.
 - In extreme cases, long-term harm to health and safety.

Why Reporting Matters

Failing to act on unsafe online behavior allows the problem to spread. For example:

- **Cyberbullying** continues and may target more people.
- **Phishing scams** go unreported, leading to more victims losing money or identity.
- **Illegal content** spreads further if platforms and authorities aren't notified.

Inaction not only harms individuals but also weakens the overall safety of online communities. Reporting provides evidence and allows platforms, schools, or law enforcement to take action.

Positive Outcomes of Reporting

When suspicious or harmful behavior is reported, several good outcomes follow:

- **Stops ongoing harm** by removing harmful posts or blocking accounts.
- **Ensures accountability** through investigations, school policies, or law enforcement.
- **Improves security systems** since reports help platforms detect and prevent future attacks.
- **Builds safer communities** by showing that unsafe behavior will not be tolerated.

Strategies to Combat Cyberbullying and Online Harassment

Users can apply these technical and procedural strategies to protect themselves and others:

1. **Don't Respond** – Avoid replying to harassing messages.
2. **Block and Restrict** – Use platform tools to block the bully and limit their access.
3. **Save Evidence** – Take screenshots or download records of harmful messages or posts.
4. **Report the Behavior**

- To the platform (use reporting tools).
- To school staff (teachers, principals, or school resource officers).
- To parents or trusted adults.
- To law enforcement if threats, hacking, or illegal content are involved.

5. **Adjust Security Settings** – Strengthen privacy settings on apps and devices.
6. **Use Technical Safeguards** – Enable two-factor authentication, strong passwords, and monitoring tools where available.
7. **Be an Active Bystander** – If you see cyberbullying, report it and, if safe, support the victim.
8. **Stay Informed** – Keep learning about new online threats and platform safety tools.

Summary

Cyberbullying is the use of technology to harass or harm others, with significant personal, technical, and legal consequences. Reporting harmful behavior is critical—it helps stop ongoing harm, ensures accountability, and improves digital safety systems. By using strategies like blocking, saving evidence, and strengthening security, individuals can protect themselves and contribute to safer online environments.

Critical Thinking Questions

1. The Jeffrey Johnson Stand Up for All Students Act fights bullying. If cyberbullying happens outside school but still affects a student's safety at school, how should the school respond under this act? What makes judging online incidents tricky?
2. Imagine you see a friend frequently cyberbullying others, but no one is reporting it. What are the possible long-term impacts of you doing nothing on your friend, the victims, and yourself? What ethical ideas might guide your choice to report or help?
3. Create a public service announcement (PSA) idea for high school students about stopping cyberbullying. Your PSA, for video or social media, should include at least two tips for victims and two for people who see bullying, showing the good things that happen when action is taken.

Questions (5)

1. A student is being targeted online with hurtful messages. They decide to ignore the bully and immediately block them on all social media platforms. Which two strategies to combat cyberbullying are they primarily using?

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Choose the correct answer:

- A. Seeking support and educating others.
- B. Don't Respond and Block/Unfriend.
- C. Saving evidence and reporting to law enforcement.
- D. Being an upstander and strengthening online security.

2. True or False: If their actions are severe, a cyber bully could face legal charges, fines, or even jail time.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Choose the correct answer:

- A. False
- B. True

3. The Jeffrey Johnson Stand Up for All Students Act in Utah requires schools to have policies against bullying, including cyberbullying. If cyberbullying happens outside school hours but clearly affects a student's safety and well-being at school, how should

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Choose the correct answer:

- A. The school has no jurisdiction as the bullying happened off-campus.
- B. The school should ignore it unless the bully is also a student at the same school.
- C. The school should still respond and investigate, as the act covers bullying that affects a student's safe learning environment.
- D. The school should only report it to the police, without internal action.

4. What is a crucial reason to save evidence (e.g., screenshots) of cyberbullying messages or posts?

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Choose the correct answer:

- A. To publicly shame the bully online.
- B. It is necessary proof for reporting the behavior to platforms, adults, or law enforcement.
- C. To collect mementos of the experience.
- D. It allows the victim to re-read the messages later for emotional processing.

5. Beyond stopping ongoing harm, what is another significant positive outcome when someone reports suspicious online behavior, like a phishing scam?

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Choose the correct answer:

- A. It immediately makes the internet completely secure forever.
- B. It brings accountability for perpetrators, leading to investigations and potential discipline or legal action.
- C. It automatically educates all internet users about new threats.
- D. It guarantees immediate financial compensation for any victims.

Answer Keys & Solutions

Questions

1. A student is being targeted online with hurtful messages. They decide to ignore the bully and immediately block them on all social media platforms. Which two strategies to combat cyberbullying are they primarily using?

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Correct Answer:

- A. Seeking support and educating others. ✗ Incorrect
- B. Don't Respond and Block/Unfriend. ✓ Correct
- C. Saving evidence and reporting to law enforcement. ✗ Incorrect
- D. Being an upstander and strengthening online security. ✗ Incorrect

Explanation:

Consider the direct actions a victim can take to disengage from the bully.

2. True or False: If their actions are severe, a cyber bully could face legal charges, fines, or even jail time.

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Correct Answer:

- A. False ✗ Incorrect
- B. True ✓ Correct

Explanation:

Think about the most serious repercussions for severe malicious acts.

3. The Jeffrey Johnson Stand Up for All Students Act in Utah requires schools to have policies against bullying, including cyberbullying. If cyberbullying happens outside school hours but clearly affects a student's safety and well-being at school, how should

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Correct Answer:

- A. The school has no jurisdiction as the bullying happened off-campus. ✗ Incorrect
- B. The school should ignore it unless the bully is also a student at the same school. ✗ Incorrect
- C. The school should still respond and investigate, as the act covers bullying that affects a student's safe learning environment. ✓ Correct
- D. The school should only report it to the police, without internal action. ✗ Incorrect

Explanation:

Consider the scope of school anti-bullying policies, even for off-campus incidents that impact the school environment.

4. What is a crucial reason to save evidence (e.g., screenshots) of cyberbullying messages or posts?

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Correct Answer:

- A. To publicly shame the bully online. ✗ Incorrect
- B. It is necessary proof for reporting the behavior to platforms, adults, or law enforcement. ✓ Correct
- C. To collect mementos of the experience. ✗ Incorrect
- D. It allows the victim to re-read the messages later for emotional processing. ✗ Incorrect

Explanation:

Think about what is needed to support a formal complaint or investigation.

5. Beyond stopping ongoing harm, what is another significant positive outcome when someone reports suspicious online behavior, like a phishing scam?

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Correct Answer:

- A. It immediately makes the internet completely secure forever. ✗ Incorrect
- B. It brings accountability for perpetrators, leading to investigations and potential discipline or legal action. ✓ Correct

C. It automatically educates all internet users about new threats.

✗ Incorrect

D. It guarantees immediate financial compensation for any victims.

✗ Incorrect

Explanation:

Consider the consequences for those who commit malicious acts online.