The Modern Teen's Guide to Handing Out L's to Cyberbullies

Cyberbullying can make you feel like you can't really be "you" online, and that's not right! In some cases, cyberbullying can even make you feel unsafe. You might feel like there is nothing you can do -- one teen against an anonymous online mob. But the truth is that you aren't alone, and you can take action against cyberbullying, no matter how old you are.

What is Cyberbullying?

There can be some confusion about what cyberbullying actually is. The term itself is somewhat subjective and can change as technologies change. Are your friends just ragging on each other on social media, or is something more serious going on?

The government defines bullying as unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. This power imbalance can be physical, but it can also revolve around popularity or the bully having access to embarrassing information about the victim. Generally, bullying is a repeated behavior, or it has the potential to be repeated. Cyberbullying, then, is when these behaviors occur online.

Here are some examples of cyberbullying:
- Embarrassing private photos of a student are shared online without their permission.
- Social media users send hurtful and threatening messages to one user, and they encourage their followers to do the same.
- Lies about a classmate spread online.
- Cyberbullies impersonate a victim with fake accounts.

I'm Being Bullied. What Do I Do?

If a joke or other form of online attention makes you feel bad and those making the joke won't stop after you ask them to, this is a form of cyberbullying and you should talk to a trusted adult. Hurtful comments online can have a real impact on your mental health – if you feel like hurting yourself, you should reach out to someone immediately. You can call the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988 on your phone 24/7. Also, you should immediately reach out to someone if a person online is suggesting that you hurt yourself or others.

National Cybersecurity Alliance

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I'm Being Bullied. What Do I Do?

Many teens find it extremely helpful to block cyberbullies online – every platform has simple ways you can block and report users engaged in bullying behavior. There's no shame in having a strong blocking game!

While other's bad behavior should not define how you act online, it's true that some people feel better after logging out or stepping away from the screen for a little while.

How to Report Cyberbullying on Social Media and Gaming Platforms

- Instagram
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Reddit
- Snapchat:
- WikiHow
- Twitch
- Discord
- Steam: Community Page

- Epic Games
- Xbox
- Playstation
- Facebook: more info
- LinkedIn
- Pinterest
- WhatsApp

Who Do I Talk To?

If cyberbullies are making you feel bad, you should talk to a trusted adult as soon as possible. Talk to your parents, but don't let it be a side conversation. Sit down and have a real talk about the situation.

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If you don't feel like you can go to your parents, you should still talk to an adult, like a trusted teacher or school guidance counselor. Many schools have anonymous cyberbullying reporting systems, so take advantage of that if you don't want to share your identity.

It can be helpful to collect evidence of cyberbullying, like by taking screenshots of hurtful posts or saving bullying messages. In some cases, the police or other authorities should be involved.

Remember, the adults in your life might not understand the technology as well as you. Take the time to explain what is going on and how it is making you feel. Taking on cyberbullying as a group is always more empowering than going it alone.

My Friend Is Being Cyberbullied!

If you think your friend is being cyberbullied, reach out. Be kind, calm, and understanding – they might be embarrassed to talk about the situation. But don't be a bystander! Feeling alone and attacked by bullies can have deep impacts on a person's mental, and physical, health. Cyberbully victims often lose sleep and extended periods of stress can be very detrimental. In some cases, victims might feel like hurting themselves. If you think your friend or classmate is at risk, call the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988 on any fun or visit StopBullying.gov.

Understand that your friend might feel fragile about the bullying. Share these tips and try to help them talk about the situation with an adult. Most importantly, stand by their side and be there to help them.

Work together with your friends to flood social media with positivity. Think of ways to take on bullies together!

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Steps to Help Prevent Cyberbullying

It's not you – it's them! In the end, you can't decide what a cyberbully does. Even celebrities and politicians get cyberbullied.

However, you can take some steps to protect your online accounts so that snooping cyberbullies can't impersonate you or get access to your private photos, videos, or documents:

- Protect all of your online accounts with unique, strong passwords that are at least 8 characters long. The strongest passwords are long, unrecognizable as words, and use letters, numbers, and symbols. Ask an adult to install a trusted password manager to help you store your passwords safely. We also recommend using a phrase as a password, like St0pCyberbull1es!
- Set privacy settings on your social media accounts so only the people you want can see you, not the general public.
- Be very careful about clicking links or downloading attachments from suspicious emails, text messages, or DMs. If you aren't sure if you should click, talk to an adult. The link can wait!
- If you don't like a comment on your post, delete it! Block and report users who cyberbully. It's your online world, and, in many cases, you can choose who participates!