

# Preventing Cyberbullying

## Top Ten Tips for Parents



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- 1. Establish that all rules for interacting with people in real life also apply for interacting online** or through cell phones. Convey that **cyberbullying inflicts harm** and causes pain in the real world as well as in cyberspace.
- 2. Make sure your school has Internet Safety educational programming** in place. This should not solely cover the threat of sexual predators, but also how to prevent and respond to online peer harassment, interact wisely through social networking sites, and engage in responsible and ethical online communications.
- 3. Educate your children** about appropriate Internet-based behaviors. Explain to them the problems that can be created when technology is misused (e.g., damaging their reputation, getting in trouble at school or with the police).
- 4. Model appropriate technology usage.** Don't harass or joke about others while online, especially around your children. Don't text while driving. Your kids are watching and learning.
- 5. Monitor your child's activities** while they are online. This can be done informally (through active participation in, and supervision of, your child's online experience) and formally (through software). Use discretion when covertly spying on your kids. This could cause more harm than good if your child feels their privacy has been violated. They may go completely underground with their online behaviors and deliberately work to hide their actions from you.
- 6. Use filtering and blocking software** as a part of a \*comprehensive\* approach to online safety, but understand software programs \*alone\* will not keep kids safe or prevent them from bullying others or accessing inappropriate content. Most tech-savvy youth can figure out ways around filters very quickly.
- 7. Look for warning signs** that something abnormal is going on with respect to their technology usage. If your child becomes withdrawn or their Internet use becomes obsessive, they could either be a victim or a perpetrator of cyberbullying.
- 8. Utilize an "Internet Use Contract" and a "Cell Phone Use Contract"** to foster a crystal-clear understanding about what is appropriate and what is not with respect to the use of communications technology. To remind the child of this pledged commitment, we recommend that these contracts be posted in a highly visible place (e.g., next to the computer).
- 9. Cultivate and maintain an open, candid line of communication** with your children, so that they are ready and willing to come to you whenever they experience something unpleasant or distressing in cyberspace. Victims of cyberbullying (and the bystanders who observe it) must know for sure that the adults who they tell will intervene rationally and logically, and not make the situation worse.
- 10. Teach and reinforce positive morals and values** about how others should be treated with respect and dignity.

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The Cyberbullying Research Center is dedicated to providing up-to-date information about the nature, extent, causes, and consequences of cyberbullying among adolescents. For more information, visit <http://www.cyberbullying.us>. © 2009 Cyberbullying Research Center - Sameer Hinduja and Justin W. Patchin

# Family Internet Use Contract



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## Child Expectations

I understand that using the family computer is a privilege that is subject to the following rules:

1. I will respect the privacy of others who use this computer. I will not open, move, or delete files that are not in my personal directory.
2. I understand that mom and dad may access and look at my files at any time.
3. I will not download anything or install programs without first asking mom or dad.
4. I will never give out private information while online. At no time will I ever give out my last name, phone number, address, or school name – even if I know the person with whom I am communicating.  
My screen name will be: \_\_\_\_\_
5. I understand that I can use the computer for approved purposes only.
6. I will never write or post anything online that I would not want mom or dad to see. I will not use profanity or otherwise offensive language. If I receive messages or view content with offensive language, I will report it to mom and dad immediately.
7. I will never agree to meet an online friend in person without first asking mom or dad. Dangerous people may try to trick me into meeting up with them.
8. If I ever feel uncomfortable about an experience online, I will immediately tell mom or dad. I understand that mom and dad are willing to help me and will not punish me as long as these rules are followed.

## Parent Expectations

I understand that it is my responsibility to protect my family and to help them receive the best of what the Internet has to offer. In that spirit, I agree to the following:

1. I will listen calmly. If my child comes to me with a problem related to his or her online experiences, I promise not to get angry but to do my best to help my child resolve the situation in which they find themselves.
2. I will be reasonable. I will set reasonable rules and expectations for Internet usage. I will establish reasonable consequences for lapses in judgment on the part of my child.
3. I will treat my child with dignity. I will respect the friendships that he or she may make online as I would his or her offline friends.
4. I will not unnecessarily invade my child's privacy. I promise not to go further than I need to in order to ensure my child's safety. I will not read diaries or journals, nor will I inspect emails or computer files unless there is a serious concern.
5. I will not take drastic measures. No matter what happens, I understand that the Internet is an important tool that is essential to my child's success in school or business, and I promise not to ban it entirely.
6. I will be involved. I will spend time with my child and be a positive part of his or her online activities and relationships – just as I am offline.

We understand the above rules and agree to use the computer accordingly.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

After signing, post visibly by the computer.



# Cyberbullying Unplugged

**Cyberbullying is the use of Internet technologies to tease, humiliate, and harass someone. It might be mean text messages sent at all hours of the day, or degrading comments about someone posted to a website. Cyberbullying can have devastating effects on children, so learn about the issue and how to help your child deal with it.**

## **Spot It** *A child who is being cyberbullied may*

- ▶ Avoid using computers, cell phones, and other technological devices
- ▶ Appear stressed when receiving an e-mail, instant message, or text
- ▶ Withdraw from family and friends
- ▶ Act reluctant to attend school and social events
- ▶ Avoid conversations about computer use
- ▶ Exhibit signs of low self-esteem including depression and/or fear
- ▶ Have declining grades
- ▶ Stop eating or sleeping
- ▶ In serious cases, consider suicide

## **Deal With It** *If your child is being cyberbullied, teach them to*

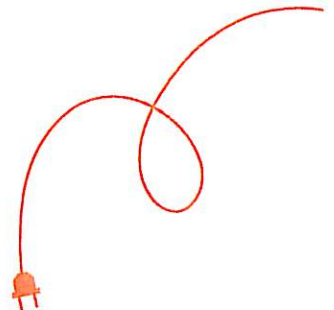
- ▶ Not respond
- ▶ Save the evidence
- ▶ Report it to the website, and/or your Internet service provider

### **Also, you should**

- ▶ Meet with school administrators to discuss a plan of action and their bullying/cyberbullying policy
- ▶ Talk about the situation with the bully's parent or guardian

## **Talk About It** *Ask your child*

- ▶ Has anyone ever been mean to you online? How did you respond?
- ▶ Have you ever been mean to anyone online? Why?
- ▶ Is it OK to forward a text message making fun of someone? Why or why not?
- ▶ Do you know your school's policy on bullying?
- ▶ Which teacher would you talk to if you were being bullied?



**Did You Know?**

Cyberbullying involves more than just the bully and victim; bystanders also have a role to play.

**Standing By: Mike's Story**

**Text and video messages go around Mike's high school all the time.** He's just received one showing a classmate being tripped in the cafeteria. "Forward me" the message says, but Mike thinks that forwarding it would be mean. The student featured in the video message is already being teased and taunted in the hallways. Every time a new person gets the video, there is someone else laughing at him. Mike doesn't know what to do. If he tells a teacher about the video, maybe someone will stop the teasing. On the other hand, he doesn't want to become the cyberbullies' next target.

**Encourage your children to speak up** and tell a trusted adult if they know that a peer is being cyberbullied. If children show that they are unwilling to support cyberbullying or let it go on under the radar, then bullies are more likely to back off.

# PARENTS' GUIDETO SMARTPHONE SAFETY

## SMART OR SCARY?

Smartphones are essentially little computers, so you might be a little worried when handing one over to your child. Take some time to understand the risks and implement a few safeguards so that you can help your child use smartphones safely.



About 1 in 4 teens report owning a smartphone.

## THE RISKS

## 5 WAYS TO BE SMARTER THAN THE SMARTPHONE!

- **CYBERBULLYING**  
With the constant connectivity of smartphones, your child may be more susceptible to cyberbullying or have more opportunities to cyberbully others.
  - **GEOLOCATION**  
A GPS-enabled smartphone can reveal your child's location through online posts and uploaded photos.
  - **INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT**  
With smartphones, your child has mobile access to content you may consider inappropriate, such as pornography or violent videos.
  - **SEXTING**  
Your child may use the Internet and social apps to send, receive, or forward revealing photos.
  - **VIRUSES & MALWARE**  
Just like a computer, a smartphone is vulnerable to security attacks if your child accesses unsecured websites and apps.
1. **Be a parent and a resource.**  
Establish clear guidelines, including time limits and consequences for inappropriate behavior, but be open so your child will come to you with any problems.
  2. **Set up password protection.**  
This will keep everyone but you and your child from accessing personal information stored on the phone.
  3. **Update the operating system.**  
New versions often contain important security fixes.
  4. **Approve apps before they are downloaded.**  
Make sure you understand their capabilities and approve their content.
  5. **Understand location services.**  
GPS features are useful when using maps, but you'll want to disable location-tagging when your child posts anything online.

For more resources visit [Netsmartz.org/Tipsheets](http://Netsmartz.org/Tipsheets)

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**Netsmartz Workshop**

A PROGRAM OF THE  
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Lehnert, Amanda.  
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