

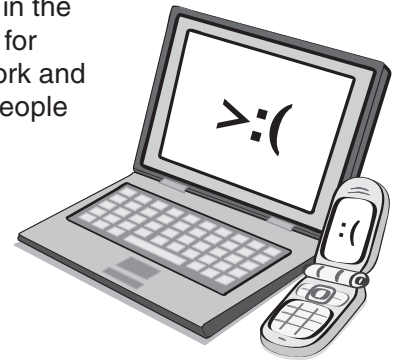


GETTING STARTED WITH CYBERBULLYING PREVENTION

Your son or daughter is taking part in classroom lessons from the CyberSmart! Student Curriculum to begin a dialogue about cyberbullying prevention. CyberSmart!'s approach is standards- and research-based. We focus on adopting best practices from face-to-face bullying prevention, school violence prevention, character education, and cyber security education. CyberSmart! believes that students should have access to and instruction in the use of the Internet and other information and communication technologies for learning, for socialization, and for preparing for college and 21st century work and citizenship. Filters and other technological solutions for protecting young people online are not a substitute for teaching them how to stay safe online.

What is cyberbullying?

The formal definition of *cyberbullying* is intentional and repeated use of computer and cell phone networks by kids and teens to cause harm or distress to other kids and teens.



Here's what we teach sixth through eighth graders about cyberbullying:

- It's not unusual for students in middle school to be friendly one minute and fighting the next.
- Since so much of their socializing takes place online or on cell phones, it is not unexpected that disagreements between friends are common. Because intent in text-based messages can be hard to decipher, youths should try to cue their intent with abbreviations such as *JK* ("just kidding").
- Sometimes students are not upset by cyberbullying behavior, and other times it can make them feel angry, frustrated, sad, or afraid.
- Bystanders, or witnesses, to cyberbullying can have a positive effect on reducing bullying behaviors in others.
- Even if a student posts a single mean comment or embarrassing picture only once in anger, it quickly gets passed around online, sometimes creating a cyberbullying situation.
- Everyone has a right to be treated fairly and a responsibility to treat others fairly.
- Threatening messages are taken very seriously by schools, parents, and the police and should be reported immediately.
- Students should know when it is time to ask a trusted adult for help with a cyberbullying situation.

Here's what families can do:

- Start a conversation with your children about cyberbullying. Ask them to tell you what they know about it. Tell them that you know that the middle school years are when most cyberbullying takes place.
- Talk with your children about positive roles they can take when they witness cyberbullying, such as supporting the target and letting the bully know that the behavior is not acceptable.
- Talk about ways to handle these incidents when your child is the target of cyberbullying. Emphasize that when they get angry with other kids, it's best to stop what they are doing, get offline, and calm down. Brainstorm ways to cool their anger, such as taking slow, deep breaths.
- Tell your children that you understand that cyberbullying is just as serious as face-to-face bullying. In fact, because it can take place when your children are home at night or on weekends, it can often be more intrusive and upsetting than schoolyard bullying.
- Talk with your children about what they do online. Discuss their social network profiles, blogs, and favorite game sites. Talk about who is on their buddy lists and the language they use to communicate by texting and IM-ing.