



# Crime Prevention Tips

## Cyber Bullying



### Crime Prevention is Everyone's Responsibility

#### What is cyber bullying?

Cyber bullying is defined as the use of technology to support deliberate, hostile and hurtful behaviour towards an individual or group of individuals. Just like other forms of bullying, cyber bullying is about power and control. Those who bully others are trying to establish dominance over people they perceive to be weaker than them and can occur whether or not the perpetrator knows the victim.

While technology can be used as a positive communication tool it can also be used to hurt others. There are several ways that people bully others online. They do it by:

- Sending e-mails or instant messages containing insults or threats directly to a person.
- Spreading hateful comments about a person through e-mail, instant messaging or postings on websites and blogs.
- Stealing passwords and sending out threatening e-mails or instant messages using an assumed identity.
- Building websites, often with password protection, to target specific people.
- Taking pictures of people in school locker rooms with cell phone cameras so cyber bullies can post them on the net.



#### Cyber bullying and the law

Young people should be aware that some forms of online bullying are considered criminal acts. Under the Criminal Code of Canada, it is a crime to communicate repeatedly with someone if your communication causes them to fear for their own safety or the safety of others.

It's also a crime to publish a "defamatory libel" – writing something that is designed to insult a person or likely to injure a person's reputation by exposing him or her to hatred, contempt or ridicule.

A cyber bully may also be violating the Canadian Human Rights Act, if he or she spreads hate or discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or disability.

*This tip sheet is generously supported by: BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General*

**More crime prevention tips: [www.bccpa.org](http://www.bccpa.org)**



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## Preventing Cyber Bullying



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#### What Parents can do

##### **Take your child's complaint seriously**

Watch your child for signs that they may be troubled, upset or scared. Don't belittle their feelings or the threats they receive. To protect your kids from cyber bullies, stop the harassment before it becomes a bigger problem. If an adult is harassing your child you must take this very seriously and report the person to the police.

##### **Communicate and draw up a plan**

Many cases of cyber bullying have occurred without the parents knowing. It is only when the damage is already too much that parents learn their child was being victimized. Encourage your kids to come to you if anybody says or does something online that makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened. Stay calm and keep the lines of communication and trust open. If you "freak out" your kids won't turn to you for help when they need it. Be open minded and loving, letting your child know he or she can rely on you for support and protection.

##### **Work out a plan with your child on what they should do if they ever becomes the target of a cyber bully**

Include a simple 'no-response' rule in your plan by telling your child to avoid replying to a hurtful message and instead, reporting it to you, a trusted school teacher or school staff. If your child is prepared, they will be better at handling the situation should it occur to them.

##### **Learn the walk and talk**

You can't protect your kid from cyber bullies if you know nothing about the technology that made cyber bullying possible in the first place. Learn everything you can about the Internet, the lingo and what your kids are doing online. Talk to them about the places they go online and the activities that they are involved in. Be aware of what your kids are posting on web sites, including their own personal home pages.

##### **Set limits**

Without encroaching on your child's privacy, try to keep the computer in another area of the house where you can monitor any activity that may constitute bullying. You'll be more likely to stop cyber bullying early if you know what's going on. Parents can purchase software to install on home

computers to filter web content for youth. However this is not as effective as parents' supervision or involvement in their children's online activities.

#### What schools can do

- Integrate curriculum-based anti-bullying programs into classrooms. Educate teachers, students and parents about the seriousness of cyber bullying.
- Change the school or board's bullying policy to include harassment perpetrated with mobile and Internet technology. There should be serious consequences for anyone who doesn't follow the guidelines.
- Update the school or board's computer Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) to specifically prohibit using the Internet for bullying.

#### What kids can do

- Guard contact information. Don't give people you don't know your cell phone number, instant messaging name or e-mail address.
- If you are being harassed online tell an adult you trust immediately – a teacher, parent, older sibling or family member.
- If you are being harassed, leave the area or stop the activity (i.e. chat room, news group, online gaming area, instant messaging, etc.).
- If you are being bullied through e-mail or instant messaging, block the sender's messages. Never reply to harassing messages.
- Save any harassing messages and forward them to your Internet Service Provider (i.e. Hotmail or Yahoo). Most service providers have appropriate use policies that restrict users from harassing others over the Internet – and that includes kids!
- If the bullying includes physical threats, tell the police as well.
- Take a stand against cyber bullying with your peers. Speak out whenever you see someone being mean to another person online. Most kids respond better to criticism from their peers than to disapproval from adults.
- You can report the bully to the school and to the bully's service provider.

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### The role of Internet service providers (ISPs) and cell phone service providers

Internet service providers (ISPs) are the companies that provide Internet access to consumers. Most ISPs have Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) that clearly define privileges and guidelines for those using their services, and the actions that can be taken if those guidelines are violated.

The use of cell phones is challenging the ability of adults to monitor and guide children because, unlike a computer placed in a public area of a home, school or library, mobiles are personal, private, connected and always accessible. Kids tend to keep their phones turned on at all times, meaning that bullies can harass victims at school or even in their own bedrooms.

ISPs and cell phone service providers can respond to reports of cyber bullying over their networks, or help clients track down the appropriate service provider to respond to.

Parents should tell their children not to delete messages so that they can be saved and referred to the appropriate people for resolution.

### Facts about Cyber bullying:

More than one third of Canadians know of a kid who has been bullied online in the last year and 20% knew of a teacher who had been cyber bullied. (Canadian Teachers Federation, 2008)

About one third (32%) of all teenagers who use the Internet have been targets of a range of annoying and potentially menacing online activities, such as receiving threatening messages; having their private emails or text messages forwarded without consent; having an embarrassing picture posted without permission; or having rumors about them spread online. (Cyber bullying and Online Teens (2007).

Girls are more likely than boys to experience cyber bullying – 38% of online girls report being bullied, compared with 26% of online boys (The Pew Report, Cyberbullying and Online Teens (2007))

Nearly one in five Canadian students surveyed reported having been bullied online in the past three months. (University of Toronto Study, 2008)

### RESOURCES ON CYBER BULLYING:

[www.cyberbullying.ca](http://www.cyberbullying.ca)  
[www.cyberbullying.us](http://www.cyberbullying.us)  
[www.cyberbully411.org](http://www.cyberbully411.org)  
[www.mysecurecyberspace.com](http://www.mysecurecyberspace.com)  
[www.cyberbullyingbook.com](http://www.cyberbullyingbook.com)  
[www.safeonlineoutreach.com](http://www.safeonlineoutreach.com)  
[www.safecanada.ca](http://www.safecanada.ca)  
[www.cyberbullying.org](http://www.cyberbullying.org)

*The information in this tip sheet is adapted from Government of Canada, Public Safety Ministry ([www.safecanada.ca](http://www.safecanada.ca)), Hinduja, S. & Patchin, J. W. (2008); The Media Awareness Network ([www.media-awareness.ca](http://www.media-awareness.ca)) and Children's Services and Education, Alberta.*

### For more information on Cyber Bullying please contact:

Crime Prevention and Stakeholder Relations Unit  
Victim Services and Crime Prevention Division  
Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General  
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