

# HOME CYBER DEFENSE

ARE YOU SAFE FROM CYBER CRIME?

## WEEKLY

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This is a weekly publication dedicated to your personal cyber security. Our newsletter is designed to help the public recognize and avoid cyber threats while they are online. If you are not a subscriber, please go to [HomeCyberDefense.net](http://HomeCyberDefense.net) to sign up.

## Cyber Bullying



Most of our readers probably don't know that I taught for 14 years at Santa Fe High School. In the light of the unbelievable tragedy that my former High School, and friends that still work there, have experienced, we will be publishing information about Cyber Bullying for the next few issues. This information is geared for teachers, but it is still very important for any parent to know.

Cyberbullying is the use of technology to harass, threaten, embarrass, or target another person. By definition, it occurs among young people. When an adult is involved, it may meet the definition of **cyberstalking**, a crime that can have legal consequences and involve jail time.

Examples of cyberbullying include mean text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles. Sometimes cyberbullying can be easy to spot — for example, if your student shows you a text, tweet, or response to a status update on Facebook that is harsh, mean, or cruel. Other acts are less obvious, like impersonating a victim online or posting personal information, photos, or videos designed to hurt or embarrass another person. Some kids report that a fake account, webpage, or online persona has been created with the sole intention to harass and bully.

Cyberbullying also can happen accidentally. The impersonal nature of text messages, IMs, and emails make it very hard to detect the sender's tone — one person's joke could be another's hurtful insult. Nevertheless, a repeated pattern of emails, texts, and online posts is rarely accidental. Kids who are being cyberbullied are often bullied in person as well. Additionally, kids who are cyberbullied have a harder time getting away from the behavior.

- Cyberbullying can happen 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and reach a kid even when he or she is alone. It can happen any time of the day or night.
- Cyberbullying messages and images can be posted anonymously and distributed quickly to a very wide audience. It can be difficult and sometimes impossible to trace the source.
- Deleting inappropriate or harassing messages, texts, and pictures is extremely difficult after they have been posted or sent.
- Cell phones and computers themselves are not to blame for cyberbullying. Social media sites can be used for positive activities, like connecting kids with friends and family, helping students with school, and for entertainment. But these tools can also be used to

hurt other people. Whether done in person or through technology, the effects of bullying are similar. **Kids who are cyberbullied are more likely to:**

- \* **Use alcohol and drugs**
- \* **Skip school**
- \* **Experience in-person bullying**
- \* **Be unwilling to attend school**
- \* **Receive poor grades**
- \* **Have lower self-esteem**
- \* **Have more health problems**

If you are a teacher, talk with your students about cyberbullying and other online issues regularly.

- Notice the sites your students visit in your school. Ask where they're going, what they're doing, and who they're doing it with.
- Ask to "friend" or "follow" your kids on social media sites or ask another trusted adult to do so.
- Encourage your students to tell you if they, or someone they know, is being cyberbullied. Explain that you will not take away their computers or cell phones if they confide in you about a problem they are having. Encourage parents to establish rules about appropriate use of computers, cell phones, and other technology. Students need to try and develop the self control to make their own rules online.
- **Teach students to be smart about what they post or say.** Tell them not to share anything that could hurt or embarrass them or others. Once something is posted, it is out of their control whether someone else will forward it. Also make them think about who they want to see the information and pictures they post online. Should complete strangers see it? Real friends only? Friends of friends? Have them consider about how people who aren't friends could use it. Keep passwords safe and do not share them with friends. Sharing passwords can compromise their control over their online identities and activities.

Next week we will discuss signs for parents to look for that their child is being Cyber Bullied.

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