

# Elementary School Cyberbullying

by Common Sense Media [www.commonsense.org](http://www.commonsense.org)

## Cyberbullying Statistics

- The most commonly experienced form of cyberbullying is when someone takes a private email, IM, or text message and forwards it to someone else or posts the communication publicly.
- 38% of girls online report being bullied, compared with 26% of online boys.
- Nearly 4 in 10 social network users (39%) have been cyberbullied, compared with 22% of online teens who do not use social networks (all from Pew, 2007).

## What is cyberbullying?

Whether it's creating a fake Facebook or MySpace page to impersonate a fellow student, repeatedly sending hurtful text messages and images, or posting cruel comments on the Internet, cyberbullying can have a devastating effect. Nasty comments, lies, embarrassing photos and videos, and snide polls can be spread widely through instant messaging (IM) or phone texting, and by posts on social networking sites. It can happen anytime — at school or home — and can involve large groups of kids. The combination of the boldness created by being anonymous and the desire to be seen as “cool” can cause a kid who normally wouldn't say anything mean face-to-face to show off for other kids. Because it's happening in cyberspace, it can be completely undetectable by parents and teachers. This type of bullying is especially disturbing because it is constant, pervasive, and very, very public.

## Why it matters

Nothing crushes kids' self-confidence faster than humiliation. And just imagine a public humiliation sent instantly to everyone they know. Sadly, hurtful information posted on the Internet is extremely difficult to prevent or remove, and millions of people can see it. Most cyberbullying happens when adults aren't around, so parents and teachers often see only the depression or anxiety that results from being hurt or bullied. This emotional damage can last a lifetime.

## Parent tips for all kids

- **Give them a code of conduct.** Tell them that if they wouldn't say something to someone's face, they shouldn't text it, IM it, or post it.
- **Ask your kids if they know someone who has been cyberbullied.** Sometimes they will open up about others' pain before admitting their own.
- **Establish consequences for bullying behavior.** If your children contribute to degrading and humiliating people, tell them their phone and computer privileges will be taken away.

## Parent tips for elementary school kids

- **Keep online socializing to a minimum.** Let your kids use sites like Webkinz or Club Penguin where chat is pre-scripted or pre-screened.
- **Explain the basics of correct cyber behavior.** Tell your kids that things like lying, telling secrets, and being mean still hurt in cyberspace.
- **Tell your kids not to share passwords with their friends.** A common form of cyberbullying is when kids log in to another child's email or social networking account and send fake messages or post embarrassing comments. Kids can protect themselves from this by learning early on that passwords are private and should only be shared with their parents.

