

# STANDING TALL

## FACTS:

- Up to 42% of teens report being bullied on-line
- 16% of adolescents report they cyberbully others
- Disrespect and name-calling occur most. However, over 12% of students report being physically threatened on-line
- **LESS THAN 15% OF VICTIMS TELL AN ADULT**

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## Cyberbullying: Protect Your Sons and Daughters

The National Crime Prevention Council defines cyberbullying as “when the Internet, cell phones or other devices are used to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.”

Cyberbullying may be as simple as repeatedly sending text messages to someone who has requested no further contact. However, it can quickly escalate to name calling and ridicule, to threats, or to posting inappropriate text or images in an effort to humiliate and demean another.

Cyberbullying is different from more traditional forms of face-to-face bullying familiar to most parents. Before the explosion of technology, the home provided a sanctuary for children. You might have been pushed around at school or given a hard time in the neighborhood. However, once you entered your home, you were safe. Now a teenager’s cell phone has become a permanent appendage on the body and computers are located in children’s bedrooms. Kids activities on-line and over their cells are not supervised by parents to the extent that face-to-face interactions are. This means bullies have potential access to any target, any place, any time.

Bullies are different too. Bullies now can hide behind a computer screen and seem-

ingly remain anonymous while targeting others. This assumed anonymity actually can encourage teens, who would never bully another face-to-face, to vent their hostilities and bully others online.



As a parent, you wonder: What can I do? I am not technically savvy! The good news is that you don’t need to be a computer guru to protect your children. The same things you do to protect children every day can be used to protect children when using the Internet and other communication devices. In real life, parents talk to their children; they know where they are going and what they are doing. They set limits, like curfews, and

monitor their children’s behavior to make sure that they are following house rules. The same is true for Internet life. Know where your children are going online and what they are doing. Know their friends and set limits. Make sure your computer is located in a well-traveled, public place in your home so you can monitor your child’s actions and reactions. Most cyber bullying occurs outside of the school building. You are your child’s first line of defense. You are the protector. This issue of “Standing Tall” will assist you in making sure you are armed with the knowledge you need to keep your children safe.

## Typical Cyber Bully Roles

Cyberbullies typically feel justified in their behavior and actually think cyberbullying is “funny.” Nearly 20% of teens that cyberbully do so by pretending to be someone else in order to acquire embarrassing or personal information from another. In addition, 17% of teens who were cyberbullied report that someone posted lies about them online and another 10% report that someone posted unflattering pictures of them online without permission. While every situation is unique, cyberbullies can usually be categorized into one of four loosely defined roles.

**“Vengeful Angels”**—These teens cyberbully as a means to protect themselves or another they perceive to be a target. These individuals are not unlike the mavericks of the Old West who take justice into their own hands instead of reporting other aggressors to adults who can help.

**“Power-Hungry”**—These teens are not unlike traditional bullies. Cyberbullying is just a new frontier to them and is used as a means to feel powerful and control others through the use of fear. These teens feed on audience attention.

**“Mean Girls”**—Many times, girls bully others by spreading rumors and causing other girls to be ostracized or to face social ridicule. They thrive on the attention and drama that the situation creates. This is done in an effort to gain power and control over others. These types of bullies can act individually or as a collective group behind a computer screen. The Internet provides an avenue for this type of behavior.

**“Inadvertent”**—These individuals do not think of themselves as bullies. They may react to messages received, forward an unflattering message about someone to another, or “play along” and not realize the seriousness of their behavior.

—Adapted with permission from WiredKids, Inc.—stopcyberbullying.org and wiresafety.org

## Cyberbullying by Proxy

Cyberbullying by proxy is when a bully impersonates a victim so that it appears the victim is actually the one causing the problem. Of surveyed teens, 13% learned that a cyberbully was pretending to be them while communicating with another.

The most typical way a cyberbully by proxy attack occurs is when the bully uses the password of the target to access her account, pretends to be the target and sends rude and hateful messages to everyone on the target’s “friend” or “buddy” list. The target’s friends then get angry with the target because of the messages and take it out on her.

“Warning” or “Notify Wars” are when kids fraudulently click the “warning” or “notify” buttons of their IM or chat screens or email and alert the ISP or service provider that the target has done something that violates one of the service agreement rules. If a target receives enough warnings or notifications, they can be denied service by their provider and can lose their account. Although it can be verified by the provider if a warning is justified, by that time, the bully hopes to have angered the target enough to where he writes something rude or hateful about the bully and then the bully has “proof” that a violation occurred. In addition, if the cyberbully can make it look like the target has done something wrong, the victim’s parents may be contacted, and the parents may actually unwittingly punish the target!

Sometimes, cyberbullying by proxy can be much more serious. Armed with personal contact information of the target, cyberbullies can either post information about or pose as a target in hate group chat rooms or on bulletin boards trying to incite individuals who are members of these groups to respond to the target in threatening ways. If you feel your child has been victimized through the use of hate or deviant groups, law enforcement should be contacted at once. Make sure you save any pertinent information to show authorities.

—Adapted with permission from WiredKids, Inc.—stopcyberbullying.org and wiresafety.org

## Teaching Cyber Ethics In Your Home

### Set Up Your Space!

- Put the computer in a frequently traveled part of the home and no computers, including laptops, should be allowed in bedrooms. Make it a rule: if you walk by and your child changes screens or shuts off the monitor, they are automatically grounded for the weekend.
- Limit the amount of time exposed to the Internet and schedule “black-out” times for Internet and cell phone use (Example: no use after 10:00 p.m.)

### Talk To Your Child!

- Talk with your teen about the dangers of the Internet. While the Internet can be a great source of information, it also has inherent risks.
- Tell your teen to never post personal information about themselves or others online, including their name, address, phone number, school, or team/extra-curricular activities. At the same time, you shouldn’t post personal information online either. Parents’ MySpace accounts can reveal information that should only be in a grandmother’s brag book and that information can put you and your family at risk.
- Let your child know that they are NEVER to arrange to meet someone in-person that they only know online—that fifteen-year-old boy from Daytona could really be a 45-year-old, bald man with a van.
- Learn what teens are doing online. Visit websites that your child frequents. If you don’t know anything about Facebook or MySpace or any other social networking site, ask your teen for help. Have them help you set up your own page. They are usually more than happy to show you how technically smart they are. Find out what to look out for (extremely large friends list, truth box, etc.).
- Teach children to recognize cyberbullying and let them know that they are not to engage in cyberbullying. This means that your child should not post or text anything which could be considered cyberbullying and should not forward any email or text which would continue a bullying pattern.
- Make sure all social networking accounts are marked “friends only”. This means you have to approve a person to be added to your account to see your page. “Friends” should only include people known to your child in real life.
- **Make sure students know that NOTHING posted on the Internet or texted is PRIVATE, even if it is marked so.** It only takes one download by a “friend” of your “private” information and another posting to make it public for all of the world to see.
- Know what your child is writing on his/her social networking pages. The purpose of social networking sites is just that—to social network. If your child wants their written information to be “private”, buy them an old-fashioned diary with a key.
- Make sure they know that cyberbullies can be traced, located, and punished. In fact, cyberbullies actually provide the best evidence against themselves—in written word.
- Talk to your teen about how to handle cyberbullying:
  1. Tell your child to immediately contact you if they are being bullied and not to respond to the bully.
  2. Help your teen record the bullying incident. Take a screenshot of the screen in which your child was threatened by a bully. (Directions for screenshots can be found on Page 4.)
  3. Tell your child never to seek revenge on the bully. Don’t type when you are frustrated and angry.
  4. Tell your teen to keep passwords secret from their friends—a friend today is an enemy tomorrow, is a friend again the third day.



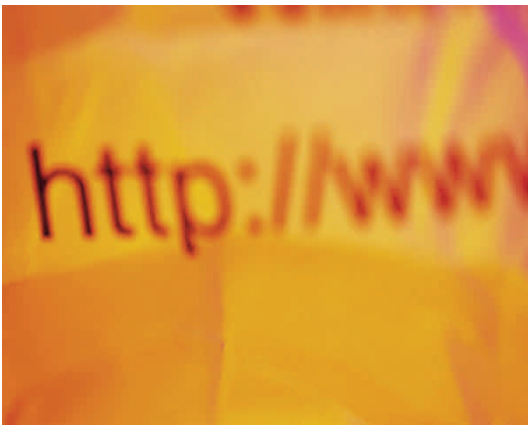
—Adapted from “Stop Cyberbullying Before it Starts,” National Crime Prevention Council

## Is Your Child A Target?

Less than 11% of teens tell a parent if they are the target of cyberbullying. Parents have to be vigilantly alert to behavioral signs of bullying. Your child may be the target of a cyberbully if he/she:

- Unexpectedly stops using the computer
- Becomes nervous or anxious when an instant message appears on the computer or a new text appears on his cell phone
- Seems uneasy about going to school or outside of the home
- Appears to be anxious, angry, or depressed after using the computer
- Is reluctant to disclose what she is doing on the computer
- Shows signs of withdrawal from friends, family members and social activities.

—Adapted from [www.cyberbullying.us](http://www.cyberbullying.us)



## Cyberbullying Website Resources

<a href="http://stopcyberbullying.org">stopcyberbullying.org</a>	<a href="http://isafe.org">isafe.org</a>
<a href="http://cyberbullying.org">cyberbullying.org</a>	<a href="http://safeteens.com">safeteens.com</a>
<a href="http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov">stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov</a>	<a href="http://blogsafety.com">blogsafety.com</a>
<a href="http://cyberbully.org">cyberbully.org</a>	<a href="http://onguardonline.gov">onguardonline.gov</a>
<a href="http://wiredsafety.com">wiredsafety.com</a>	<a href="http://ic3.gov">ic3.gov</a> (Internet Crime Complaint Center)
<a href="http://netsmartz.org">netsmartz.org</a>	<a href="http://ncpc.org">ncpc.org</a> (National Crime Prevention Council)
<a href="http://netbullies.com">netbullies.com</a>	

## Taking Screenshots—Saving Evidence

A screenshot is an image captured by the computer to record the visible items displayed on the monitor ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)). It is an invaluable, yet easily used tool to document cyberbullying.

### PC/Windows Directions for Taking and Saving a Screen Shot

1. Have the content you wish to “photograph” clearly displayed on your monitor.
2. Press the “PrtScn” button on your keyboard. It is typically located in the top right corner of your keyboard.
3. Open a new document in Microsoft Word (or an equivalent).
4. Right-click your mouse and select “paste” from the menu that pops up.
5. A copy should appear in the document. Then type in any other relevant information, such as online nicknames, email addresses, date, time, and anything else which you might later need to document the incident.
6. Save the document onto your computer hard drive in a location you will remember.

### Apple Directions for Taking and Saving a Screen Shot

1. Have the content you wish to “photograph” clearly displayed on your monitor.
2. Press Apple (Command) Key + Shift +3. This captures the entire desktop to a file on the desktop as ‘picture #’.
3. You can also be more selective with what content you “photograph” by pressing Apple (Command) Key +Shift +4. This allows you to use your mouse to select a specific part of your desktop for capture. When your pointer turns into a cross, hold down the mouse button and drag to select the part of the screen you want to capture. When you release the mouse button a snapshot will be captured of that part of the screen. Press ‘Esc’ to release the screen capture feature and switch back to the normal cursor arrow.

—Reprinted with permission from [www.cyberbullying.us](http://www.cyberbullying.us)



## Sexing

Sexing is the exchange of nude or semi-nude pictures by cell phone, and it is becoming more common among teens. In a national study sponsored by Cosmo Girl and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, it was noted that while 75% of teens report that sexting is a bad idea that can have negative impacts, 20% posted or sent semi-nude or nude picture of themselves to another. While teens are aware that these photos can be made public, many may feel that theirs won't be shared because they only send them to "trustworthy" people. However, 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 3 boys report that they have had provocative pictures shared with them that were not originally sent for them to see. The more provocative the information or photo, the more likely it is going to be seen by others. It's also important for parents to understand that there is an expectation of "hooking up in real life" that accompanies racy texts and emails. Because texting is less conspicuous and easier to hide from parents than a verbal phone call, you may not have an overwhelming amount of clues that it is happening. Therefore, talk to your teen about sexting no matter if you suspect it or not. Discuss long-term consequences, family values, and house rules.

## Dealing with Cyberbullies—Parents Have Power!

**Save the Evidence.** Save all of the emails, texts, screenshots, etc. Save everything that indicates a bullying incident occurred.

**Identify the Cyberbully.** This may be more difficult than you think since the cyberbully may impersonate someone else or it could be a case of cyberbullying by proxy. If you can identify the cyberbully, immediately block them from your site or email. If you don't know who is behind the bullying contact your ISP provider to identify the source or contact a company which specializes in this type of information retrieval such as wired-safety.org. They have volunteers who will help you track down the person behind the bullying.

**Tell the Cyberbully to Stop.** Most kids who are cyberbullied report that they tell the person to stop. This may not be effective if not supported by a parent, and you may need to also tell the person to stop. A simple, non-emotional reply indicating that you will either go to their parents or the police if the bullying continues should suffice.

**Contact the Bully's Parents.** Don't approach them face-to-face. Send them a certified letter including all of the material you have collected, the repeated attempts to tell the bully to stop, and let them know that if it continues, you will be contacting law enforcement.

**File a Complaint.** Cyberbullying violates the Terms of Agreement of most websites, ISPs and mobile phone companies. In your complaint, include the harmful messages and link information to harmful material posted on the Internet. Keep a copy of all communications. Follow these directions when filing complaints:

If your child is being cyberbullied through email, contact the ISP of the cyberbully. The ISP is in the email address. Example: MSN is the ISP in this email address: safetynow@msn.com.

If the material is posted to a website, go to the website and file a complaint by clicking on the "Contact Us" area.

If the cyberbully is using a cell phone, trace the number and contact the company.

**Contact Your School.** If the cyberbully used school computers to threaten others, it is a given that they can be punished by the school. In addition, the school can intervene with formal discipline if the offending text or posted material that was created off school campus causes the disruption of a target's educational process.

**Contact Law Enforcement.** Cyberbullying which involves threats of violence, coercion, obscene or harassing text messages, harassment or stalking, hate crimes, or creating or sending sexually exploitative pictures should be reported to law enforcement.

## Is Your Child A Cyberbully?

Parents must be vigilant when observing their own children for bullying behaviors. Cyberbullying hurts everyone, and perpetrators may be held criminally responsible. A child may be a cyberbully if:

- He quickly switches off the monitor, minimizes the screen, switches screens, or closes programs when you walk past.
- She uses the computer after the rest of the family has gone to sleep, when there is less supervision.
- He becomes very angry if you do not allow him to use the computer.
- She laughs excessively when using the computer.
- He is reluctant to disclose what he is doing on the computer.
- She uses multiple online accounts, or an account that is not her own.

—Adapted from [www.cyberbullying.us](http://www.cyberbullying.us)

## Your Child Cyberbullied Someone Else

Either you have discovered or another has reported to you that your child is engaging in cyberbully behavior. Take action. If you do not, you could be held civilly liable for any damage done to the target, which may mean money out of your pocket. In addition, some cyberbullying can result in criminal charges. Use the following tips to help you address your child's behavior:

1. Discuss with your child the potential consequences of his behavior and tell him not to seek revenge against the target or the person who reported it.
2. Immediately install monitoring software and monitor all internet activities of your child.
3. Tell your child that she is only to use the internet at school and at home. If you find out she has accessed the internet anywhere else, tell her a more severe punishment will occur.
4. Monitor all cell phone activity, as well as internet activity, and limit both internet and cell phone use.

—Adapted from *Cyberbullying and Cyberthreat: Responding to the Challenge of Online Social Aggression, Threats, and Distress*, by N.E. Willard, 2007. Champaign, IL, Research Press.

## What is Circulating on the Web about You? Google Yourself!

Did you know that if you have given your listed telephone number out online, someone maybe able to access that information and actually get a map leading straight to your home? If you want to find out what is out there about you and/or your children, here are some quick search ideas which will start you on your cyber journey.

- Go to the Google search engine at [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)
- Type in your full name in quotes (Example: "Alfred Smith" ) and click search. Everything which lists that name will be displayed.
- Repeat the search with your email address, IM screen names, nicknames, and telephone numbers—always making sure to put the search in quotes.
- Next, google your children following the same steps listed above.
- If you find information posted about a child of yours under the age of thirteen, notify the webmaster at the website and request it be removed. The Children's On-line Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) requires that the information be removed immediately. However, if it involves individuals over the age of thirteen, information removal may prove difficult. Start with the webmaster of the site. Usually, the webmaster can be contacted at [webmaster@\[the web site name/URL\]](mailto:webmaster@[the web site name/URL]). For example, Polk Schools webmaster is [webmaster@polk-fl.net](mailto:webmaster@polk-fl.net). In the request, you need to include the URL of the page that includes the personal information you want removed, the exact information you want removed, and a statement indicating you are that person or that person's parent. Copy and paste the information from the site into your email and email yourself a copy too. Wait a week, and if you have heard nothing, send a follow-up email including all information previously sent, as well as the date when the original was sent. If another week passes with no response, you can email a computer safety watchdog group such as Wired Safety, [privacy@wiredsafety.org](mailto:privacy@wiredsafety.org) for further assistance.
- If you find a site designed to harass or target you or members of your family, immediately involve law enforcement.

—Adapted with permission from WiredKids, Inc.—[stopcyberbullying.org](http://stopcyberbullying.org) and [wiredsafety.org](http://wiredsafety.org)