

Parents Can Protect Children from Cyberbullying

As kids discover new ways to share information, they have unfortunately also found more ways to harm each other. According to [Common Sense Media](#), a resource to help families teach kids how to be safe and smart with today's media, cyberbullying has affected 43% of kids between the ages of 13 and 17. As holiday breaks approach and time online is likely to increase, parents can use tips from Common Sense to prevent cyberbullying or limit its damage.

Common Sense suggests giving children a code of conduct. Parents should tell their child that if they would not say something to somebody's face, they should not text it, instant message it, or post it. Also, parents can ask their kids if they know someone who has been cyberbullied. They might open up about others' pain before admitting their own. Other age-appropriate tips:

For High-School Kids

- Tell kids to think before they reveal. At this age, kids experiment with all sorts of activities, many of which should not be made public. Remind your teens that anything they post can be misused by someone else.
- Remind them they aren't too old to ask for your help. There are things some kids can handle on their own, but sometimes they just need help. Coming to their parents isn't babyish, it's safe.

For Middle-School Kids

- Monitor their use. See what they're posting. Check their mobile messages.
- Tell your kids what to do if they're harassed. They shouldn't respond or retaliate. They should block bullies immediately and tell you or an adult they trust. They shouldn't delete the messages in case the harasser needs to be reported to a cell or Internet service provider.
- If your child is doing the bullying, establish strict consequences and stick to them. That goes for mean or sexual comments about teachers, friends, and relatives.
- Remind them that all private information can be made public. Posts on friends' walls, private IMs, intimate photos, etc., can all be cut, pasted, and delivered.
- Don't start what you don't want to finish. Game chat can get ugly fast. Make sure your kids are respectful.

For Elementary School Kids

- Keep online socializing to a minimum. Let them use sites like Webkinz or Club Penguin where chat is pre-scripted or pre-screened.
- Explain the basics of cyber behavior. Tell your kids that things like lying, telling secrets, and being mean still hurt in cyberspace.
- Tell kids not to share passwords with their friends.

Source: **The PTA Parent-Wednesday, December 3, 2008**