

Cyberbullying is the use of social media, email, instant messaging, chat rooms, or other forms of Information Technology to deliberately harass, threaten or intimidate someone. The problem is made worse by the fact that the bully can hide behind an electronic veil and disguise his or her own identity. This can make it difficult to trace and sometimes bullies will behave more aggressive online than they may face to face. Cyberbullying includes acts such as posting or texting mean comments, making threats, sending insults or racial slurs and pretending to be someone else. Victims can delete or block the bully and not respond to threatening messages as well as not opening emails from sources not recognised and reporting the bullying to the school.

What can you do about cyberbullying?

If your child is being cyberbullied it is possible they are feeling powerless and isolated.

But there are options and you can do things to stop the problem.

1. Keep a record of what is happening and include time and date.
2. Tell someone. Encourage your child to talk to you, a parent, friend, school counsellor or teacher.
3. Contact your phone or internet service provider and report what is going on and they can help you block messages or calls from certain senders.
4. If messages are very threatening or serious get in contact with the police. It is illegal and you don't need to put up with it.
5. Don't reply to bullying messages. It only makes matters worse and by replying the bully gets what he or she wants.
6. Change your contact details - get a new username, a new email account and a new mobile phone number and only give to your closest friends.
7. Keep your username and passwords secret.