How Do Kids Cyberbully?

**Instant Messaging/Text Messaging Harassment**
- Sending hateful or threatening messages to other kids.
- Warning wars - Many Internet Service Providers offer a way of “telling on” a user who is saying inappropriate things. Kids often engage in “warning wars” which can lead to kicking someone offline for a period of time. While this should be a security tool, kids sometimes use the Warn button as a game or prank.
- A kid/teen may create a screenname that is very similar to another kid’s name. They may use this name to say inappropriate things to other users while posing as the other person.
- Text wars or text attacks are when kids gang up on the victim, sending thousands of text-messages to the victims cell phone or other mobile device. The victim is then faced with a huge cell phone bill and angry parents.

**Stealing passwords**
- A kid may steal another child’s password and begin to chat with other people, pretending to be the other kid. They may say mean things that offend and anger this person’s friends or even strangers.
- A stolen password can be used to change the victims profile to include sexual, racist, and inappropriate things. Often times the victim is locked out of their own account.

**Blogs**
- Blogs are online journals. They are a fun way for kids and teens to send messages for all of their friends to see. However, kids sometimes use these blogs to damage other kids’ reputations or invade their privacy. Sometimes kids set up a blog or profile page pretending to be their victim and saying things designed to humiliate them.

**Web sites**
- Kids sometimes create Web sites that may insult or endanger another child or children. They post personal information and pictures, which put those people at a greater risk of being contacted or found.

**Sending Pictures through E-mail and Cell Phones**
- In some cases, teens send mass e-mails to others that include nude or degrading pictures. Once an e-mail like this is sent, it is passed around to hundreds of other people within hours and there is no way of controlling where it goes.
- Many cell phones allow kids to send pictures to each other. The kids receive the pictures directly on their phones, and may send them to everyone in their address books. After viewing the picture at a Web site, some kids have actually posted these often pornographic pictures on Kazaa and other programs for anyone to download. Pictures are often taken of someone in a locker room, bathroom or dressing room and are posted online or sent to others on cell phones.

**Internet Polling**
- Who’s Hot? Who’s Not? Who is the biggest slut in the sixth grade? These types of questions run rampant on Internet polls created by young people.

**Interactive Gaming**
Many kids today are playing interactive games on gaming devices such as X-Box Live and Sony Play Station 2 Network. These gaming devices allow your child to communicate by chat and live Internet phone with anyone they find themselves matched with in a game online. Sometimes the kids verbally abuse the other kids, using threats and
What Can You Do?

- **Be the one trusted place** your child can go when things go wrong online and offline. Yet, often times parents are the one place kids avoid when things go wrong online. Why? Parents tend to overreact. Most children will avoid telling their parents about a cyberbullying incident fearing they will only make things worse. Unfortunately, parents also sometimes under react, and rarely get it “just right.”

- **Be supportive of your child during this time.** You may be tempted to give the “sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will never hurt you” lecture, but words and cyberattacks can wound a child easily and have a lasting effect. These attacks follow your child into your otherwise safe home and wherever they go online. And when up to 700 million accomplices can be recruited to help target or humiliate your child, the risk of emotional pain is very real, and very serious. Don’t brush it off.

- **Let the school know** so the guidance counselor can keep an eye out for in-school bullying and for how your child is handling things. Children have committed suicide after being cyberbullied, take it seriously.

- **Understand that your child is just as likely to be a cyberbully as a victim** of cyberbullying and that children often go back and forth between the two roles during one incident.

- **Google your child.** What are they sharing online with Web sites and in public with strangers? It’s time you found out for sure.

- **Know your child’s passwords** and check their internet usage, social networking pages and cell phones. You pay for their access to this technology. It is your job to make sure that they are using it correctly and to keep them safe.

- If there is any indication that personal contact information has been posted online, or any threats are made to your child, you should run, not walk, to your local law enforcement agency. Take a print-out of all instances of cyberbullying but note that you will need electronic evidence and live data to prove a case of cyber-harassment or cyberbullying. Always remember, if in doubt, report it.

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“How Do Kids Cyberbully?” Continued

- **lewd language.** Sometimes they take it further, by locking them out of games, passing false rumors about them or hacking into their accounts.

**Sending Malicious Code**

- Many kids will send viruses, spyware and hacking programs to their victims. They do this to either destroy their computers or spy on their victim. Trojan Horse programs allow the cyberbully to control their victim’s computer remote control, and can be used to erase the hard drive of the victim.

**Sending Porn and Other Junk E-Mail and IMs**

- Often cyberbullies will sign their victims up for e-mailing and IM marketing lists, lots of them, especially to porn sites. When the victim receives thousands of e-mails from pornographers their parents usually get involved, either blaming them (assuming they have been visiting porn sites) or making them change their e-mail or IM address.

**Impersonation**

- Posing as the victim, the cyberbully can do considerable damage. They may post a provocative message in a hate group’s chatroom posing as the victim, inviting an attack against the victim, often giving the name, address and telephone number of the victim to make the hate group’s job easier. They often also send a message to someone posing as the victim, saying hateful or threatening things while masquerading as the victim. They may also alter a message really from the victim, making it appear that they have said nasty things or shared secrets with others.

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Laws and Legal Consequences:

Cyberbullying may arise to the level of a misdemeanor cyberharassment charge, or if the child is young enough may result in the charge of juvenile delinquency. Most of the time the cyberbullying does not go that far, although parents often try and pursue criminal charges. It typically can result in a child losing their ISP or IM accounts as a “terms of service” violation. And in some cases, if hacking or password and identity theft is involved, can be a serious criminal matter under state and federal law.