

Preventing Cyber-Bullying: A Resource Guide for Parents and Teachers

Online communication can be very difficult because it lacks emotion. We cannot see facial expressions or hear voice intonation. With online communication, be sure to put the information in context before responding.

Defining the Issue

From the playground to the locker room, bullying has long been a problem for children, pre-teens, and teenagers alike. For the most part, traditional bullying is characterized by the face-to-face relationship of the bully to his or her victim and the ability of the victim to escape. But with new technologies—instant messaging, text messaging, email, social networking sites, twitter, video capable cell phones, and the like—bullying has taken on a new life and a new name: cyber-bullying.

With the new technologies, bullies can harass their victims 24/7 and reach a much larger audience. In addition, the bullying often follows the victim for much longer. With cyber-bullying, both the bully and the victim are minors. Cyber-bullying should not be confused with cyber-harassment or cyber-stalking, both of which have an adult in the equation.

Did You Know?

- Cyber-bullies are twice as likely to be girls.
- 75 percent of teen victims of cyber-bullying received the message at home.
- Only 35 percent told their parents about being bullied.
- Instant messaging is the most commonly used tool for cyber-bullies.

Your Child's Cyber-bully Toolbox

There are several rules that can help your child deal with the cyber-bullies in your neighborhood. The most important thing



is to make sure your child knows he/she can talk to you about being bullied. Also, teach your child these things:

- Never respond to the cyber-bully; put down the mouse and walk away.
- Never say anything online you wouldn't say face to face.
- Never give out your password to anyone—even friends!
- Never post your personal information online.

Your Response to Cyber-bullying

- Avoid the temptation to respond to the cyber-bully. This usually only escalates the situation.
- Talk to your children about the situation. Do they know who it is? How long has it been going on? How are they dealing with it emotionally?
- Supervise computer use and frequently review "buddy" lists.
- Keep instant messages, text messages, emails, and other electronic messages for evidence.
- Escalate your response as the threat to your child worsens.



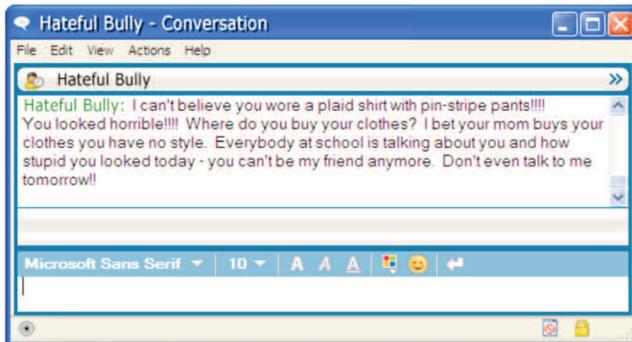
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Gathering Evidence

Taking a Simple Print Screen

1. Hold down the Control key and the Print Screen key on your keyboard at the same time.
2. Press the Control key plus the letter C to copy the image on the screen.
3. Open up a blank document (for example, in Word) and press the Control key and the letter V to paste the image on the screen.

Print screens are quick and easy to create, but they will not hold up in court. In order to provide usable evidence, you will also need to save and copy the source or header information.



Looking at the Header or Source Information in an Email

For Gmail (Google Email):

1. Open the email by clicking on the subject line.
2. Click the down arrow next to Reply.
3. In the drop-down menu, click Show Original.

For Yahoo! email:

1. Open the email by clicking on the subject line.
2. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click Full Headers.

For MSN Hotmail email:

(This only works for the newest version of MSN Hotmail.)

1. Right-click on the email subject line.
2. In the pop-up menu, click View Source.
3. The source code will be displayed in a new window.

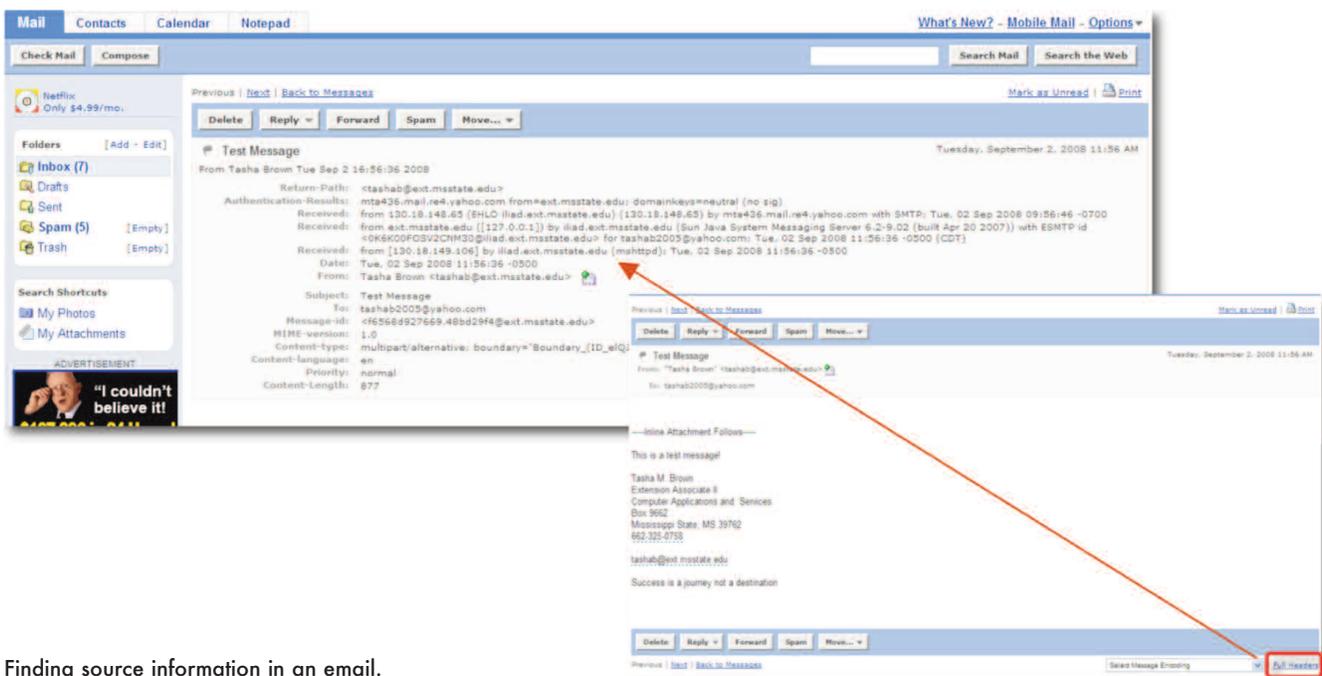
Creating a Google Alert

Creating a Google Alert will allow Google to notify you anytime information is posted on the Internet containing the search terms you specified. To create a Google Alert, try the following:

1. Open Internet Explorer and type <http://www.google.com/alerts> into the address bar.
2. Type the search terms you would like Google to notify you about (like a name or address).
3. Select the type of search you would like Google to conduct.
4. Select how often you would like to be notified.
5. Enter your email address, and then click Create Alert.

Googling your child's name from time to time is a good way to see if anything has been posted about him or her on the Internet. Listed below are a few other things you might want to check out:

- Images on Google
- Facebook
- MySpace
- Buddy List



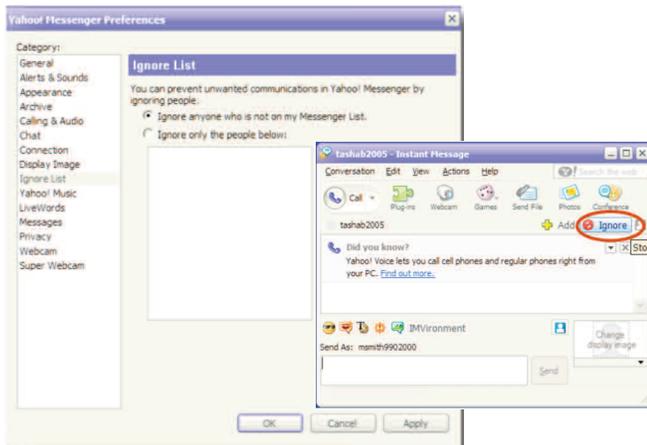
Finding source information in an email.

Blocking Instant Messages

To ignore anyone not in your messenger list on Yahoo! Instant Messaging, try this:

1. Click Messenger.
2. In the drop-down menu, click Preferences.
3. Under Category, select Ignore List.
4. Select the button next to "Ignore anyone not on my Messenger List."
5. Click Apply.
6. Click OK.

If you want to block just one person, click Ignore in the instant message itself.



Implementing Acceptable Use Policies for Schools

Many schools face a difficult task when it comes to disciplining students who cyber-bully other students or school staff. On the one hand, they have the First Amendment guaranteeing free speech; on the other hand, they have students who are being bullied daily.

It is nearly impossible for school administrators to exercise authority over students' out-of-school behavior. Administrators should include a provision in the school's acceptable use policy, stating the school has the right to intervene if a student's off-campus behavior impacts another student's well-being.

Schools should consider the following when dealing with cyber-bullying:

- Make sure both parents and students sign the policy.
- Teach students cyber-ethics and appropriate responses to cyber-bullying.
- When cyber-bullying occurs, talk to the student and his or her parents/guardians first.
- Record all instances of cyber-bullying.
- Contact police immediately if there is a threat of violence, child sexual solicitation, hate crimes, or stalking.

Sample Acceptable Use Policy

Under no circumstances will you, your parents, or your guardians, engage in any abusive action that directly impacts the well-being of another student, teachers, school administrators, staff, or the school itself. This includes any actions that originate on the school grounds or off school grounds. Abusive actions may be defined as cyber-bullying, cyber-stalking, or cyber-harassment.

As a student of XYZ School or as a parent, I agree to abide by the following:

1. I will not send harassing or demeaning text messages to other students or school staff.
2. I will not use cell phones or digital cameras in locker rooms.
3. I will not take or transmit inappropriate or demeaning images or videos.
4. I will not post any harmful messages on social networking websites.
5. I will not post another student's information online.
6. I will not impersonate another student online.
7. I will not engage in cyber-bullying in my online activities. If I do engage in such activities, I understand that my rights to the school's network will be suspended and I will be subject to disciplinary action by the school (see Policy ABC of the student handbook).
8. I will notify appropriate authorities if I discover any of the aforementioned activities taking place.

Student signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/guardian signature: _____ Date: _____

Understanding the Law in Mississippi

SEC. 97-45-15. "Cyber stalking"; penalties.

- (1) It is unlawful for a person to:
 - (a) Use in electronic mail or electronic communication any words or language threatening to inflict bodily harm to any person or to that person's child, sibling, spouse, or dependent, or physical injury to the property of any person, or for the purpose of extorting money or other things of value from any person.
 - (b) Electronically mail or electronically communicate to another repeatedly, whether or not conversation ensues, for the purpose of threatening, terrifying, or harassing any person.
 - (c) Electronically mail or electronically communicate to another and to knowingly make any false statement concerning death, injury, illness, disfigurement, indecent conduct, or criminal conduct of the person electronically mailed or of any member of the person's family or household with the intent to threaten, terrify, or harass.
 - (d) Knowingly permit an electronic communication device under the person's control to be used for any purpose prohibited by this section.

SEC. 97-45-17. Posting of messages through electronic media for purpose of causing injury to any person; penalties.

- (1) A person shall not post a message for the purpose of causing injury to any person through the use of any medium of communication, including the Internet or a computer, computer program, computer system, or computer network, or other electronic medium of communication without the victim's consent, for the purpose of causing injury to any person.

Want To Know More?

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