Cyberbullying  
*Resources for Teachers*

**Teaching Digital Citizenship**  
Lesson plans for students in grades 4-8; includes videos and inquiry-based, collaborative activities.

**Commonsense Media Toolkit**  
https://www.commonsensemedia.org/educators/cyberbullying-toolkit  
Free toolkit with resources and lesson plans for elementary, middle, and high school teachers. Also includes posters and information about involving parents.

**Cyberbullying Research Center**  
http://cyberbullying.org/resources/educators  
Information includes activities, handouts, and lesson plans in PDF format for downloading or printing.

**PACER’s National Bullying Prevention Center**  
http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/  
Includes resources for bullying prevention with specific activities, lesson plans, books, toolkits, and handouts that focus on cyberbullying. Includes resources for all grades.
Cyberbullying and the Law
When Should Schools Get Involved?

What to consider?

1. Location of the bullying, did it happen...
   a. During a school-sponsored education program or activity
   b. While in school, on school property, on school buses or other vehicles, at designated bus stops, school-sponsored or school sanctioned events or activities
   c. From a school computer, school network, other school electronic equipment

   If yes to any of these... then GET INVOLVED!

2. Does it violate the student’s right to free speech?
   a. Right not to speak, protest, use phrases to convey political messages, contribute money, advertise services, engage in symbolic speech
   b. If yes... go to step 3
   c. If no... go to step 3

3. Sometimes a student’s right to free speech may not be protected, such as when it...
   a. Substantially or materially disrupts learning
   b. Interferes with the educational process or school discipline
   c. Utilizes school-owned technology to harass or bully
   d. Threatens other students or teachers or infringes on their civil rights

**Bottom Line: Get involved when the bullying substantially interferes with the learning environment or occurs at school events, even if it violates the student’s right to free speech.
Developing a Positive School Climate
Top Ten Tips to Prevent Bullying and Cyberbullying

Sameer Hinduja, Ph.D. and Justin W. Patchin, Ph.D.
Cyberbullying Research Center

Much research has shown that a positive school climate contributes to a variety of behavioral, emotional, and academic outcomes that educators hope to achieve. Our research demonstrates that students who report a positive climate at school also experience fewer problematic behaviors online. Here’s what you can do to improve your climate and not only enhance student achievement, success, and productivity, but also teach youth to be safe, smart, honest, and responsible while using technology.

1. **Promote awareness.** School staff should dedicate time in the classroom to educating students about all forms of bullying in order to raise awareness of the risks, possible school-based and legal penalties, and the emotional, psychological, reputational, and even physical harm that can result. Students should realize that even if they are not bullying others, they have a responsibility to ensure the safety of their peers. If they see bullying, they should do something about it. Schools should also instruct, model, and reward appropriate and helpful behaviors, instead of only speaking out against and disciplining that which is inappropriate.

2. **Cultivate open lines of communication.** Interaction between staff and students should exist conveniently and comfortably throughout the school. Staff should intentionally work to build an atmosphere of trust and continual dialogue regarding the issues youth are confronting. Students must know and feel completely comfortable with at least one adult at school whom they can approach to discuss any struggle they are facing – offline or online.

3. **Learn their names.** Educators should take the time to learn the names of all of their students in order to build relationships, combat feelings of unimportance, promote connectedness and belongingness, and to reinforce critical feelings of trust, mutual respect, and safety. This is a simple but very powerful way for educators to show that they truly care about each and every child in their school.

4. **Develop stakeholder relationships.** Educators should work together with parents and others in the community, such as businesses, non-profits, law enforcement, and other youth professionals to properly address bullying and cyberbullying. Local organizations that care about these issues can assist in ways that are substantive (sponsorships!) and symbolic (messaging, endorsements, intangible support). Everyone can bring something to the table and help collectively combat these issues. Teaching teens to use technology with wisdom, discretion, and forethought is the responsibility of everyone in the community.

5. **Set up anonymous reporting.** Schools should create safe and private ways for students to report issues of concern that they may otherwise feel uncomfortable, scared, or ashamed to openly share with the proper authorities. Nobody wants to be viewed as a snitch or tattletale. Reporting systems could include a form on a school web page, a phone number to receive confidential calls or texts, or a drop-box on campus for youth to use. As important as reporting mechanisms are, it is even more essential that schools investigate and respond swiftly and appropriately to all reports that come in. If not, students will quickly learn that nothing happens when reports are made, and they will stop doing it, and dismiss the school as oblivious, hypocritical, and apathetic.

Cyberbullying Research Center www.cyberbullying.org
6. **Instill hope.** School staff should work to cultivate a strong sense of hope and positivity across the student body to counter negative messages from those who bully, and to help buffer typical adolescent stressors. The best educators demonstrate care about more than just the academic or athletic success of youth. Administrators, teachers, and support staff can come alongside all students to build them up, show compassion and empathy, give them assistance when needed, and keep them inspired toward a great future.

7. **Build positive social norming campaigns.** Social norming is about changing prevailing mentalities about the extent of certain behaviors across campus. For example, if most youth think that bullying is a common and natural part of adolescent culture, or that anyone who talks to an adult about their problems is weak, then these beliefs will dominate and spread. The reality is that the vast majority of kids despise bullying, don’t want to hurt others, and desire great relationships with their peers. Focus attention on the majority of youth who do utilize their phones, social media, and other technology in acceptable and even positive ways. Promote the positive things that students are doing. Celebrate successes. Highlight and commend acts of kindness. Make clear that care and compassion is the norm at your school, and not the exception. And have a clear messaging strategy that gets the word out!

8. **Enlist the help of students.** Many youth want to be actively involved in combatting cruelty and promoting positivity at their school. And they are typically best positioned to make the greatest impact! The peer group is a powerful influence on the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of adolescents at this stage of their development. High school leaders could talk to fellow students about these issues informally in the cafeteria during lunch or during a more structured assembly. Some could organize a presentation for others in small classroom–sized (20+) groups. The potential opportunities for student empowerment and involvement are endless!

9. **Collect data.** Administrators should consider conducting a regular formal assessment of students to find out the actual extent of bullying, cyberbullying, and related teen problems – as well as their contributing factors and the negative outcomes that result. This will help inform and direct efforts so that resources are spent in the best possible ways. Having data specific to your school(s) also adds credibility and legitimacy to funding requests by demonstrating what is happening locally. The results can also be compared to national data to examine the extent to which your school is substantially different (better or worse) than other schools. Contact us for help and support in making this happen!

10. **Never stop learning.** Educators themselves should continue to learn about new technological developments, devices, and forms of online misuse. They should also develop relationships with staff at other schools who focus on these problems so that they know where to get help when an incident comes across their desk. There are plenty of research-informed resources available to help educators identify, prevent, and respond to bullying and cyberbullying. They just need to seek out and obtain the best materials out there. Our Cyberbullying Research Center has an increasing number of excellent resources for educators, parents, and teens; check them out at www.cyberbullying.org.

For a more detailed discussion of how to develop a positive school climate as a way to prevent bullying, cyberbullying, and other adolescent misbehaviors (online and off), see our book: School Climate 2.0: Preventing Cyberbullying and Sexting One Classroom at a Time (from Corwin Press).
What steps should school administrators take to protect students from cyber bullying? The following approaches are recommended (Kowalski, Limber, and Agatston 2008):

1. Develop rules and policies that prohibit the use of district computers and other cyber technologies at school to bully or harass others.

These can be incorporated into existing policies that address acceptable uses of technology by students (often termed “acceptable use policies”). Or administrators may address cyber bullying through policies that specifically focus on bullying. The following elements of a good policy are included on pages 49–50 in the Schoolwide Guide for the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program:

- a clear definition of bullying
- a focus on prevention
- the use of OBPP’s Four Anti-Bullying Rules
- the use of negative consequences for bullying and positive consequences for prosocial behavior or active bystander efforts
- procedures for reporting bullying, including the process for reporting and responding
- procedures for intervening and addressing bullying as it occurs and when it is reported
• procedures for working with parents and guardians when bullying problems occur

• district-level standards for logical consequences and disciplinary actions

• district-level policies for handling disputes and incidents that cross the line into illegal behaviors such as assault, sexual harassment, disability harassment, hazing, and discrimination

For guidance on the development of an acceptable use policy, administrators may view the Model Acceptable Use Policy for Information Technology Resources in the Schools (U.S. Department of Justice) as a starting point. This model policy requires, in part, that students comply with these rules:

• Respect and practice the principles of community.

• Communicate only in ways that are kind and respectful.

• Report threatening or upsetting materials to a teacher.

• Do not intentionally access, transmit, copy, or create material that violates the school’s code of conduct, for example, messages that are pornographic, threatening, rude, discriminatory, or meant to harass.

• Do not intentionally access, transmit, copy, or create material that is illegal, such as obscenity, stolen materials, or illegal copies of copyrighted works.

• Do not use the resources to further other acts that are criminal or violate the school’s code of conduct.

• Do not send spam, chain letters, or other mass unsolicited mailings.

• Do not buy, sell, advertise, or otherwise conduct business, unless approved as a school project.

Because bullying and harassment have different legal connotations, it is recommended that even more specific language be included under the fourth point: “Do not intentionally access, transmit, copy, or create material that violates the school’s code of conduct, such as messages that are pornographic, threatening, rude, discriminatory, or meant to
bully or harass.” A complete copy of the model policy may be found at www.usdoj.gov/criminal/cybercrime/rules/acceptableUsePolicy.htm.

2. Establish policies and procedures that limit students’ use of school Internet resources to academic purposes only.

Under the U.S. Department of Justice model policy just mentioned, if students are in compliance with the policy, they may do the following:

- Design and post Web pages and other material from school resources
- Use direct communications, such as Internet Relay Chat (IRC), online chat, or instant messaging, with a teacher’s permission
- Install or download software, if also in agreement with laws and licenses, and under the supervision of a teacher
- Use the resources for any educational purpose

3. Educate faculty, staff, students, and parents and guardians about cyber bullying and the school’s policies and procedures.

It is not necessary for all faculty and staff members to be trained as experts on cyber bullying, but they should be familiar with the issue and know how to recognize and to respond to cyber bullying if students raise concerns. In addition, certain staff members (for example, counselors, administrators, media specialists) should have specific training to address cases of cyber bullying that may surface (Kowalski, Limber, and Agatston 2008). A Teacher Training Presentation on this CD-ROM provides basic information for faculty and staff about cyber bullying.

School districts should provide copies of any cyber bullying policy to faculty, staff, parents and guardians, and students.

4. Provide adequate supervision and monitoring of students, including their use of the Internet.

Bullying thrives where adults are not present or not observant. Students’ behavior at school should be monitored closely for signs of possible bullying or misuse of technology, for example, the use of cell phones on campus. Students’ use of computers in classrooms should be closely
monitored, and school staff members should routinely inspect school computers and students’ Internet accounts.

5. Establish a schoolwide reporting system for students, faculty, staff, and parents and guardians to report suspected cyber bullying or other misuse of cyber technologies.

This will encourage students to report instances of bullying that they are aware of or suspect. Some schools have created forms that students and/or staff may complete to report bullying, including a description of the incident and the location where it occurred, which could be a Web address. For an example, see the Sample Middle School Bullying/Cyber Bullying Report Form on this CD-ROM.

6. Establish effective procedures to respond to these reports.

All reports should be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly and in a timely manner. (See also Gathering Cyber Bullying Evidence on this CD-ROM.) School staff members should carefully document investigations and responses to suspected or known cyber bullying.

Reference
**Cyberbullying**

*Resources for Students*

- **Connect Safely**

  Resource web page for students with links and phone numbers for hotlines regarding suicidal thoughts, dating abuse, and cyberstalking, etc.

- **Cyberbullying Research Center**
  [http://cyberbullying.org/resources/teens](http://cyberbullying.org/resources/teens)

  Resources for students with tips on smart social networking, cell phone safety, password safety, responding to cyberbullying, etc.

- **PACERS’s National Bullying Prevention Center**

  Includes KidsAgainstBullying.org & TeensAgainstBullying.org websites with resources such as books, videos, and stories for youth of all ages.

- **Cyberbully Help**
  [http://cyberbullyhelp.com/resources/](http://cyberbullyhelp.com/resources/)

  The ABC’s of cyberbullying each with a tip for how students can respond and prevent cyberbullying.
1. Talk about it
Tell someone if you’re the target of cyberbullying. Whether it’s your parents, a teacher, or another trusted adult, or even your best friend, never keep the fact that you’re being bullied to yourself. We know it’s not fun and it’s hard to talk about it, but you should give others a chance to come through for you. It could help make the problem go away, which is the ultimate goal.

2. Ignore them
If there is an isolated incident where you are being bullied, don’t respond to the instigator. Cyberbullies who do not get a response from their target may just move on. They are looking for a response—don’t give it to them!

3. Never retaliate
Be the bigger person and never retaliate against a cyberbully. Retaliation only further perpetuates the cycle of violence, and does nothing to solve the problem. Plus, if you retaliate you could get into trouble for what you are doing or saying to them!

4. Tell them to stop
For repeated bullying, if ignoring the bully doesn’t work, tell them to stop. Let them know that what they are doing is hurtful and, more importantly, lame and uncool. Be respectful in approaching them and never come off in an aggressive manner.

5. Laugh
If someone says something funny about you, try to laugh it off. Maybe they really are just trying to be funny and not hurtful. Sometimes we say funny things or make fun of a friend as a way of fitting in. Of course this can be taken too far. If it is not funny at all, and you really are hurt by what was said, try one of the other responses listed here.

6. Save the evidence
Record all instances of cyberbullying. Print out Facebook messages and emails, save text messages, and capture screen shots when cyberbullying occurs. Then turn these documents over to an adult who you believe can help.

7. Block access to cyberbullies
Block cyberbullies from contacting you. Most websites and software programs have the ability for you to block certain users from messaging you or even being able to “see” you online. Newer phones have the capability to block preset phone numbers, and you can also contact your cell phone service provider (for example, AT&T or Verizon) to help. If certain people simply cannot reach you, it will be more difficult for them to bully you.

8. Report it to the content provider
If you don’t know who the cyberbully is, contact the content provider of the site where the cyberbullying is occurring and make a report. The most popular web sites (like Facebook, YouTube, and Google) make it pretty easy to report cyberbullying. Harassment is a violation of the terms of service of all reputable web sites.

9. Never pass along messages from cyberbullies
If you receive a hurtful or embarrassing messages or photos of someone else, delete it and refrain from forwarding it to others. Don’t be part of the problem, be part of the solution. You can stop cyberbullying by letting your friends know that is simply isn’t cool.

10. Call the police
If you feel your safety (or the safety of someone else) is in danger, call the police immediately. Any time there is a threat, tell an adult. They can help you make sure that your safety is protected.
Don’t let your social media use negatively affect your life. Follow these simple strategies and avoid problems later!

1. **Don’t post or send anything you would be embarrassed for certain others to see.** Think about what your family, friends, future employers, or college admission decision-makers might think if they see it. How would you feel if that statement or picture was forever tied to your name and your identity? Does it really represent who you are? Remember, your keyboard may have a “delete” button, but once online it is often impossible to remove.

2. **Do start early in building a positive online reputation.** Don’t wait until you are getting ready for college or applying for a job to start developing a dynamite digital dossier. From the very first post you make on a new social media platform, think about how others will perceive and interpret what you share. Also, actively involve yourself in many positive activities. Excel academically. Volunteer. Play a sport. Lead a social group. Give a speech. Do community service. Write positive, thought-provoking and creative blog posts or editorials for online news outlets. Get yourself featured in newsworthy projects. All of these things will look good on a resume, and they will reflect positively on you if someone stumbles upon them in an online search. Figure out the best ways to create and maintain an online identity that strongly demonstrates integrity and maturity.

3. **Don’t compromise your identity.** Identity thieves are constantly looking for new ways to obtain your personal information, usually for the purpose of benefiting financially at your expense. Never post your address, date of birth, phone number, or other personal contact information anywhere on social media. Even with restrictions, access can be gained through fraudulent means such as by phishing, hacking, or malware.

4. **Do be considerate of others when posting and interacting.** If you message someone and they do not respond, or if someone messages you and asks that you not post about them, take the hint and move on. Also don’t post pictures of others without their permission. And if someone asks you to remove a picture, post, or to untag them, do so immediately. It’s what you would want if you asked someone the same thing.

5. **Don’t vent or complain,** especially about specific people or organizations, in public spaces online. People will negatively judge you based on your attitude, even if your complaint has merit. Employers, schools, and others have access to social media, and they are looking. Is that spiteful comment about your boss or co-worker really worth losing your job over? Or sharing with those who may have an awesome opportunity to give you in the future? Be careful, too, about complaining in seemingly private environments or sending direct messages to others you think you can trust. You just never know who might eventually see your posts.
6. **Do be careful about oversharing.**
If you are always posting about your meals, trips to the bathroom, social life, and the latest viral YouTube video, others are going to think that: 1) you have way too much time on your hands, 2) you have no focus or goals, or 3) you are unproductive and cannot possibly contribute meaningfully to anything. Remember that people don’t care as much as you want them to care about all of the various random things going on in your life. It’s not all about you!

7. **Don’t hang out with the wrong crowd online.** Resist accepting every friend and follower request that comes your way. Having a lot of followers isn’t the status symbol some people make it out to be, and can just increase your risk of victimization. Giving strangers access to your personal information opens you up to all sorts of potential problems. It’s also true, though, that those who are most likely to take advantage of you won’t be complete strangers, but will be those you’ve let into your life just a little bit (like allowing them to friend or follow you) - and who use information they can now access against you. Be selective with who you allow to enter into your world! Go through your friends and followers lists regularly and take the time to delete those you do not fully trust, those that you have superficial and largely meaningless friendships with, and those you probably aren’t going to ever talk to again.

8. **Don’t hang out with the wrong crowd offline.** Maybe you’re smart enough not to post that pic of you holding that red solo cup (filled with lemonade). But your friend does—and tags you—along with the comment: “Gettin’ blitzed!!!” You also might not want others to record your legendary dance moves at last weekend’s party, but cameras and phones are everywhere. If you are associating with people who don’t really care about you or your reputation, they may seize the opportunity to record and post the video for others to see (and laugh at). Worst of all, it could go viral, and next thing you know you are being interviewed by Daniel Tosh about a humiliating video of you that has gone global and been viewed by millions. Trust us – you do not want that kind of attention.

9. **Do properly set up the privacy settings** and preferences within the social media apps, sites, and software you use. Use the features within each environment to delete problematic comments, wall posts, pictures, videos, notes, and tags. Don’t feel obligated to respond to messages and friend/follower requests that are annoying or unwanted. Disallow certain people from communicating with you or reading certain pieces of content you share, and allow access only to those you trust. Turn off location-sharing, and the ability to check-in to places. If you need to let your friends know where you are, just text them using your phone rather than sharing it with your entire social network.

10. **Don’t post or respond to anything online when you are emotionally charged up.** Step away from your device. Close out of the site or app. Take a few hours, or even a day or two, and allow your brain some downtime to think through the best action or response. Responding quickly, based on emotion, almost never helps make a problem go away, and often makes it much worse. Pause before you post!
11. **Do secure your profile.** Use complex passwords that consist of alphanumeric and special characters. Avoid using recovery questions which have easy-to-guess or common answers such as a pet’s name. Never reveal your passwords to friends or family, or leave them written down somewhere. Avoid accessing your online profile from devices which are unsecure (like at a library computer), or do not have virus and malware protection.

12. **Don’t tell the world where you are at all times.** You probably wouldn’t hand a stranger your daily agenda, and you shouldn’t post it all over social media. Burglars use social media to target victims by reading posts that clue them in as to where you are (and when you’re not at home). Checking in while on vacation or posting an update such as “At the beach for the day” or “Be back in town on Tuesday” may be a fun way of letting your friends know what you are up to, but it also lets those with bad intentions know when your home is empty and vulnerable.

13. **Do regularly search for yourself online,** just to see what is out there. Start with Google, but also use site-specific search engines on social networking sites, as well as sites that index personal information about Internet users. Some examples are: peekyou.com, zabasearch.com, pipl.com, yoname.com, and spokeo.com. If you do find personal information about yourself, investigate how you can have it deleted. Many sites provide some type of “opt-out” form which allows you to request its removal.

14. **Don’t get political.** It’s best to shy away from political and religious declarations which might seem abrasive and may offend others. Even though these opinions might be legitimate (and you are certainly entitled to them), you need to realize that others are looking at what you post and will judge you accordingly. Plus, social media isn’t the best place to discuss these complicated issues. Save the preaching for personal conversations! Also remember that sarcasm is often lost in online communications. A funny comment might be easily misinterpreted or taken out of context, resulting in unintended hurt feelings or inaccurate perceptions.

15. **Do separate business from pleasure.** The reality is that we all would probably rather not have our employers (and many others) know every little detail about our personal lives. For this reason, consider online social networking with work acquaintances via sites like LinkedIn or Google+ as opposed to mixing your professional contacts with more personal ones on Facebook and Instagram.

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Sameer Hinduja, Ph.D. is a professor at Florida Atlantic University and Justin W. Patchin, Ph.D. is a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Together, they travel across the United States and abroad teaching teens how to use technology safely and responsibly. They have written six books, including “Words Wound: Delete Cyberbullying and Make Kindness Go Viral” which helps empower teens to be the solution to online cruelty. They also offer comprehensive workshops for parents, teachers, counselors, mental health professionals, law enforcement, and others concerned with addressing and preventing online aggression. The Cyberbullying Research Center is dedicated to providing up-to-date information about the nature, extent, causes, and consequences of cyberbullying among adolescents.

For more information, visit [http://www.cyberbullying.us](http://www.cyberbullying.us).

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1. **Delete any explicit images sent to you.** Even having these images on your phone could land you in a heap of trouble.

2. **Do not distribute explicit images.** If someone sends you an explicit image of themselves or someone else, do not pass it on to anyone else. Try to think about how you would feel if someone sent similar pictures of you to someone else that you didn’t know or wouldn’t want to see.

3. **Ignore or flat-out reject any requests from others for inappropriate images.** It is just not worth it, no matter how much you like the other person—even if you think you can trust them. The potential risk is just too high. If they really care about you, they will understand.

4. **Block individuals who make you uncomfortable with how they talk to you** (or what they send to you).

5. **Distract the person requesting inappropriate pictures from you.** Engage them in conversation about something else, or direct them to a cool YouTube video you just saw, or an app you think they would like. If they continue to ask about the pics, let them know that they should just chill out.

6. **Don’t support your own objectification.** You are not a piece of meat. You don’t want people to like you because of your body, but because of your mind and heart. Giving in and sending explicit images just feeds their appetite for more, and continues to devalue your worth.

7. **Sexting doesn’t define a healthy, functional romantic relationship.** Sure, it’s fun, flirtatious, and risqué, but remember that these images could be seen by a wider audience (including your parents, teachers, or the police).

8. **Send images that are suggestive, but not explicit.** Keep private parts covered at all times. It’s fine to send your partner a picture, just make sure it’s PG-13 and not X-rated. Even so, realize that these too may be broadcast to others. If you wouldn’t be concerned if your whole school (or grandma!) saw it, it’s probably ok.

9. **If you receive (or someone shows you) an explicit image of someone you know, contact that person to tell them that their images are being circulated.** You would want someone to tell you if an image of yours like that was going around.

10. **Inform an adult you trust if you are concerned about the well-being of the person in the image.** If you are worried about the person who is in the picture, whether they are a friend or not, you may need to get help from an adult.
Cyberbullying
Resources for Parents

Connect Safely
http://www.connectsafely.org/cyberbullying/?doing_wp_cron=1476624991.5129020214080810546875

Resource web page for parents with information about cyberbullying and the latest apps, how to capture a screenshot, a podcast about cyberbullying, and a family smartphone pledge.

Cyberbullying Research Center
http://cyberbullying.org/resources/parents/

Resources for parents on how to prevent cyberbullying, recognize the signs, how to respond if your child is cyberbullied or is a cyberbully, tips for parents, and a technology contract.

Federal Trade Commission’s On Guard Online
https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/features/feature-0002-parents

Tips for how to talk to your child about internet safety and privacy via videos and text, how to prevent cyberbullying and how to respond effectively.

Cyberbully Help
http://cyberbullyhelp.com/resources/

Free online cyberbullying training course for parents, PowerPoint presentations, advice and tips for handling cyberbullying, and brief CDC report on cyberbullying for parents.
Internet Safety Tips for Parents and Guardians

• Install antivirus software on your computer and keep it up to date. Use a firewall for protection. Young people are notorious for downloading games and applications from Web sites that may include harmful viruses. Make sure you back up files regularly.

• Take advantage of any free parental controls and spam blockers provided by your Internet service provider.

• When kids are young (elementary-school age), the best practice is to bookmark appropriate sites for your children to visit and reach an agreement that these are the only sites they can visit online. If they wish to venture to a new site, they should check with you first. Teach them to use a “kid-friendly” search engine, such as Yahooligans, and set your Google Search Preferences on Strict Filtering to avoid the display of inappropriate content.

• Limit your children’s online time to 1 hour or less a day.

• As kids move into the tween and teen years, consider adding monitoring software. Monitoring software allows you to view the sites they visit and to review chat sessions and comments they post on social-networking sites. You can also view the history of the sites visited on your computer by using the Control/Shift/H keys on a PC or selecting View from the toolbar on a PC or Mac. Kids often learn how to clear the history by selecting the Delete History option. If your child appears to be deleting the history of sites visited, you will need to add monitoring software.

• Teach your child how to communicate appropriately in cyberspace. Explain how easy it is for messages to be misinterpreted online.
Discuss the golden rule as it applies to cyberspace. Stress to your child that, “If you wouldn’t want someone to say that to you, don’t send it in a message.” Discuss how easily rumors get started online and the importance of avoiding gossip. Teach your child how to be a rumor blocker (don’t pass it on) rather than a rumor starter. Remind him or her not to respond to a message when feeling angry or upset. It’s okay to respond after calming down.

- Discuss with your child what information is appropriate to share online and what information is too private or personal. Make sure your child knows to avoid posting his or her phone number, cell phone number, date of birth, or home address on Web sites or in instant messages.

- Younger children should be prohibited from sending and sharing personal photos online or through a cellular phone without your permission. Discuss with tweens and teens with whom they can share photos and what types of photos are appropriate. Explain that sharing nude photos of minors is against the law. If your teen is posting photos on a social-networking site, make sure he or she uses a privacy feature that only allows friends to view the photographs.

- Respect the minimum-age guidelines of social-networking sites. Do not allow your children to lie about their ages to bypass the age limits. If you are willing to let your child have a profile on a social-networking site such as MySpace.com or Facebook.com, set it up together. Emphasize how important it is for you to know their passwords.

- Make sure your child understands the importance of keeping their passwords private. Good friends may become enemies and could wreak havoc if they know your child’s passwords.

- Online friends should be friends in the real world. Make sure the friends on your child’s buddy lists and social-networking sites are people he or she knows, rather than friends of friends.

- Google your child’s name, screen name, phone number, and address regularly to see what pops up. Teach him or her the importance of building a positive online reputation for the future, because employers and colleges may search online for information about him or her.
• Keep the computer in a central place, but recognize that you need to set guidelines for other wireless devices, such as cell phones, PDAs, and gaming devices. Computers and laptops that have Internet capability should not be in bedrooms. As your child enters his or her later teens, you may be able to relax some of these standards based on your teen’s demonstrated appropriate use of technology. This will also prepare him or her for the increased freedom to come in college and adulthood.
A Child May Be a Target of Cyberbullying If He or She:

- unexpectedly stops using their device(s)
- appears nervous or jumpy when using their device(s)
- appears uneasy about going to school or outside in general
- appears to be angry, depressed, or frustrated after going online (including gaming)
- is oversleeping or not sleeping enough
- becomes abnormally withdrawn from usual friends and family members
- shows increase or decrease in eating
- seems regularly depressed
- makes passing statements about suicide or the meaningless of life
- loses interest in the things that mattered most to them
- avoids discussions about what they are doing online
- frequently calls or texts from school requesting to go home ill
- desires to spend much more time with parents rather than peers
- becomes unusually secretive, especially when it comes to online activities

A Child May Be Cyberbullying Others If He or She:

- quickly switches screens or hides their device when you are close by
- uses their device(s) at all hours of the night
- gets unusually upset if they can’t use their device(s)
- laughs excessively while using their device(s) and won’t show you what is so funny
- avoids discussions about what they are doing online
- seems to be using multiple online accounts or an account that is not their own
- is dealing with increased behavioral issues or disciplinary actions at school (or elsewhere)
- appears overly concerned with popularity or continued presence in a particular social circle or status
- demonstrates increasing insensitivity or callousness toward other teens
- starts to hang out with the “wrong” crowd
- demonstrates violent tendencies
- appears overly conceited as to their technological skills and abilities
- is increasingly withdrawn or isolated from the family