Cyber bullying
Advice for young people

If you wouldn't say it, don't send it.
#DontSayDontSend

Cyber bullying is the misuse of digital technologies or communications to bully a person or a group, typically through messages or actions that are threatening and/or intended to cause offence, anxiety or humiliation.

Behaviour includes…

Abusive comments
Rumours, gossip and threats made using digital communications and/or technologies - this includes internet trolling.

Sharing images
Circulating photos, videos or personal information without the consent of the owner and with the intent to cause harm or humiliation.
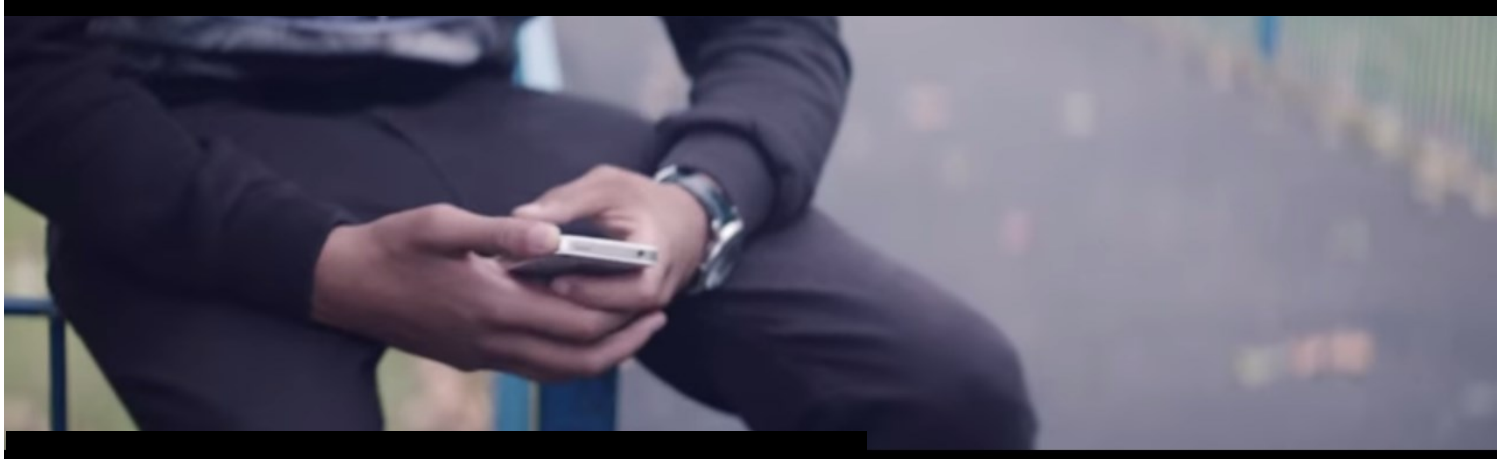
Hacking & impersonation
Accessing someone's email, phone or online profiles to extract and share personal information, or to send hurtful content while posing as that person.

Creating dedicated websites
Posting content that is intended to cause harm, make fun of someone or spread malicious rumours.

Blackmailing
Pressurising someone to do something they do not want to such as sending a sexually explicit image.

#DontSayDontSend
Always think before you post!

The cyber world is the real world with real consequences, so make sure you always consider the following points before you hit send.

Would you say it to someone's face? No? Then don't say it in cyber space. Behind each screen is a human being, how do you think your comments might make them feel?

Will I feel good or different about it later? Social media comes with one golden rule, don't post when you are angry. A split second of rage can have permanent consequences.

Why am I posting? Does your post really reflect your personality and values? Don't follow the crowd or post just to gain attention, as you might not like the response you get back.

Can this be interpreted differently? Sarcasm and irony do not often transfer well into a short social media post or text. Think about how others may read it; could it be seen as offensive?

Am I being kind? Treat others with the respect that you would like to receive. If you read it about yourself, would it make you feel good?

Is it really private? People often excuse offensive posts based on the idea that their page is private. Facebook statistics suggest that the average young user has up to 300 online friends. This private profile suddenly doesn't seem so private at all.

Do I have permission? You might find that bad photograph of your friend amusing, but the likelihood is that they will not. Don't share content that will embarrass or humiliate someone.

Would I like me? If you were a stranger looking at your profile, what would you think? If most of your posts are critical, unkind, offensive or negative, how do you think you are being perceived?

Is it legal? In the eyes of the law, posting is publishing, just the same as if it was written in the newspaper. Harassment, hate speech, threats of violence, ruining someone's reputation can all be used as evidence in a legal case against you. Sharing sexually explicit images of someone under 18 can also be a criminal offence, even if you are a minor yourself.

Staying safe on social media

Set your profiles to private. Do you really want the whole world seeing everything that you post online?

But don't get complacent. Even with strong privacy settings, what you post online is never really private.

Recognise the fakes. Be very wary of anyone you don't know taking an unusual amount of interest in connecting with you. Never meet up with anybody who you haven't met in person, and make sure that you only accept friend requests from people you know

Spring clean your contacts. Once you make a friend online, it doesn't have to be permanent.

Protect your identity. Make sure passwords are strong, change them regularly and always keep them private.

Avoid potential disasters. Be aware of what you send to people privately, as no matter how trustworthy they seem you can never be sure that they will not pass your message on. Remember, #DontSayDontSend.

Inform your friends. Other people will never respect your privacy as much as you do. Make sure your friends know your preferences about uploading pictures, tagging your location or sharing information you expect to be confidential. This works both ways, so make sure that you respect other people's privacy in the same way.

Be wary of suspicious messages. Messages with a shortened url alongside a statement such as 'OMG look at this picture of you…' or 'Have you seen what they are saying about you…' are not to be trusted. Never be fooled by the grabby statement, as it will only send you to a malicious site.

Dealing with cyber bullying
Recognise it. Report it. Prevent it.

Recognise it

Know what to look out for: Cyber bullying comes in many different forms; make sure you know how to recognise it when it happens (see page 2).

Find the perpetrator: Try to establish who is behind it, and make sure you keep the evidence, as without proof, it will be hard for your complaint to be dealt with effectively.

Report it to…

Parents/carers: Unless you report cyber bullying to an adult, it is very unlikely to stop.

The school: The school has a responsibility to protect you from bullying, even if it happens offsite, online or over the phone.

Service providers: Most phone providers and website administrators offer accessible ways to report abusive activity and cyber bullying—details will be available through an online search.

The police: Forms of cyber bullying such as threatening phone calls or messages may be an illegal offence that the police can help with. Contact your local police station for more information.

Prevent it

Don't respond: Never get involved in arguments or negative behaviour online, as this will only escalate the situation and make it much worse. Remember, #DontSayDontSend.

Block the bullies: Only allow people you trust to gain access to your accounts. Block abusive users or telephone numbers from being able to reach you through your social media profiles or phone.

Increase your privacy: Follow our guidelines on staying safe on social media on the previous page.