

Module 7. Cyberbullying and online safety



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This module is designed to help parents understand, identify, and prevent cyberbullying while promoting online safety for their children. Through five detailed lessons, you'll learn about the nature of cyberbullying, recognize warning signs, implement effective monitoring strategies, establish appropriate boundaries, and foster open communication with your child about their digital experiences.



Cyberbullying vs. Traditional Bullying

As parents, understanding how bullying has evolved in the digital age is crucial. While traditional bullying was confined to physical spaces like schools and playgrounds, cyberbullying follows children everywhere through their devices.

Cyberbullying is defined as "an aggressive act or behavior carried out using electronic means by a group or an individual repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend themselves" (Smith et al., 2008). It represents a systematic abuse of power enabled by information and communication technologies (ICTs), peaking during adolescence (ages 13-15).

Sending threats

Direct threatening messages that create fear and anxiety, such as "If you don't stop talking to my friends, I'll make your life miserable. I'll get you back for this!"

Starting arguments (flaming)

Initiating heated online arguments that escalate quickly, like posting harsh comments in a school group chat: "You're so stupid, you clearly have no idea what you're talking about!"

Excluding someone

Deliberately removing someone from online groups or conversations, making them feel isolated and unwanted.

Impersonating someone

Pretending to be someone else online to cause harm, such as creating fake accounts to manipulate or embarrass others.

Revealing private information

Sharing someone's private information, photos, or conversations without consent, causing embarrassment and distress.

Trolling

Posting inflammatory or hurtful comments specifically to upset the victim, such as negative comments on social media posts.

Key Differences Between Traditional and Cyberbullying

Location

Traditional bullying occurs in person at specific physical locations, while cyberbullying happens online and can affect a child anywhere, even in their own home.

Example: A child teased in the classroom (traditional) versus receiving hurtful messages on social media at home (cyber).

Anonymity

In traditional bullying, the bully is typically identifiable. In cyberbullying, the perpetrator may remain anonymous through fake accounts, making it harder for victims to identify them.

Example: When a child is pushed at school, they know who did it; online, many bullies use fake accounts, leaving victims unsure who to address.

Audience Size

Traditional bullying is usually witnessed only by those physically present, while cyberbullying can reach hundreds or thousands of people within minutes (Slonje & Smith, 2007).

Victim's Experience

Traditional bullying typically ends when the victim leaves the situation. Cyberbullying can follow victims everywhere because phones and internet are always accessible.

Example: A child teased at school may feel safe at home, but a cyberbullying victim might continue to see mean messages even at night.

More Key Differences Between Traditional and Cyberbullying

Repetition

In traditional bullying, repetition is straightforward—repeated face-to-face acts. In cyberbullying, a single act, such as uploading a harmful image, can spread widely through sharing by others (Slonje et al., 2012).

Example: If someone repeatedly pushes a child in the school corridor, it happens in a specific location. But if someone posts a harmful photo online, it can be shared by many others, extending the bullying far beyond the original incident.

Power Imbalance

Traditional bullying often involves physical or psychological strength differences. In cyberbullying, power imbalance can arise from greater technical skills or anonymity (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008).

Example: In traditional bullying, a larger child might pick on a smaller one. In cyberbullying, the perpetrator might be someone the victim doesn't know, or bullying might occur because a child has fewer social media followers than others.

Overlap Between Traditional Bullying and Cyberbullying

Many children who are bullied in person are also bullied online. The two often overlap, particularly for boys (Gradinger et al., 2009). A conflict that starts in the classroom can quickly move to social media, creating a cycle of victimization.

Cyberbullying enhances the feeling of "no escape" and makes children feel even more powerless or trapped compared to other types of bullying (Beane, 2008).

Since cyberbullying takes place in virtual spaces, its effects are primarily psychological, affecting the child's mental state, well-being, feelings, motivation, and overall mood. Unlike traditional bullying, which may leave visible physical signs like bruises or injuries, cyberbullying's impact is often less immediately apparent but can be equally or more damaging.

Recognizing Signs of Cyberbullying

Psychological symptoms of cyberbullying can manifest through physical or behavioral changes. Parents should watch for changes in their child's emotional state or behavior (Vaillancourt et al., 2017).



Depressive Symptoms

Research shows cyberbullying may cause even higher levels of depressive symptoms than traditional bullying (Bonanno & Hymel, 2013; Perren et al., 2010). The uncertainty of not knowing who the bully is or how far compromising information has spread can lead to feelings of permanent harassment and negative thought spirals.



Negative Emotions

Feelings such as sadness, fear, anger, helplessness, and increased distress are common with cyberbullying. The victim-aggressor power dynamic creates an impression of being at the bully's mercy with little control over what happens next (Li, 2005).



Health Problems

Negative feelings can manifest as physical symptoms through somatization. The constant tension and worry from cyberbullying's omnipresent nature can lead to headaches, stomach aches, nausea, and digestive problems (Låftman et al., 2013).



Sleep/Eating Changes

Changes in appetite or sleeping patterns often occur when a child is constantly anxious or tense. Nightmares, trouble sleeping, and poor appetite can result from the ongoing stress of cyberbullying (Vaillancourt et al., 2017).



School Avoidance

Cyberbullying can affect academic performance through absenteeism and lower grades (Kowalski & Limber, 2013). Children may express unwillingness to attend school due to shame or fear that classmates have seen embarrassing online content about them.



Withdrawal at Home

Children may become withdrawn, spending less time with family and avoiding questions or conversations. They might seem constantly preoccupied and "not present," losing trust in their parents' ability to help (Brighi et al., 2012).

Digital Behavior Changes

Following cyberbullying, most children modify their behavior toward digital activity. Some completely stop accessing online content they previously enjoyed, while others obsessively check the platforms where the bullying occurs. Watch for:

- Hiding their phone/laptop when parents approach
- Reluctance to discuss online activities
- Noticeable nervousness, tension, anger, or upset during or after internet use
- Appearing "jumpy" or restless when receiving notifications
- Constant checking of devices
- Refusing to let others see their screen

In severe cases, self-destructive behaviors or self-harm have been associated with cyberbullying (John et al., 2018), often as a way to manage emotional suffering. These may take the form of cuts, burns, or bruises, usually on arms, wrists, thighs, or chest.

Case Study: Recognizing Signs of Cyberbullying

The following scenario illustrates how cyberbullying can manifest in a child's behavior. As you read, try to identify the warning signs that parents might notice.

S. is a 15-year-old boy in 9th grade who loves school, maintains good grades, and has a close circle of friends. He plays tennis with two close friends and shows promise in the sport. S. has a Facebook account his parents don't know about, where he keeps in touch with friends and posts pictures from tennis club.

Recently, S. accepted a friend request from someone claiming to be from his tennis club. After extensive conversations about S.'s tennis experiences, the stranger disappeared and deleted their account. Shortly after, a new account emerged, friending children from the tennis club and S.'s school friends. This account began posting false allegations that S. bribes trainers and threatens opponents.

Initial Changes

S. becomes self-conscious at tennis club and struggles to explain the situation to peers who question him about the posts. He feels people are talking about him and don't believe his denials.

1

2

Performance Decline

S. loses focus during tennis, fearing that winning would support the false allegations. His trainers notice the change and pressure him to concentrate, which adds to his stress.

3

Digital Obsession

S. constantly checks his phone, even at school. His academic performance drops, and teachers scold him for being distracted. Parents notice he seems "in his own world" and keeps his phone with him at all times, appearing tense at notifications.

4

Withdrawal

After doctored "proof" is posted, S. avoids friends, believing they don't trust him. He frequently claims illness to avoid school and tennis, spending most time in his room feeling helpless and unmotivated.

5

Crisis Point

S. feels his life and plans are ruined, that he has disappointed everyone, and begins having thoughts of self-harm.

Warning Signs Parents Could Notice:

- Sudden change in attitude toward previously enjoyed activities (tennis)
- Decreased focus and performance decline
- Constant checking of phone and anxiety around notifications
- Withdrawal from social interactions and family
- Short, dismissive answers when questioned ("everything is fine")
- Frequent claims of illness to avoid school or activities
- Spending excessive time alone in his room
- Appearing distracted or "in his own world"

Effective Monitoring of Online Activity

Research shows that fostering open parent-child communication is the most significant factor in reducing cyberbullying risk (Offrey & Rinaldi, 2014; Helfrich et al., 2020). Open discussions and active engagement with children's media use prove more effective than solely restrictive monitoring strategies.

Children need to feel assured that their parents are available whenever needed and that they can seek help without fear when something concerning arises.

Beyond communication, active monitoring serves as a safeguard against online risks while supporting positive behavior. Active monitoring uses communication-based and instructive strategies that allow parents to supervise their child's online activities without seeming intrusive (Wisniewski et al., 2015).



Co-use

Develop your digital and technical skills to better understand your child's online environment. Get acquainted with the platforms they use and keep up with online trends. Many children avoid discussing social media with parents because they perceive them as disconnected from current digital culture.



Discussing Online Media

Beyond co-use, discuss online media and educate children about potential risks. Parents who are present in the digital world can relay knowledge effectively. Discussing what children see on social media encourages them to share insights about their own online activities.

Finding the Right Balance

Solely relying on restrictive monitoring often backfires. When children feel their privacy is violated or perceive excessive surveillance, they're more likely to engage in secrecy and less likely to disclose their media habits. By contrast, **a combination of autonomy-supportive and restrictive rules has been shown to reduce secrecy and promote media disclosure** (Padilla-Walker et al., 2019).

In the short term, restrictive monitoring—such as setting screen time limits—may yield positive results. However, over the long term, it risks stunting children's ability to learn independent and responsible media use, leaving them vulnerable to cyberbullying (Helfrich et al., 2020).

The TECH Parenting Model

Talk

Talk to children about their media use. Create regular opportunities for open discussion about online experiences, both positive and negative. Ask open-ended questions about what they enjoy online and what concerns them.

House Rules

Establish clear house rules surrounding children's media use. Create boundaries that protect while allowing appropriate independence, and involve children in creating these rules.



Educate

Educate children about risks associated with media usage. Help them understand potential dangers without creating fear. Teach critical thinking skills to evaluate online content and interactions.

Co-use

Actively co-use media with children. Participate in their digital world by learning about platforms they use, understanding online language, and occasionally joining their online activities.

Understanding Online Language

To effectively monitor and engage with your child's online world, familiarize yourself with common terms and abbreviations used in digital communication:

- BRB - Be Right Back
- FOMO - Fear of Missing Out
- IDC - I Don't Care
- IKR - I Know, Right
- SMH - Shaking My Head
- TBH - To Be Honest
- IMO/IMHO - In My Opinion / In My Humble Opinion
- LMK - Let Me Know
- NGL - Not Gonna Lie
- FWIW - For What It's Worth
- TMI - Too Much Information
- YOLO - You Only Live Once
- RN - Right Now
- GG - Good Game (often used in gaming)
- JK - Just Kidding
- HBU - How About You
- IDK - I Don't Know
- TTYL - Talk To You Later
- OOTD - Outfit of the Day
- PFP - Profile Picture
- DM - Direct Message
- BFF - Best Friends Forever
- FYI - For Your Information
- SUS - Suspicious
- AFK - Away From Keyboard
- IRL - In Real Life
- TL;DR - Too Long; Didn't Read
- Rizz - Ability to charm someone
- Cap / No cap - False / True
- GOAT - Greatest Of All Time

Establishing Family Rules for Online Activity

Creating clear, consistent family rules about technology use is essential for promoting online safety while allowing children appropriate independence. These rules should be developed collaboratively and explained clearly to ensure understanding and compliance.



Screen Time Limits

Evidence suggests excessive time online is associated with depressive symptoms, anxiety (Gunnell et al., 2016), poor sleep (Hale & Guan, 2014), and cyberbullying (Walrave & Heirman, 2009). Set age-appropriate restrictions while explaining the reasoning.

Example: "You can play video games for two hours after finishing homework, and we'll set a timer as a reminder."



Collaborative Rule-Setting

Involve children in establishing limits regarding websites and social media. This collaborative approach fosters accountability and reduces defensiveness while decreasing the likelihood of secrecy (Padilla-Walker et al., 2019).

Frame it as a win-win: children enjoy activities within agreed boundaries, while parents have reassurance that everything is safe.



Privacy and Safety Rules

Teach children about online safety by fostering awareness and building critical thinking skills. Help them understand that sharing certain information online can make them vulnerable to exploitation or harm.

Example: "Imagine if a stranger asked for your phone number in person. The same caution applies online."

Additional Important Rules

"No Device" Spaces

Set specific times or places in the house where devices aren't allowed, such as during family meals or in bedrooms at night. Ensure these rules apply to everyone in the family, including parents, demonstrating that they benefit everyone rather than being punishments (Nichols, 2018).

Example: "No phones at the dinner table so we can talk about our day."

Parental Controls

Install parental controls on devices and apps to block inappropriate content, but explain to your child that these tools are there to protect them, not to spy on them. Discuss and agree on these limits together.

Example: Use tools like Google Family Link or Apple's Screen Time. "These settings will help keep you safe online, and we'll review them together."

Sample Conversation: Collaborative Rule-Setting

The following dialogue demonstrates how parents can effectively engage children in establishing technology rules together:

Starting the Conversation

Parent: "I noticed you've been really into gaming lately. I want to make sure you can enjoy those activities while staying safe and having time for other important things like school and sleep. What do you think about setting some rules together to balance everything?"

Child: "Hmm, okay. But I don't want to stop gaming with my friends. We have a lot of fun."

Finding Middle Ground

Parent: "I totally get that. I'm not saying you need to stop—just that we should figure out some limits so you can still enjoy gaming and other things you like without it taking over. For example, how about playing games for two hours after homework is done? That way, you can hang out with your friends, and I know your schoolwork is sorted. What do you think?"

Child: "Two hours seems a bit short. Can we make it three on weekends?"

Reaching Agreement

Parent: "That sounds fair. Two hours on school nights and three on weekends. And we'll set a timer to keep track, so it's easier to remember."

This conversation demonstrates several effective strategies:

- Acknowledging the child's interests and concerns
- Explaining the reasoning behind limits
- Inviting the child's input and suggestions
- Being willing to compromise
- Ending with a clear agreement that both parties understand

By involving children in rule-setting, parents help them develop self-regulation skills while ensuring they understand the purpose behind the rules. This collaborative approach is more likely to result in compliance and honest communication about online activities.

Encouraging Children to Talk About Online Experiences

While rules and monitoring are important, they should never become rigid restrictions or excessive surveillance. Parents cannot realistically watch their children all the time. This is where an honest, open relationship between parents and children becomes crucial, making the difference between children who come forward about problems and those who don't (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018).

Research finds that monitoring and online activity rules work better as preventive measures when combined with a close parent-child relationship and a warm home environment (Elsaesser et al., 2017).

Why Children Don't Talk About Cyberbullying

Generational Gap Concerns

Children may feel parents won't understand their online experiences due to age differences. They might think parents would consider cyberbullying trivial or unimportant, or conversely, fear parents will completely restrict their internet access (Beane, 2008; Young & Tully, 2019).

Desire for Independence

Some children feel they should handle problems independently (Juvonen & Gross, 2008). They might not recognize cyberbullying as serious or may not realize what's happening is wrong (Young & Tully, 2019).

Shame and Embarrassment

Children may blame themselves for cyberbullying and feel too ashamed to tell anyone, including parents (Young & Tully, 2019). The victim-aggressor power dynamic can intensify these feelings.

Fear of Being a "Tattletale"

Children learn early not to "rat" on peers. This social norm may prevent them from reporting cyberbullying, as they fear judgment from friends for breaking group loyalty (Beane, 2008).

Strategies to Encourage Open Communication

To help children feel comfortable discussing online problems, parents can:

- Show genuine interest in their digital life without being intrusive
- Demonstrate openness to learning about platforms and technologies
- Reassure them that discussing problems won't automatically result in device restrictions
- Cultivate healthy moral principles so children recognize unfair treatment
- Create a warm, supportive environment where children feel safe sharing concerns
- Express appreciation when children are honest ("Thank you for sharing this with me")
- Explain the difference between "tattling" and reporting harmful behavior

Practical Activities to Promote Online Safety

Engaging in practical activities with your child can strengthen your relationship while developing their online safety skills. Here are some effective exercises to try together:



Social Media Exploration

Spend 15-20 minutes exploring a social media platform your child uses. Learn about trends, hashtags, and language. Ask your child to explain features you don't understand, allowing them to be the expert. This demonstrates your interest in their digital world without being intrusive.



"What If" Scenarios

While exploring online activities together, introduce hypothetical cyberbullying scenarios. For example: "What if someone messaged you saying you don't play well and should quit? How would you react?" Listen to their thoughts without judgment and ask if they or their friends have encountered similar situations.

Building Digital Resilience Together

These activities serve multiple purposes:

- They demonstrate your willingness to understand your child's digital world
- They create natural opportunities to discuss online safety without lecturing
- They help children practice responding to potential problems before they occur
- They reinforce that you're available to help, regardless of the situation

When discussing these scenarios, emphasize that you'll support them even if they've made mistakes or broken rules. Children need to see rules as helpful guidance, not as tools for control or punishment.

Mention that, no matter the situation (for example, even if they broke some rules or went too far with something), you will be there for them, to listen, support and help.

By combining clear boundaries with warm support, you create an environment where children feel safe discussing online challenges and seeking help when needed.

Understanding the Impact of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can have profound effects on children's mental and physical health. Understanding these impacts helps parents recognize the seriousness of the issue and respond appropriately.

50%

Higher Depression Risk

Research shows cyberbullying may cause even higher levels of depressive symptoms than traditional bullying (Bonanno & Hymel, 2013; Perren et al., 2010).

24/7

Constant Exposure

Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying can follow victims everywhere through their devices, creating a sense of no escape.

60%

Academic Impact

A majority of cyberbullied students experience decreased academic performance and increased absenteeism (Kowalski & Limber, 2013).

The Psychological Toll

The psychological impact of cyberbullying is particularly severe because of several factors:

Permanence

Digital content can persist indefinitely, creating a sense that the humiliation will never end. As one cyberbullying victim expressed: "Once something is out on the internet, it can never be truly gone, so they might think they will never be able to escape the feeling of shame or recover from the humiliation."

Uncertainty

Not knowing who the bully is or how far compromising information has spread creates profound anxiety. This uncertainty makes cyberbullying particularly distressing, as victims cannot predict or prepare for what might happen next.

Physical Manifestations

The psychological distress of cyberbullying often manifests physically through:

- Headaches and migraines
- Stomach aches and digestive problems
- Sleep disturbances and nightmares
- Changes in appetite
- Fatigue and low energy

Responding to Cyberbullying: A Step-by-Step Guide

If you discover your child is experiencing cyberbullying, a thoughtful, measured response is essential. Here's a comprehensive approach to addressing the situation:

Listen Without Judgment

Create a safe space for your child to share their experience. Listen actively without interrupting or expressing shock or anger that might make them shut down. Thank them for their courage in telling you.

Document Everything

Before anything is deleted, capture evidence of the cyberbullying. Take screenshots of messages, posts, or images, noting dates, times, and contexts. This documentation will be valuable if you need to report the situation.

Report and Block

Help your child report the bullying to the platform where it occurred. Most social media sites, gaming platforms, and apps have mechanisms to report abusive behavior. Then block the person responsible to prevent further contact.

Contact Appropriate Authorities

If the cyberbullying involves school peers, inform school administrators. For serious cases involving threats, harassment, or distribution of private images, contact local law enforcement. Many jurisdictions have specific laws addressing cyberbullying.

Provide Emotional Support

Reassure your child that the bullying is not their fault. Consider professional support from a counselor or therapist if they show signs of significant distress. Maintain open communication throughout the process.

What Not to Do

When responding to cyberbullying, avoid these common mistakes:

- Don't immediately take away devices or internet access as punishment
- Don't contact the bully or their parents directly without a plan
- Don't minimize the situation or tell your child to "just ignore it"
- Don't promise complete confidentiality if safety issues require involving others
- Don't encourage retaliatory behavior

Remember that your response sets an example for how your child should handle conflict and adversity. By demonstrating calm problem-solving and appropriate reporting, you teach valuable life skills while addressing the immediate situation.

Preventive Strategies: Building Digital Resilience

While monitoring and responding to cyberbullying are important, equipping children with skills to navigate online spaces safely is equally crucial. Digital resilience—the ability to recognize, respond to, and recover from online challenges—can be developed through intentional parenting strategies.



Teach Critical Thinking

Help children evaluate online content and interactions critically. Discuss how to recognize suspicious behavior, misleading information, and manipulation tactics. Ask questions like "Why might someone post this?" or "What might they want from you?"



Build Self-Esteem

Children with strong self-esteem are less vulnerable to cyberbullying and better equipped to handle it. Encourage activities that build confidence offline, praise effort rather than results, and help them develop a sense of identity beyond social media validation.



Develop Empathy

Discuss how online actions affect others. Help children understand that digital communications lack tone and facial cues, making misunderstandings common. Encourage them to consider how their words might be interpreted before posting.

Practical Skills for Online Safety

Privacy Management

Teach children to manage privacy settings on all platforms. Review these settings together regularly, as platforms often update their features. Discuss what information should remain private (addresses, school names, daily routines) and what can be shared more widely.

Digital Footprint Awareness

Help children understand that everything posted online contributes to their digital footprint. Before posting, encourage them to ask: "Would I be comfortable with a teacher or future employer seeing this?" This promotes thoughtful online behavior.

The Role of Schools in Preventing Cyberbullying

Schools play a vital role in cyberbullying prevention and intervention. As parents, understanding how to effectively partner with educational institutions can create a more comprehensive safety net for your child.

School Anti-Bullying Policies

Most schools have established anti-bullying policies that increasingly address cyberbullying. As a parent, you should:

- Request and review your school's anti-bullying policy
- Understand how the school defines cyberbullying
- Learn the reporting procedures for incidents
- Know what consequences exist for perpetrators
- Understand what support is available for victims

If your school's policy doesn't adequately address cyberbullying, consider advocating for updates through parent-teacher organizations or school board meetings.



Establish Communication

Build relationships with teachers, counselors, and administrators before problems arise. Knowing who to contact and having established rapport makes addressing issues easier when they occur.



Document Incidents

If your child experiences cyberbullying involving school peers, document everything thoroughly before approaching the school. Include screenshots, dates, and any relevant context about how the bullying is affecting your child's education.



Collaborative Approach

Work with school personnel as partners rather than adversaries. Ask about their perspective and proposed solutions, while clearly communicating your expectations for your child's safety and well-being.

Special Considerations for Different Age Groups

Children's online experiences and vulnerabilities change as they develop. Effective cyberbullying prevention requires age-appropriate strategies that address the specific challenges of each developmental stage.



Elementary School (Ages 6-10)

Young children are typically beginning their digital journey through educational apps, games, and limited social interactions. At this stage, direct supervision is appropriate and expected.

- Use devices in common areas where you can easily monitor activity
- Utilize robust parental controls and child-friendly browsers
- Focus on teaching basic internet safety concepts through stories and examples
- Limit online interactions to known friends and family members



Middle School (Ages 11-13)

This transition period often coincides with first smartphone ownership and increased social media interest. Cyberbullying risk increases significantly during these years.

- Gradually introduce more independence while maintaining oversight
- Discuss social dynamics and peer pressure in digital contexts
- Teach specific strategies for handling mean comments or exclusion
- Review privacy settings together regularly
- Establish clear time limits and content boundaries



High School (Ages 14-18)

Teenagers require increasing autonomy while still needing guidance. Cyberbullying at this age can involve more sophisticated tactics and greater emotional impact.

- Shift from monitoring to mentoring
- Discuss complex issues like digital reputation and long-term consequences
- Address romantic relationships and their online dimensions
- Prepare teens for college/work environments where they'll manage digital presence independently
- Focus on developing internal judgment rather than external rules

Adjusting Your Approach

As children grow, gradually adjust your approach to match their developmental needs:

- Evolve from strict rules to collaborative guidelines
- Transition from direct supervision to periodic check-ins
- Move from simple explanations to nuanced discussions
- Shift from managing their digital presence to advising on self-management

Remember that development varies widely among children of the same age. Consider your child's individual maturity, judgment, and temperament when determining appropriate levels of independence and responsibility online.

Technology Tools for Online Safety

While open communication remains the foundation of cyberbullying prevention, technology tools can provide additional layers of protection. These tools should complement, not replace, ongoing conversations about online safety.



Parental Control Apps

These applications allow parents to monitor and manage children's device usage. Popular options include Google Family Link, Apple Screen Time, Qustodio, and Net Nanny. These tools typically offer features like content filtering, time limits, app blocking, and location tracking.

When using these apps, be transparent with your child about what you're monitoring and why. Frame it as a safety measure rather than surveillance.



Network-Level Controls

Router-based solutions like Circle Home Plus or eero Secure provide protection across all devices connected to your home network. These can be particularly useful for managing internet access for younger children.

Features typically include content filtering, time limits, pause buttons for internet access, and usage reports. These tools affect all devices on your network, making them efficient for families with multiple children.

Platform-Specific Safety Features

Most popular platforms offer built-in safety features that parents and children should understand:

Social Media

- Privacy settings to control who sees posts
- Blocking and muting capabilities
- Reporting mechanisms for harmful content
- Comment filtering options

Gaming Platforms

- Chat restrictions and parental controls
- Friend list management
- Reporting systems for abusive players
- Age-appropriate content settings

Messaging Apps

- Blocking unwanted contacts
- Reporting inappropriate messages
- Privacy settings for profile information
- Controls for group chat participation

Building a Positive Digital Culture at Home

Beyond specific cyberbullying prevention strategies, creating a positive digital culture within your family can foster healthy online habits and values. This proactive approach helps children develop into responsible digital citizens who treat others with respect online.

Model Healthy Digital Habits

Children learn by watching their parents. Demonstrate appropriate technology use by following the same rules you set for your children. Put devices away during family meals, avoid checking phones during conversations, and show restraint in what you share about yourself and others online.

Highlight Positive Uses

Showcase how technology can be used constructively for learning, creativity, and positive social connection.

Introduce children to educational apps, creative tools, and platforms where they can pursue interests and develop skills.



Emphasize Digital Empathy

Help children understand that real people with real feelings exist behind screen names and avatars. Discuss how online comments can impact others, and encourage children to consider "Would I say this to someone's face?" before posting or sending messages.

Promote Digital Balance

Encourage a healthy mix of online and offline activities. Create technology-free times and spaces in your home. Support hobbies, sports, and face-to-face social interactions that help children develop well-rounded identities beyond their digital presence.

Family Digital Citizenship Agreement

Consider creating a family digital citizenship agreement that outlines shared values and expectations. Unlike rules focused solely on restrictions, this agreement emphasizes positive behaviors and shared responsibility. Include principles like:

- We treat others online with the same respect we show in person
- We think before we post, considering how our words might affect others
- We protect our privacy and respect others' privacy
- We balance screen time with other important activities
- We talk openly about online experiences, both positive and concerning
- We stand up for others who are being treated unfairly online

Have all family members, including parents, sign the agreement and post it where it's visible. Review and update it periodically as children grow and technology evolves.

Celebrating Digital Citizenship

Acknowledge and celebrate when children demonstrate responsible digital behavior. This positive reinforcement helps establish healthy norms and values around technology use. For example, praise your child when they:

- Report concerning content they encounter online
- Stand up for someone experiencing cyberbullying
- Make thoughtful decisions about what to share or not share
- Voluntarily take breaks from technology
- Use digital tools creatively or for learning

By focusing on positive digital citizenship rather than just avoiding problems, you help children develop intrinsic motivation for responsible online behavior.