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## Internet Safety Newsletter from ChildrenOnline.org

### In This Issue

[Bullying Online](#)

[Understanding the Reasons Behind Bullying](#)

### Quick Links

[Register Now](#)  
[Resources for Parents](#)  
[ChildrenOnline Website](#)

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**Welcome to our 5th edition of the Children Online newsletter.**

You may have noticed that this edition was a few days late. It also happened to coincide with our publishing deadline for our new book. It is to be published in 2008 by the International Society for Technology in Education ([ISTE.org](#)). Life continues to be busy!

Having visited several schools and organizations recently we are reminded how difficult it is to "parent" our children in today's world. Be strong! Remember, kids are healthiest when they grow up in families that communicate, place boundaries and are filled with love.

Happy Reading,  
Doug Fodeman and Marje Monroe

[CHILDREN ONLINE](#)

When speaking to parents and students about life online, we include the statement, "children and teens often use mean and harassing language online because they can". The students we work with always agree with this. From the

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[Understanding the Reasons Behind Bullying](#)

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[ChildrenOnline Website](#)

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**What can a child/teen do if they feel uncomfortable online?**

- 1. Block them in IM (Instant Messaging)**
- 2. Set their IM software to ONLY allow the people on their Buddy List to contact them. (Do YOU know everyone on your child's Buddy list?)**
- 3. Report them. Every web-based game and social online environment has some method to report abuse of members.**
- 4. Log off immediately! NEVER respond to harassment. It only encourages more!**
- 5. Quit. Close. Turn off the monitor.**
- 6. Tell a parent, a trusted teacher or other adult.**
- 7. Shut down. Pull the plug!**
- 8. Remind children/teens that THEY are in control and can turn it off at any time.**

**Keep in mind that if a child/teen is being threatened, repeatedly harassed or sexually harassed it may be important to capture and print this to bring it to the authorities.**

**Also sometimes the harassment may not be obvious at first. Have frequent conversations with your children about their online world. Who do they talk with? What do they talk about? Explain that it is different for you, their parent, if they had a friend over the house compared to your child having a friend online.**

**Send us your questions. Email questions to: [DFodeman@Brookwood.edu](mailto:DFodeman@Brookwood.edu)**



relative safety of a screen, lonely and bored children can strike out at others with little concern for the consequences. Without the social cue of face to face contact, it can be hard for children to feel the sting of "hurting" another person. Playground bullies have moved online and the anonymity kids feel while hiding behind a computer screen empowers some to say or do things they might not do in person.

It is common for schools (especially middle schools) to be faced with online cruelty. Parents are turning to schools with print outs of cruel or mean instant messages or emails. For younger kids, instant messaging can become forums for teasing and meanness. Teens often turn to social networking sites and blogs to lash out or resolve conflicts.

**What can parents do?**

Educate your kids about responsible behavior online. While most kids know how to act in public places and with others, they may not know how to act online. Talk about kindness, respect and treating others as they would want to be treated. It isn't JUST a screen or toy!

Keep the computer in a public location such as a den, living room or kitchen.

Check-in regularly with your child about their activity online. Who are they talking to? Who belongs to what screen name?

Encourage your children to tell you when they encounter mean or hurtful behavior online.

Do not allow children younger than 11 to have email accounts or access to Instant Messaging. Children are not developmentally ready for the language issues and split second decisions that typically arise with Instant Messaging.

Discourage group interactions online. Often bullying happens during sleepovers or slumber parties when kids feed off of each other and may do things they wouldn't while alone.

Set limits to time online, on IM, on social networks.

Look at the games your children are playing on the computer, XBox, Playstation or on a web browser. Many games today can be played online with strangers from around the world and include the ability to chat.

**Understand the reasons behind cyber-bullying**

The anonymity of the internet lures children and teens to risk being mean or threatening. With a disguised screen name, kids can hide behind their computers.

There are almost no boundaries or structures in place to stop bullying. Unlike schools or home where adults may be present, bullies remain free to act out their anger or hurt.

Without social cues, children do not fully understand the implications of their words or actions online.

It is easy! With just a click of a mouse or push of a send button, mean messages are sent to individuals or groups.

**COMING IN FUTURE ISSUES:**

1. How to protect the family computer
2. You've made a mistake in giving your child certain internet privileges. What is the best language to use with your child to change your rules?
3. Understanding that there is no such thing as privacy online.

Thank you for your continued interest. We value your input and welcome your comments and questions. If you like what you see, please pass this newsletter on to a friend.

**Sincerely,**

Marje Monroe and Doug Fodeman  
Children Online

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