



## LESSON PLAN

<b>Level:</b>	Grades 7 to 8
<b>About the Author:</b>	MediaSmarts
<b>Duration:</b>	2-3 hours

# Understanding Cyberbullying – Virtual vs. Physical Worlds



This lesson is part of USE, UNDERSTAND & CREATE: A Digital Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>.

## Overview

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In this lesson, students explore the verbal and visual cues that we rely on to understand how other people are feeling. They then consider the differences between online and offline communication and discuss how these differences may make it difficult to understand the effect our words and actions have on others online. Students then identify strategies for mitigating these aspects of online communication and apply those strategies to create a media product in which they are used successfully.

## Learning Outcomes

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Students will demonstrate:

- understanding of how online communication differs from face-to-face conversation
- awareness of how the distinct attributes of online communication may contribute to inappropriate or bullying behaviour
- recognition of cyberbullying behaviour
- understanding of the crucial role played by witnesses, including themselves, in fuelling or stopping bullying behaviour – online and offline
- awareness of the impact of cyberbullying on targeted individuals
- knowledge of appropriate action to take when cyberbullying occurs
- awareness of rules for good digital citizenship

## Preparation and Materials

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- Read the *Cyberbullying Backgrounder*
- Read the backgrounder *Advice for Avoiding Online Conflict*
- Distribute to parents or caregivers (via email or hand delivery by students) the *Parents' Guide to Cyberbullying* backgrounder
- Distribute to students the handout *What to Do if Someone is Mean to You Online*



Photocopy the assignment sheet *Rewind, Be Kind*

## Procedure

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### Taking Perspective

Tell students that you're going to play an improv game called "Restaurant." Pick two students to play the first round. One student is the Waiter, who must try to "serve" a meal to the other student, the Customer. Don't tell the class or the Waiter anything else about the game. Quietly tell the Customer his/her "trigger": a common word or action that will make him/her react with a particular emotion – anger, sadness, fear, etc. – if the Waiter does it. Here are some suggested triggers:

- Saying the word "Restaurant"
- Looking directly at him/her
- Touching or covering his/her shadow
- Nodding
- Saying a number
- Saying a colour
- Saying a sentence with an even number of words

The Waiter's job is to try to play out the scene for a certain amount of time (two or three minutes is suggested; it can be shorter if students have little experience with drama games or longer if they have done them before) without triggering the Customer's reaction three times – on the third reaction the game is over.

Once the scene has been played through, ask the Waiter how it felt to play the game. (*Most likely, baffling and frustrating.*) Ask if s/he or anyone else figured out the "hidden rule" of the game and, if no one did, explain it to the students.

Now have two new students play the game. When it is over, ask both the Waiter and the Customer how it felt. In particular, ask the Waiter what s/he did to try to figure out what the trigger was. Did anything change in the Customer's voice, facial expression or body language right before the Waiter said or did the trigger? (Even though the Customer wasn't actually feeling the emotion caused by the trigger, s/he will have reacted in anticipation when s/he knew it was about to happen.)

Finally, have a third pair of students play the game, this time with the added rule that the students in the audience are allowed to try to help the Waiter by saying what they think the trigger is or suggesting how to avoid it. (To avoid all the students shouting at once, either you or the Customer can call on students who are raising their hands.) After this round is over, ask the class what they did to figure out what the Customer's trigger was. Again, point out that we rely on certain cues – tone of voice, facial expression, body language – to understand how someone is feeling, and particularly to know if we've upset them. Ask students to give you some examples of cues that tell you someone is sad or upset, such as:

- A quavering voice
- A frown



- A “tight” look on their face (trying to control their expression)
- Holding breath
- Flushed cheeks
- Looking away
- Defensive (hunched or curled) posture

### Interacting Online

Now write or project the following quote from a teenage girl (from the 2012 MediaSmarts study *Young Canadians in a Wired World, Phase III: Talking to Parents and Youth About Life Online*) on the board:

*I think online it's easier to say [mean] things, because you're not face-to-face and you're hiding behind a screen.*

Ask students:

- Do they agree with this quote? Why or why not?
- When someone says something to you online that hurts your feelings, how is it different from when it happens offline? *(If you know them offline, you may be more likely to give them the benefit of the doubt if they do or say something that makes you upset; people you only know online may seem less like “real” people and more like video game characters; also, if you’re unsure whether they meant to hurt your feelings or not you can talk to them in person instead of online.)*
- Have you ever been unsure whether something that someone said or did to you online was meant to be mean or not?
- If so, what did you do about it? *(More than a third of Canadian students say they would react to mean online behaviour by talking to the person offline.)*
- Have you ever accidentally said something online that offended someone? Have you made a comment meaning to be funny, and had it backfire?

Start a chart on the board with the headings OFFLINE and ONLINE. Ask students how talking to people online (through things like video games, social networks, texting and instant messaging) is different from talking to people face-to-face. Make sure to include the following points:

#### OFFLINE

We can see them  
 We can hear their tone of voice  
 They can see you  
 They can hear you  
 Things you say disappear (except in memory)  
 Only people who are there hear you  
 We can see how people react to what we say

#### ONLINE

We can't see them  
 We can't hear them  
 They can't see you  
 They can't hear you  
 Everything you say can be read later  
 People can read what you say  
 We don't see how people react to what we say



### Strategies for Better Online Interaction

Tell students that more than half of Canadian students who have been mean online say they did it because they were just joking. Ask students how the aspects of online communication above can make it hard to tell if someone is just joking, or hard to tell if a joke you've made has gone too far and really hurt someone. Can they think of a time (online or offline) when someone said or did something to them that hurt more than it was meant to? (*This last question is meant for personal reflection; don't require students to answer unless they volunteer to.*)

Divide the class into small groups and ask students to think about these aspects of communicating using digital technology like the Internet and then make a list of strategies to address the negative side of online communication. In particular, make sure they consider:

- How can you reduce the chances of hurting someone's feelings online?
- How can you tell if you've hurt someone's feelings without meaning to?
- How can you make things better if you've hurt someone's feelings without meaning to?
- How should you react if someone hurts your feelings online?

Have the groups share their strategies with the class and make a "master list" on the board. Now ask students whether they think people are more or less likely to speak out when they **witness** bullying if it's online or offline. What are some ways that the aspects of online communication discussed above might make it harder to speak out against bullying, or make it easier for you to do nothing or even join in? Make sure the following points come up:

- Because you can't see or hear people, it can be hard to tell if a situation is serious, especially in environments like games where a certain amount of "trash talk" is normal: more than half of all Canadian students don't speak out about racism or sexism online because they say "people are just joking around."
- Because people can't see us, it's easier to pretend we don't see what's going on and to just leave the situation.
- Because online communications may be recorded and shared, we don't know who and how many people will see anything we do – so speaking out may feel more risky.
- Because we can't see all the other people who are witnessing it, we don't know whether they feel the same way as we do about it. If nobody else is doing anything, that may make us feel like it can't be that serious.

### Assessment/Evaluation: Rewind, Be Kind

Distribute the assignment sheet *Rewind, Be Kind*. Have students create (individually or in groups) a video, story, comic, skit, etc. in which someone hurts someone else's feelings unintentionally (or hurts someone more than they meant to) and then "rewind" the story to see how the main character and/or a witness can make things better (the main character still makes the same mistake, but now s/he or a witness is able to correct it.)



**Reflection: I Will Never / I Will Always**

Have students create two lists for themselves about what they will say and do online in order to keep from hurting people's feelings, one with the heading "I will never" and the other with the heading "I will always." Tell students that nobody but them will see these lists: they are for them to refer back to later when they're not sure about the right thing to do.



## Cyberbullying Backgrounder

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### What is Cyberbullying?

For most youth, the Internet is all about socializing and while most of these social interactions are positive, increasing numbers of kids are using the technology to intimidate and harass others – a phenomenon known as cyberbullying.

The term “cyberbullying” can be a bit of a misnomer. Unlike the traditional definition of bullying, which involves a difference in power or strength between the perpetrator and the target, a lot of the activities that adults would label as cyberbullying happen between people of roughly the same status. It’s also sometimes difficult to distinguish clearly between the target and perpetrator in a cyberbullying scenario. Finally, much of the abusive behaviour that takes place within offline relationships may also take place in online spaces or be abetted by digital technology.

### How Common is It?

A significant minority of students have experienced both meanness and threats online: just over a third say that someone has said something mean or cruel to them, and just under a third say that someone has threatened them online by saying something like “I’m going to get you” or “You’re going to get it.” Roughly a quarter of students say that they have engaged in online meanness.<sup>1</sup>

### Roles

Those who are involved in cyberbullying are generally categorized as perpetrators, targets and witnesses. But meanness is fairly often reciprocal, with a significant overlap between students who have engaged in online meanness and those who have experienced it.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, it’s not at all unusual for both parties in a cyberbullying scenario to see themselves as being the victims.

One of the challenges in dealing with cyberbullying is that the term itself often has little meaning to youth. What adults may consider cyberbullying youth will describe as getting into fights, “starting something” or simply “drama.”<sup>3</sup> This includes many of the activities considered forms of cyberbullying, such as spreading rumours or excluding peers from their social circles. Boys similarly refer to what they do – most often online impersonation or posting embarrassing videos – as “punking” or “pranking” rather than bullying.<sup>4</sup>

There is little doubt that cyberbullying can be traumatic: one third of students who were bullied online reported symptoms of depression, a figure which rose to nearly one half for those who experienced both online and offline bullying.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, youth typically underestimate how harmful online bullying can be. Researchers at the University of British Columbia found that while young people believe most of the negative behaviour that happens online is meant

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1 Steeves, Valerie. (2014) *Young Canadians in a Wired World, Phase III: Cyberbullying: Dealing with Online Meanness, Cruelty and Threats*. Ottawa: MediaSmarts.

2 Ibid.

3 Marwick, Dr. Alice, and Dr. danah boyd. *The Drama! Teen Conflict, Gossip, and Bullying in Networked Publics*.

4 Ibid.

5 Kessel Schneider, Shari, Lydia O’Donnell, Ann Stueve, and Robert W. S. Coulter “Cyberbullying, School Bullying, and Psychological Distress: A Regional Census of High School Students,” *American Journal of Public Health* (January 2012) 102:1, 171-177.



as a joke, “students need to be educated that this ‘just joking’ behaviour has serious implications.”<sup>6</sup> MediaSmarts’ *Young Canadians in a Wired World (YCWW)* research found that the most common reason given for online meanness is “I was just joking around,” followed by “the person said something mean and cruel about me first” and “the person said something mean about my friend first”.<sup>7</sup>

One reason cyberbullying may be more harmful than offline bullying is the potential presence of countless, invisible witnesses and/or collaborators to the cyberbullying, which creates a situation where targets are left unsure of who knows, and who to fear. Technology also extends the reach these young people have, enabling them to harass their targets anywhere and at any time. While these situations should be reported, it can be difficult for young people to step forward: how do you report an attack that leaves no physical scars? Will the consequences of telling an adult that you are being cyberbullied be worse than the bullying itself? Adults want to help, but many feel ill-equipped to handle bullying in a digital world.

Research has shown that **witnesses** to bullying can be just as important as targets or perpetrators in affecting how an incident plays out.<sup>8</sup> Witnesses may also suffer negative effects that are as bad as or worse than those suffered by the target.<sup>9</sup> MediaSmarts’ *YCWW* research on cyberbullying has revealed both good and bad news on this front. The good news is that many youth who witness bullying do something about it: 65 percent of the 5,436 Canadian students in grades 4 to 11 that were surveyed said that they had done something to help someone who was experiencing online meanness.<sup>10</sup>

There’s no question that it’s possible for witnesses to do a great deal of harm, whether it’s by directly joining in the bullying, encouraging the perpetrator or even re-victimizing the target by sharing a bullying post or video. It’s also well-established that when witnesses to bullying stand up and defend the target it can make a tremendous and positive difference – but not in every situation. There may be just as many cases where intervening can do greater harm to the target, the witness or both, and witnesses may have a number of valid reasons for not wanting to intervene:

- Fear of being a target. Saying that anyone who witnesses bullying should confront the perpetrator is not unlike suggesting that everyone who sees a mugging should try to stop it. Standing up to defend a target – especially if you turn out to be the only person who stands up – can easily lead to becoming a target yourself without necessarily having a positive effect on the situation.

6 Bellett, Gerry. “Cyberbullying needs its own treatment strategies.” *The Vancouver Sun*, April 13, 2012.

7 Steeves, Valerie. (2014). *Young Canadians in a Wired World, Phase III: Cyberbullying: Dealing With Online Meanness, Cruelty and Threats*. Ottawa: MediaSmarts.

8 Hawkins, D., Pepler, D. & Craig, W. (2001). Naturalistic observations of peer interventions in bullying. *Social Development*, 10, 512-527.

9 Rivers et al. Observing bullying at school: The mental health implications of witness status. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 24 (4): 211.

10 Steeves, Valerie. (2014). *Young Canadians in a Wired World, Phase III: Cyberbullying: Dealing with Online Meanness, Cruelty and Threats*. MediaSmarts: Ottawa.



- Fear of losing social status. Even if intervening or reporting doesn't lead to the witness becoming a target, it can still have long-term effects on a young person's social status, either by being associated with the target (youth who are marginalized for reasons such as poverty,<sup>11</sup> disability,<sup>12</sup> being a member of a visible minority group<sup>13</sup> and having a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender status<sup>14</sup> are substantially more likely to be targets) or by being labeled a "snitch" – both of which may easily be preludes to being a target of bullying.
- Fear of escalating the situation. Both targets of and witnesses to bullying often fear that standing up to a perpetrator or reporting bullying to a parent or teacher is more likely to make things worse rather than better. Many of the youth who participated in 2012 focus groups for MediaSmarts' YCWW study<sup>15</sup> said that they were reluctant to report bullying to teachers because they felt the situation was likely to get out of control, especially in cases where teachers were bound by "zero tolerance" policies to respond to cyberbullying complaints in a particular way. This reluctance was echoed in the YCWW national survey, which found that while teachers rate highly as a source of information about cyberbullying, youth are extremely reluctant to turn to them for help.<sup>16</sup>

A good starting principle for witnesses would be "first, do no harm." As well as not participating in the bullying, young people should be encouraged to think ethically about their responsibilities as witnesses. Instead of automatically following any single rule, young people who witness cyberbullying should think carefully about the possible consequences of the different ways they may react. Instead of telling youth to report and intervene each time they witness cyberbullying, we can teach them to see themselves as active participants in the situation and consider different approaches for different situations, such as:

- *documenting* the bullying and, if it seems that it will do more good than harm, reporting it;
- *comforting* the target and offering help privately (including help in reporting the bullying to authorities: targets of bullying are often reluctant to report it to adults<sup>17</sup>);
- *mediating* between the target and perpetrator; or
- *confronting* the perpetrator, either privately or in public. If the perpetrator is a friend, youth can show that they don't approve of their behaviour by not joining in or reinforcing it.<sup>18</sup>

11 Cross, E.J., R. Piggin, J. Vonkaenal-Platt and T. Douglas. (2012). *Virtual Violence II: Progress and Challenges in the Fight against Cyberbullying*. London: Beatbullying.

12 Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., Ólafsson, K., with members of the EU Kids Online Network (2011) 'EU Kids Online Final Report'.

13 Cross, E.J., R. Piggin, J. Vonkaenal-Platt and T. Douglas. (2012). *Virtual Violence II: Progress and Challenges in the Fight against Cyberbullying*. London: Beatbullying.

14 Hinduja, S., and Patchin, J. (2011) 'Cyberbullying Research Summary Factsheet: Bullying, Cyberbullying and Sexual Orientation'.

15 Steeves, Valerie. (2012). *Young Canadians in a Wired World, Phase III: Talking to Youth and Parents About Life Online*. Ottawa: MediaSmarts.

16 Ibid.

17 Dinham, Peter. "Kids Reluctant to Speak Up About Bullying, Bad Experiences." iTWire, June 2, 2014.

18 Patchin, Justin W. "Empower Bystanders to Improve School Climate." Online: <<http://cyberbullying.us/empower-bystanders-to-improve-school-climate/>>. Posted July 18, 2014.



## Methods of Cyberbullying

There are several ways that young people bully others online. Seventy-eight percent of those students who have done something mean or cruel online say they have called someone a name (18% of the total sample). Self-reporting of other problematic behaviours is much lower. Around six percent of all students report that they have harassed someone in an online game, five percent have spread rumours and four percent have posted an embarrassing photo/video of someone. Three percent say that they have made fun of someone's race, religion or ethnicity and two percent report making fun of someone's sexual orientation. One percent report that they have harassed someone sexually (e.g. said or did something sexual when the person did not want them to).<sup>19</sup>

## Cyberbullying and the Law

Young people should be aware that some forms of online bullying are considered criminal acts. Under the Criminal Code of Canada, it is a crime to communicate repeatedly with someone if your communication causes them to fear for their own safety or for the safety of others. It's also a crime to publish a "defamatory libel"—writing something that is designed to insult a person or is likely to injure someone's reputation by exposing him or her to hatred, contempt or ridicule.

A cyberbully may also be violating the Canadian Human Rights Act if he or she spreads hate or discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or disability. A thorough explanation of federal and provincial laws relating to cyberbullying can be found at <http://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/digital-issues/cyberbullying/cyberbullying-law>.

## The Role of the School

Almost two thirds of students say their school has a rule relating to cyberbullying; of these, three quarters say the rules are "often" or "sometimes" helpful. This does not, however, seem to translate into actual effects on students' behaviour: unlike with household rules, there is almost no correlation between the presence of school rules and whether or not a student has engaged in or experienced either meanness or threats online. Perhaps because of this, students who have personally experienced online threats or meanness are much less likely to feel that school rules are helpful.<sup>20</sup>

Schools have started to become more proactive about confronting bullying, but too often these efforts fall into stereotypes, emphasize unrealistic worst-case scenarios and are presented as one-time-only interventions. Youth participants in MediaSmarts' YCWW focus groups repeatedly said that they had experienced anti-cyberbullying programs – usually one-time assemblies – that not only failed to resonate with them but made them take the issue less seriously. They were also often reluctant to report bullying because they felt that teachers were likely to escalate a situation into more than what it was, possibly due to teachers being bound by zero-tolerance policies.<sup>21</sup>

19 Steeves, Valerie. (2014). *Young Canadians in a Wired World, Phase III: Cyberbullying: Dealing with Online Meanness, Cruelty and Threats*. Ottawa: MediaSmarts.

20 Ibid.

21 Steeves, Valerie. (2012). *Young Canadians in a Wired World, Phase III: Talking to Youth and Parents*. Ottawa: MediaSmarts.



Effective intervention programs, on the other hand, have a number of characteristics in common: they include the whole school; they provide support both for targets and perpetrators after an incident; and they work at multiple levels – in the classroom, school-wide and in connection with parents and the surrounding community.<sup>22</sup> Zero-tolerance and one-size-fits-all approaches to dealing with online conflict are not only unsuccessful, but can be actively harmful as they prevent students from turning to what should be one of their main sources of help and support. Instead of a greater emphasis on punishment and criminalization, we need to foster empathy in youth; teach them to avoid the “empathy traps” of digital communication; provide them with effective tools for managing their emotions and dealing with online conflict; and promote awareness of the power of parents to teach their children to treat others with respect.

Finally, in order to fight cyberbullying effectively we need to make an effort to change the culture in which it happens. Both at school and at home, we can help kids understand that what may seem like “just a joke” may have a powerful effect on someone else. It’s also important to teach kids that cyberbullying may be less common than they think it is: youth often overestimate how common this sort of bullying actually is, even though most report their own experiences as being positive.<sup>23</sup> This is significant because research indicates that when youth believe that bullying behaviour is the norm, they are more likely to exhibit and tolerate this behaviour – and that when youth are made aware of how uncommon bullying actually is, bullying rates drop.<sup>24</sup>

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22 Craig, Wendy. Testimony before the Senate Committee on Human Rights, December 12, 2011.

23 *Teens, Kindness and Cruelty on Social Network Sites*. Pew Research Institute, November 9, 2011.

24 Craig, David W. and H. Wesley Perkins, *Assessing Bullying in New Jersey Secondary Schools: Applying the Social Norms Model to Adolescent Violence*, Presented at the 2008 National Conference on the Social Norms Approach, July 22, 2008.



## Advice for Avoiding Online Conflict

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Here are some tips to help youth avoid online conflict:

- Remember that the people we talk to and play with online are real people. Even if you don't know them offline, try to imagine a person sitting next to you before you say or type anything.
- Don't respond right away. When something happens that gets you upset, take some time to let the first rush of anger or fear fade away.
- If you can, talk things out in person rather than online. Remember that other people can't tell how *you're* feeling online either, so it's easy for drama to blow up.
- Talk to your friends and family about how you're feeling. Kids consistently say that just having someone listen to them is one of the most effective ways of dealing with online conflict.
- Don't ask your friends/posse to back you up. Research suggests that getting the same message over and over again – even if it's from your friends taking your side in an argument – can make angry feelings a lot more intense. It can also make the drama spread and turn into a much bigger conflict.
- Keep an eye on how *you're* feeling! It's hard to make good decisions when you're mad, scared or embarrassed. If your heart is racing or you're feeling tense, it's time to get offline for a while.



## Parents' Guide to Cyberbullying

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For most youth, the Internet is all about socializing and while most of these social interactions are positive, increasing numbers of kids are using the technology to intimidate and harass others – a phenomenon known as cyberbullying.

The term “cyberbullying” can be a bit misleading. Unlike the traditional definition of bullying, which involves a difference in power or strength between children who bully and the children they target, a lot of the activities that adults might see as cyberbullying happen between children of roughly the same status. It can also be difficult to tell who is bullying whom in a cyberbullying scenario. Finally, much of the abusive behaviour that takes place within offline relationships may also take place online or be enhanced by digital technology.

### How Common is It?

Just over a third of Canadian students say that someone has said something mean or cruel to them online, and just under a third say that someone has threatened them online (posting things like “I’m going to get you” or “You’re going to get it”). Roughly a quarter of students say that they have been mean to someone online.

Parents have an important role to play in helping their children and teens learn how to respond to cyberbullying. In fact, parents are the number one group of people that they turn to for help with online meanness.

### How Do I Know if my Child is Being Cyberbullied?

Signs that your child is being bullied online can include fear of using the computer or going to school, anxiety and distress, and withdrawal from friends and usual activities.

### What Should I do if my Child is Targeted?

- Watch out for signs that your child is being bullied online – a reluctance to use the computer or go to school may be an indication.
- Listen and provide advice if your child asks for it. Make sure to check in regularly to make sure things are going better.
- Report online bullying to your Internet or cell phone service provider. Most companies have Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) that clearly define privileges and guidelines for people who use their services and the actions that can be taken if those guidelines are violated. They should be able to respond to reports of cyberbullying over their networks or help you track down the appropriate service provider to respond to.

Report incidents of online harassment and physical threats to your local police. Some forms of online bullying are considered criminal acts. For example: under the Criminal Code of Canada, it is a crime to communicate repeatedly with someone if your communication causes them to fear for their own safety or the safety of others.



We also need to teach our kids how to respond to an online bully. Your child has received a handout titled *What to Do if Someone is Mean to You Online*. Go through it together and emphasize the key points:

- Don't fight back
- Save the evidence
- Talk to someone about it
- Report it to the site where it's happening or to police if it's making you feel scared; making it hard for you to go to school or do things you enjoy; if you are being physically threatened; or if someone is threatening to publish something that would hurt or humiliate you.

### How Can I Prevent Cyberbullying?

We can reduce the risks associated with Internet use by having open, ongoing conversations with our children about their online activities and by setting up rules that will grow along with them. MediaSmarts' research shows that having family Internet rules on things like treating people with respect can have a positive impact on your children's online behaviour. (This tip sheet can get you started: [http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/tipsheet/TipSheet\\_FamilyOnlineRules.pdf](http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/pdfs/tipsheet/TipSheet_FamilyOnlineRules.pdf).) Research has also shown that bullying rates drop when kids know that it is against the rules and how to report it.

Tell your children to come to you right away if they feel uncomfortable or threatened online. Don't take it for granted that your child will do this: only eight percent of teens who have been bullied online have told their parents.

Encourage your children to take action when they witness someone being bullied. This doesn't necessarily mean confronting the bully: they need to consider what they can do that is most likely to help the person being bullied and least likely to make the situation worse. This may include:

- *recording* the bullying by taking screenshots (see [take-a-screenshot.org](http://take-a-screenshot.org) for tips on how to do this) and, if it seems that it will do more good than harm, reporting it;
- *helping the person who is being bullied feel better* and offering help privately (including help in reporting the bullying to authorities: young people who are being bullied are often reluctant to tell adults);
- *trying to help* both the person being bullied and person who is doing the bullying make up; or
- *confronting* the person who is doing the bullying, either privately or in public. If this is a friend, the best way to show that you don't approve of their behaviour is by not joining in or encouraging it.

In order to fight cyberbullying effectively we need to change the culture in which it happens, starting with helping kids understand that what may seem like "just a joke" can have a powerful effect on someone else. It's also important to teach them that cyberbullying may be less common than they think it is: young people often overestimate how common bullying actually is, even though most report their own experiences as being positive. Knowing the facts is important because research shows that when young people believe that bullying behaviour is the norm, they are more likely to engage in and tolerate this sort of behaviour – and that when they understand how *uncommon* bullying actually is, bullying rates drop.



### What Should I Avoid Doing if my Child is Being Cyberbullied?

It can be difficult for a young person to come forward when they are being bullied; even to mom or dad. To build trust, try not to overreact. Don't forbid your child to use the Internet in the hope of eliminating the source of the problem: for your child, this is equal to social death and will leave her or him feeling even more victimized (not to mention the fact that an extreme reaction such as this will probably cause your child to avoid confiding in you again when feeling threatened).

Other things to avoid:

- Telling them to stop “tattling” or “snitching”
- Telling them they should solve the problem themselves
- Blaming them for being a target
- Minimizing or ignoring the situation

### How Can I Learn More?

As much as possible, show an interest in your child's online life: where does he or she go online? What does he or she do? What is it about these online experiences that are so absorbing? If you're in the habit of sharing your own online experiences with your child, she or he will be more likely to talk to you when having a negative experience.

If you want to better understand your child's online experience, check out MediaSmarts' resources at: <http://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/digital-issues/cyberbullying>.



## What to Do if Someone is Mean to You Online

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### Don't fight back.

A lot of times a bully is looking to get a rise out of you, and fighting back just gives them what they want. Sometimes they're hoping that you'll fight back so that they can get **you** in trouble!

A lot of times people don't realize when they hurt your feelings online. If you're not sure that somebody was being mean to you on purpose, start by talking to them in person -- where you can see and hear each other -- and see if you can work things out.

When something happens that gets you upset, take some time to let the first rush of anger or fear fade away. It's hard to make good decisions when you're mad, scared or embarrassed. If your heart is racing or you're feeling tense, it's time to get offline for a while. Sometimes it can be useful to go outside and do something active to help you get it out of your system.

### Save the evidence.

If somebody is being mean to you online, make sure that you have a record of it. If it's something that was sent directly to you, make sure to save it. If it's something that can be deleted (a tweet, a status update, etc.) get a screenshot [<http://www.take-a-screenshot.org/>]

If it happens more than once, start a journal that records what's happening. Include as many details as you can: where and when it happened, everything you know about the person doing it, anything you did (or didn't do) and how it made you feel.

### Talk to somebody.

If someone is being mean to you online it's okay to talk to your friends or someone in your family about it. Kids who've been bullied say what other people did that helped the most was just to spend time with them and listen to them. If there's no one you can talk to offline, you can contact Kids Help Phone [<http://www.kidshelpphone.ca>] and talk to one of their trained counselors.

**Remind yourself that it's not your fault.** Nothing you can do makes it okay for people to be mean to you. Nothing about you gives people a reason to be mean to you. **If someone is mean to you, that's their problem – not yours.**

You should also **report** what's happening if:

- it's making you feel scared
- it's making you not want to go to school or do things you enjoy (like playing your favourite game because someone is being mean to you there)
- you can't stop thinking about it
- if the person has said they're going to hurt you or publish something that would hurt or humiliate you



You can report it to the people who run the place where it's happening (use the reporting tools on Facebook [<https://www.facebook.com/help/420576171311103/>], YouTube [[https://support.google.com/youtube/topic/2803138?hl=en&ref\\_topic=2676378](https://support.google.com/youtube/topic/2803138?hl=en&ref_topic=2676378)] or Twitter [<https://support.twitter.com/articles/15789#>].) Here (<http://cyberbullying.us/report/>) is a more complete, updated list of how you can report cyberbullying on popular sites and apps.

You can also talk to your parents, to a teacher, or to another adult you trust.

If you can't talk to an adult for any reason and the person is threatening to hurt you physically or is blackmailing you (threatening to do something like post embarrassing photos if you don't do what they say) you can also go straight to your local police.



## Rewind, Be Kind

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For this assignment, you will create a story that shows how it's possible to hurt someone's feelings without meaning to (or hurt them more than you mean to) when you're interacting online. Think about everything we've discussed in this lesson about online communication.

Your story can use any online space you're familiar with (social networks, games, videos, etc.) and will show the story from both points of view: the person whose feelings are hurt and the person who hurts them. **Then** you will "rewind" the story and show how either the person who hurt the other's feelings **or** another person who sees what's happening could make things better.

We'll discuss in class what medium the story should be in and how long it should be. Write those down below:



## Assessment Task: Rewind, Be Kind

	<i>Learning Expectations</i>	<i>Achievement</i>
<p><b>Use</b></p> <p>Skills and competencies that fall under “use” range from basic technical know-how – using computer programs such as word processors, web browsers, email, and other communication tools – to the more sophisticated abilities for accessing and using knowledge resources, such as search engines and online databases, and emerging technologies such as cloud computing.</p>	<p>demonstrate strategies for the management of a range of feelings and emotions</p> <p>demonstrate a knowledge of the appropriate strategies for sharing and expressing feelings and emotions</p> <p>demonstrate awareness of the benefits of online communication and able to handle situations of online behaviour that may make him or her uncomfortable</p> <p>demonstrate understanding the difference between being a passive bystander and an active intervener in cyberbullying situations</p>	<p>Insufficient (R);</p> <p>Beginning (1);</p> <p>Developing (2);</p> <p>Competent (3)</p> <p>Confident (4)</p>
<p><b>Understand</b></p> <p>Understand includes recognizing how networked technology affects our behaviour and our perceptions, beliefs and feelings about the world around us.</p> <p>Understand also prepares us for a knowledge economy as we develop information management skills for finding, evaluating and effectively using information to communicate, collaborate and solve problems.</p>	<p>demonstrate understanding that presenting themselves in different ways online carries both benefits and risks</p> <p>distinguish good-natured teasing from cyberbullying</p> <p>demonstrate understanding of the social nature of digital media and technologies</p> <p>understand the role of the media in establishing feelings and attitudes about ourselves and relationships with others</p>	<p>Insufficient (R);</p> <p>Beginning (1);</p> <p>Developing (2);</p> <p>Competent (3)</p> <p>Confident (4)</p>



	<i>Learning Expectations</i>	<i>Achievement</i>
<p><b>Create</b></p> <p>Create is the ability to produce content and effectively communicate through a variety of digital media tools. It includes being able to adapt what we produce for various contexts and audiences; to create and communicate using rich media such as images, video and sound; and to effectively and responsibly engage with user-generated content such as blogs and discussion forums, video and photo sharing, social gaming and other forms of social media.</p> <p>The ability to create using digital media ensures that Canadians are active contributors to digital society.</p>	<p>identify an appropriate form to suit the specific purpose and audience for a media text they plan to create and explain why it is an appropriate choice</p> <p>identify conventions and techniques appropriate to the form chosen for a media text they plan to create and explain how they will use the conventions and techniques to help communicate their message</p> <p>produce a variety of media texts for specific purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions and techniques</p>	<p>Insufficient (R);</p> <p>Beginning (1);</p> <p>Developing (2);</p> <p>Competent (3)</p> <p>Confident (4)</p>

