

# Do the Right Thing!



You may not realize it, but you have a lot of power when you're online: you can cheer people up, make them laugh, and help to make your school, your town or even the whole world a better place. The flip side is that what you do can make things worse, too. That's why you have to think about what you say and do online, and try your best to do the right thing.

Doing the right thing online mostly comes down to the **three R's of respect: respect people's privacy, respect people's feelings and respect people's property.**

## Respect People's Privacy

Our friends share stuff with us all the time: pictures they took, what they're thinking, even where they are. Every time a friend shares something with you, you have to decide whether you should share it with anybody else.

Here are some things to think about when you're making that call:

What might happen if what I'm sharing gets sent to people who weren't supposed to see it? How will my friend feel if their parents see it? Their teachers? Their friends, girlfriends or boyfriends?

If there are other people in what your friend shared with you, think about this:

- How will they feel if I share this this?
- Is there anything they'd be worried about?

## Respect People's Feelings

Sometimes we don't realize how the things we do and say online make other people feel. That's because we don't see or hear a lot of the things that let us know how someone is feeling, like the look on their face or how their voice sounds.

Here are some things to think about when you're talking to people online:

- **Griefing, trolling and pranking are pretty common in a lot of online places.** Sometimes this is just "part of the game," but before you get into it you should think about how what you're doing or saying might feel to the other person. Also, remember that the rules are different in different places: stuff that's normal to do in your favourite online game might not be OK when you're talking to your friends.

- **It's really easy for drama to get started online, and it's just as easy for it to blow up into something serious.** When you read or see something online that gets you angry, take the time to cool down before you reply. Ask yourself if maybe you're reading it wrong and seeing things that the person who wrote it didn't mean to say. Finally, if drama does get started between you and somebody else, try talking to them in person to sort it out.
- **If one of your friends gets involved in drama or is being picked on by a bully, ask them what you can do to help.** It's great to stand by your friends, but just taking their side against somebody else might make things worse: most of the time, people who've been bullied say that what helps them the most is to have somebody listen and give them support.
- **If you have a boyfriend or girlfriend, don't get into things like keeping tabs on where they are or watching who they're texting or talking to online.** Don't ever ask your girlfriend/boyfriend for a picture or anything else that he or she doesn't want to share. If your boyfriend or girlfriend does any of those things to you, you should talk to your parents, your friends, an adult you trust or a helpline about it.

## Respect People's Property

The Internet can feel like a great big mall, and most of the time there's no security guards to make sure we're not stealing anything. That doesn't mean that you don't have to show respect for the people who made all of the games, videos, music and other great stuff that's online.

Here are some things to think about when you're watching, listening to or playing stuff online:

- **Just because something's online doesn't mean you can take it and use it.** For things you are allowed to use, always give credit to the person or company who owns the copyright.
- **It's also not true that you can do anything you want so long as you give credit to the person who made it.** That's important, but you also need to respect what they want done with it: when somebody makes something like a game, a song or a movie, they own it and they deserve to control what happens to it. They may choose to give it away, but if they want to charge for it that's their right. With all the stuff that's free online, if something isn't free it's because the person who made it expects to get paid. Check out our tip sheet *Getting the Goods Ethically* for info on how to find what you want online.
- **Don't think that cheating a big company is different from cheating a person.** For one thing, selling and licensing the stuff they make is how a lot of artists make a living: if companies stop doing this because they aren't making money, it's the artists who suffer.
- **Respecting people's property also applies to using someone else's work in essays and assignments.** Sometimes plagiarism is accidental: for instance, most students know that copying whole assignments is cheating, but they may not know that rephrasing things and stitching them together to look like their own work counts as cheating as well. Remember, if you can find something online, so can your teacher, so play it safe and make sure you give the source for any ideas that aren't yours.
- **There can be lots of pressure when assignments are due, but don't take short cuts.** If you copy something somebody else wrote for your school work, you're not only cheating that person, you're really cheating yourself out of a chance to learn something and you're cheating all the other kids in your class – the ones who didn't copy – as well.