

A Parent's Guide to Cyberbullies

**What Every Parent Needs to Know About
Internet Safety**

A Parent's Guide to Social Networking Websites

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What is a Cyberbully?

A cyberbully is someone who uses technology to harass, embarrass, intimidate, or stalk someone else.

The methods used can include emails, instant messaging, text messages sent via cell phones, digital photos and all other means of electronic communications.

The cyberbully can send:

- Angry and vulgar argumentative messages
- Cruel, offensive, and insulting messages
- Threats and false promises



The cyberbully can:

- Post secrets or embarrassing information, including pictures, for everyone to see
- Post gossip or rumors for the explicit purpose of damaging the person's reputation
- Send out messages pretending to be the victim in an attempt to damage that person's friendships alienate the victim from online groups

Cyber bullying is also intrusive, allowing bullies to chase victims into their home, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Who Are Cyberbullies?

Many times, a cyberbully is also a bully in face-to-face encounters. Bullying over the computer is a natural extension of their destructive behavior.

Some people who become cyberbullies are often the victims of bullying. They may take out their anger and frustration in cyberspace. They may be targeting the people who bully them or they may have picked a different target.

Still others regard cyberbullying as a game -- nothing more than a fun thing to do.

Who Are the Victims of Cyberbullies?



Most victims of cyberbullies are children, but there are also many adults who are cyberbullying victims.

Generally, cyberbullies will know their victim, but occasionally they will pick victims they don't know. In these situations, the cyberbully is picking on someone based on a type of bias or prejudice. They may pick on

people based on religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, or people who are deemed “not cool.”

Other times, they will pick on someone based on a message that he/she has posted that the bully doesn't like.

Why Can Cyberbullying be Worse Than Physical Bullying?

Many people erroneously assume that “words can never hurt.” In cyberspace, however, cyberbullies can strike anytime, anywhere, thanks to modern technology. As long as the victims are online, they can be vulnerable to cyberbullying.

Many bullies pick on people for the feeling of power that it gives them. Because the Internet seems to give anonymity, cyberbullying is often seen to have fewer consequences to the bullies, which can encourage them to be more aggressive.

Another aspect of cyberspace that can lead cyberbullies to be more vicious than physical bullies is that cyberbullies aren't physically there when they are harassing their victims. This can lead to a lessened empathy. Since the bullies cannot see how much they are hurting the victims, they may think they have not actually hurt them much or at all and may, therefore, continue the harassing behavior.

Many people believe that there are no rules in cyberspace. They feel free to do whatever they wish. More than that, they believe they have the RIGHT to do whatever they want in cyberspace without suffering any consequences.

Warning Signs that your Child may be a Victim of a Cyberbully

- Displays signs of depression, sadness, anxiety or fear – particularly if these signs intensify after your child uses the cell phone or after being online
 - Avoiding friends, activities, or school
- Experiences difficulty with school or a drop in grades for no apparent reason
- Expressing subtle comments that indicate your child is disturbed or upset

What to do if a Cyberbully Targets your Child



Retaliation may only escalate the problem. If you feel the need to respond to the cyberbully, help your child develop

an appropriate response, asking the cyberbully to stop the behavior. This may resolve some of the problems that are occurring.

By filtering email, instant messages and text messages, you can cut off many of the ways the cyberbullies contact your child. By having your child avoid the sites and groups where the attacks occur, he/she can ignore the bully.

If the harassment continues, then you can change your child's email address, Internet account, and usernames.

If a believable physical threat is made, the police should be contacted.

If none of these steps are successful, then you may need to take additional action, as follows:

- 1) Compile a copy of all harassing messages and postings. Save the addresses of web sites where other hostile information, embarrassing pictures or negative messages are posted. The more documentation you can save the better.

Contact your child's school. Even if the cyberbullying is not occurring in school, officials might be able to assist

- 2) If possible, contact the bully's parents. In many cases, they will be unaware of their child's behavior. Send them a registered letter detailing the messages and

asking them to make the bullying stop. They could be held liable for financial and emotional damages.

3) Finally, if the situation is not resolved, contact the police.

A GUIDE TO CYBER BULLYING LINGO

Away Message – A custom-written automatic reply used to greet any instant messages the user receives while absent.

Instant Messaging – Software allowing users to chat online in “real time” from their computers or via wireless devices.

JK – An acronym for “just kidding.” Some young people follow hurtful comments with “jk,” absolving themselves of any responsibility for their statement.

POS – An acronym for “parent over shoulder.”

Profile – A biographical form, in which members record their hobbies, likes and dislikes.

Text Messaging – The use of cell phone keypads to type short messages that can be instantly sent to other cell phone users.

Three-Way Instant Messaging – An upgrade of the three-way phone call, in which two people instant message from the same computer but suggest only one person is present; this is followed by sensitive questioning of others about the “quiet” third party, who is able to view what people “really think” of him or her.

Cyberstalking – Sending harassing communications that may include threats of harm.

Denigration – Sending or posting harmful, untrue or cruel statements or images about a person to other people.

Flaming – Sending hateful messages or images, including pictures taken with cell phones, to a private or online group.

Harassment – Repeatedly sending a person offensive messages.

Impersonation – Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material using that person’s identity that makes him or her look bad or places him or her in potential danger.

Outing – Sending or posting material about or by a person that contains sensitive, private or embarrassing information.

Trickery – Fooling someone into revealing personal information and then distributing it.

About Cyberbullying

MS-ISAC: www.msisac.org/awareness/news/2007-01.cfm

Cyberbully.org: www.cyberbully.org

McGruff.org: www.mcgruff.org/advice/cyberbullies.php

Power in You: www.powerinyou.org/?id=Mzl2

Bully Online: <http://www.bullyonline.org/related/cyber.htm>

Staying Safe Online:
groups.msn.com/StayingSafeOnline/cyberbullies.msnw

National Crime Prevention Council:
www.ncpc.org/media/cyberbullying.php

WHAT EVERY PARENT NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT INTERNET SAFETY

1. **Discuss Internet use with your children and clarify what they should and should not do online.**
 - Make your expectations about Internet use clear to your children.
 - Advise your children never to reveal their name, address, phone number, or school name online without your permission. The Internet is a public place and protecting personal privacy is essential.

- Advise your children never to upload a picture of themselves to the Internet or send it as an email attachment to anyone that they do not know.
- Advise your children not to respond to “get rich quick” schemes and other emails or web sites offers that appear “too good to be true”.
 - Periodically monitor your children’s use of the computer – what they are doing at a particular moment as well as their Internet history.

2. Encourage your children to share their knowledge of the Internet and online learning experiences with you and to come to you with any concerns.

- Ask your children to show you their favorite websites.
 - Ask your children to tell you about the exciting learning they have experienced online as part of their classroom or library activities.
- Encourage your children to come to you if they feel uncomfortable about information they see online or receive via email.
- If someone sends a message or image to your child that is inappropriate, report it to your Internet Service Provider.

3. If your children use email at home, review email safety tips with them.

- Advise your children only to send email to people they know. Every email has a return address and header that provides information about the sender.
- Encourage children to protect their email identity by exercising caution about completing online forms that require an email address.

- Advise children never to respond to email, or other online messages that are hostile, belligerent, inappropriate, or make them feel uncomfortable and to tell you about them immediately.
- Advise children not to respond to junk email (known as SPAM). If they do, they are likely to receive even more SPAM. Clicking on the “unsubscribe” link on SPAM messages often causes more SPAM instead of less.

BOTTOM LINE TIPS:

- Set reasonable rules and guidelines for your children’s computer use
- Communicate your Internet use expectations with your children
- Monitor your children’s use of the Internet and periodically check their Internet history
- Remind your children not to loan their laptops to others

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Top 20 Internet Acronyms

1. A/S/L

.....
Age/sex/location

2.

B4N.....

.....Bye for now

3.

BRB.....

..... Be right back

4.

Ciao.....

..... Goodbye

5.

CUL.....

..... See you later

6.

EG.....

..... Evil grin

7. G2G

.....

..... Got to go

8.

J/K.....

..... Just kidding

9. Kewl

.....

..... Cool

10. LOL

.....

Laugh out loud

11.

Muah.....

.. (Sound of a kiss

12.

NM.....Nothing

Much or Never mind

13.

P911.....

..... Parent alert

14.

PBM.....

..Parent behind me

15.

PIR.....

.....Parent in room

16.

POS.....

Parent over shoulder

17. ROTFL

.....Rolling on the
floor laughing

18. SWAK

.....Sealed

with a kiss

19. Wat up

.....

What's up?

20. WUF

..... Where

are you from?

OMG – Oh My God

H8 – Hate

F2T – Free To Talk

CUZ – Because

4 – For

SUM – Some

4U – For You

U – You
2L8 – Too Late
R – Are
B4 – Before
NE – Any
WOT – What
BRB – Be Right Back
G – Grin
BFF – Best Friend Forever
H – Hug
LOL – Laughing Out Loud
K – Kiss
LV – Love

For safety reasons it's a good idea to be aware of the
abbreviations below:

GNOG – Get Naked On Cam(webcam)
NIFOC – Naked In Front Of Computer
PRON – Porn
WTGP – Want To Go Private?
TDTM – Talk Dirty To Me
ASL – Age, Sex, Location
LMIRL – Let's Meet In Real Life



What is Social Networking?

On social networking websites, individuals create personal web pages called “profiles” to communicate with others online. MySpace.com, Facebook.com, Xanga.com, YFly.com, Tickle.com, Friendster.com, LiveJournal.com, myYearbook.com and similar websites offer online social networking services.

Anyone with access to the Internet can create a profile on MySpace.com or a similar website. Once a person creates a profile, that person (or “member”) can post personal information, photos and “blogs” on the profile for others to read. Members link their profiles through networks of “friends” and then view each other’s profiles and share photos and comments.

Online networking services are increasing in popularity at an astonishing rate. NetSmartz.org recently reported that 61% of 13-to-17-year-olds have posted a personal profile on a social networking website and that 50% of them have posted photos of themselves online.

In July 2006, MySpace.com, Facebook.com and Xanga.com were ranked as the three most visited social networking websites. MySpace.com reportedly has more than 113 million accounts and receives nearly 80% of visits to social networking websites. Facebook.com is available to students at more than 2,500 colleges and 22,000 high schools. Xanga.com is well known for “blogging” and also offers social networking services

Unfortunately, sexual predators use social networking websites to meet and groom victims online. The FBI recently reported that criminal incidents on social networking websites are rare.

However, when these incidents occur, they can be very serious. In August 2006, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and co-sponsors published Online Victimization of Youth: Five Years Later, which reports the results of a nationwide survey of 1,500 children, ages 10 to 17.

The 2006 report identifies safety risks to children using the Internet and highlights the following findings:

- 34% (1 in 3) of the children surveyed saw unwanted sexual material online, despite increased use of filtering, blocking and monitoring software.
- 9% (1 in 11) of the children surveyed encountered harassment online, including rude, hostile and aggressive behaviors.

- 13% (1 in 7) of the children surveyed received unwanted sexual solicitations online (not only from strangers but also from their peers).

- 4% of the children surveyed received aggressive sexual solicitations (where a solicitor asked to meet in person, called on the telephone, or sent money, mail or gifts).

Given the increasing popularity of social networking websites, parents of teens are well advised to learn how teens use them. This guide uses examples from MySpace.com, Facebook.com and Xanga.com to show how teens create profiles, describe the nature of information that teens post on profiles and explain how teens use profiles to chat with friends and strangers. This guide concludes by explaining how to find out if your teen has a profile and what you can do if your teen has one.

WHAT IS A PROFILE?

A “profile” is a collection of information that describes an individual’s interests. Typically, a main profile page introduces and describes a member. Teens often post a wide range of personal information on their main profile pages, such as names, nicknames, e-mail addresses, phone numbers, photos, videos, personal interests and names of schools, sports teams and friends. The main profile page is linked to additional pages on the profile – for example, pages for blogs, bulletin boards, mail, chatrooms and calendars.

Teens may think they are posting innocent information on their profiles to be shared with friends.

However, posting personal information online creates a trail of clues for sexual predators. Also, teens may fail to consider how personal information they post will appear to employers or college admissions counselors who check candidates' references online.

Importantly, social networking websites offer teens the opportunity for self-expression. Teens often decorate their profiles with special backgrounds and fonts, animations, photos, music and videos that describe them. A lot of effort goes into these visual effects.

To see what teens post on profiles, visit some social networking websites. If you have a computer, get online and look at some profiles. The following are some examples from three popular social networking websites.

MySpace.com



"TMALGSR"

Male
17 years old
MOODY, ALABAMA
United States

 Online Now

Last Login:
9/20/2006

[View My: Pics](#) | [Videos](#)

Contacting

 [Send Message](#)

 [Forward to Friend](#)

 [Add to Friends](#)

 [Add to Favorites](#)

 [Instant Message](#)

 [Block User](#)

 [Add to Group](#)

 [Rank User](#)

MySpace URL:
<http://www.myspace.com/>

's Interests

Music:

any from classical to hard rock

's Details

Status:	Singls
Body type:	Slim / Slender
Ethnicity:	White / Caucasian
Zodiac Sign:	Leo
Children:	I don't want kids

's Schools

High School Moody, A. Graduated: N/A Degree: High School Diploma	1996 to Present
--	-----------------

is in your extended network

's Latest Blog Entry [[Subscribe to this Blog](#)]

[[View All Blog Entries](#)]

's Blurbs

About me:
hey im i guess u could call me a loser or what ever i dont care. well all bit about me i play football for my high school #44. i like to do just about anything. even if it causes some pain. cause its just me thats how i make my friends i guess im not sure. well any way thats about it if u want to no more u can get me at

's Friend Space

has 44 friends.













[View All of 's Friends](#)

's Friends Comments

Displaying 50 of 52 comments ([View All](#) | [Add Comment](#))



9/24/2006 11:45 AM

omg shot me ur on!! lol



9/10/2006 4:27 PM

i m ss tkin to you...u so need to git ur grounded nxt semester..start doin ur homework..mkay mister? mkay...english is easy peasy lemon squeez!! ol



View More Photos of [Name] (28)

Read Notes by [Name]

View All [Name] Friends

Send [Name] a Message

Poke Her!

Add [Name] as a Friend

Report this Person

▼ Boise State Friends

10 friends at Boise State. [See All](#)



▼ Friends in Other Networks

Networks with the most friends

Boise State (10)
Westminster UT (1)
Interlochen Arts Academy (1)
Boise, ID (1)
Wellesley (1)
Reed (1)
Northwestern (1)

Networks you belong to

Boise State (10)

[Show All Networks](#)

▼ Photos

2 of 4 albums. [See All](#)



Boise State '10

Sex: Female
Interested In: Men
Relationship Status: Single
Birthday: November 7, 1987
Hometown: Beaverville, US Virgin Islands

▼ Mini-Feed

Displaying 9 stories. [See All](#)

Yesterday

[Name] and [Name] are now friends. 3:05pm

[Name] is tired after a 9 hour day of rehearsal. 12:41am

[Name] wrote on [Name] wall. 1:36am

▼ Information

Contact Info

Email: [Name]@boisestate.edu

Personal Info

Activities: school and theatre... its what i do
Interests: shopping, farmers market, huckleberry honey and wheat thins, painting.
Favorite Music: what ever comes to me
Favorite TV Shows: house... its a good one
Favorite Movies: clue, the last unicorn, chocolat, count of monte cristo, the old school My little Pony and so many other good ones
Favorite Books: Girl with a pearl ear ring, most of Tamora Pierce's works,
Favorite Quotes: common sense really isn't so common

▼ Education

Education Info

College: Boise State '10
Theatre Arts

▼ The Wall

Displaying 10 of 12 wall posts. [See All](#)

[Name] at 1:33am
Dear diary,
I was really mean to [Name] during the [Name] dress rehearsal, but I couldn't help it -- I AM SO IN LOVE WITH HER. Why won't she understand that?!

also, i flunked my math test! insert sad emoticon here!

[Wall-to-Wall - Message](#)

[Name] at 11:28pm
Hey [Name], sorry it took me so long to get back to you...I'm so bad at understanding how this thing works. How is college?
[Message](#)

[Name] at 10:55pm September 25th, 2006
Hello. My name is [Name] and I am writing on your wall.
[Wall-to-Wall - Message](#)

[Name] at 3:38pm September 25th, 2006
Well this finger is well calloused and ready to inflict some serious poke-age.
[Message](#)

Xanga.com

READ MY PROFILE
SIGN MY GUESTBOOK



Name: [REDACTED]
Country: United States
State: Texas
Metro: TYLER
Birthday: 2/14/1991
Gender: Female

Interests:
cello~~~swimming~~~having
fun~~~writing~~~enjoying
the life i was given!!!

Message: MESSAGE ME
AIM: [REDACTED]

Member Since: 9/19/2005

PRISONERS OF ROBERT E. LEE
PREVIOUS - RANDOM - NEXT
BROWSE OTHER BLOGRINGS...

SEPT ▼ 29 ▼ 2006 ▼
GOTO DATE
|<< OLDEST | NEWEST >>|



Currently Watching
10 THINGS I HATE ABOUT YOU
By Heath Ledger, Julia Stiles
SEE RELATED

hey everybody, goodness its been a long time since i wrote in here!!! well we had UIL last thursday and did horribly, but afterwards was fun :wink: lol!!! i basically layed around the house all day today!! so my day was very very uneventful i watched alot of movies, and shot a little in the backyard!!! o-yea and i walked the dogs and jogged!!! then had spaghetti for dinner!!! that was basically my day, boring i know!!! well ttyl, c u guys on monday!!!

<33 [REDACTED]



9:58 PM - 8 HARD GOODBYES - 5 FAVORITE HELLOS - EMAIL IT

hey everyone hows it going well today was good, we took group pics today, but basically the day was pretty boring and the boringness was extended because of orchestra practice!!! well, i found a cool icon;

<333 [REDACTED]

7:39 PM - 10 HARD GOODBYES - 5 FAVORITE HELLOS - EMAIL IT



Currently Watching
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE (FULL SCREEN EDITION)
SEE RELATED

hey everbody, today has been boring yesterday was kinda fun though, i woke up at like 9:30, and watched TV, then mom and bob went out to go places and stuff and i didnt feel like it so when they left i got in my NEW bikini, lol and layed out in my back yard and read time

HOW EASY IS IT TO CREATE A PROFILE?

It is easy to create a profile on a social networking website. A teen or younger child with intermediate Internet knowledge can set up a profile, often without adult consent.

Generally, an e-mail address is required to set up a profile. There are many e-mail services available, such as Yahoo.com, Mail.com, HotMail.com and Excite.com. To create a profile, an individual usually needs to also provide his or her name, zip code and age.

Several social networking websites impose minimum age restrictions on new members. Any individual who is (or claims to be) age 14 or older can set up a profile on MySpace.com. To join Facebook.com or Xanga.com, a person must be (or claim to be) age 13 or older. However, younger children avoid age restrictions and gain access by lying about the year they were born to make them appear older.

Information that is generally required to become a member is shown in the following example

The image shows a screenshot of the MySpace registration page. At the top is a blue header with the text "JOIN MYSPACE HERE!". Below this is a registration form with the following fields and options:

- Email Address:** A text input field.
- First Name:** A text input field.
- Last Name:** A text input field.
- Username:** A text input field.
- Confirm Password:** A text input field.
- Country:** A dropdown menu with "United States" selected.
- Postal Code:** A text input field.
- Gender:** Radio buttons for "Female" and "Male".
- Date of Birth:** A date selection interface with "Month", "Day", and "Year" dropdowns.
- Find a friend to add to your network:** A checkbox labeled "I want to add friends to my network".
- Language:** A dropdown menu with "English" selected.
- By checking the box you agree to the M.S. Terms of Service:** A checkbox.
- Verification:** A CAPTCHA image showing the word "RECURSED" in colorful letters.
- Sign Up:** An orange button at the bottom of the form.

Facebook.com limits full profile access to members of supported “networks.” However, anyone can join Facebook.com and create a profile. After a profile is created, the member can join different networks. These networks are a collection of profiles divided into groups of colleges, high schools, companies and regions.

If an individual provides an e-mail address for a college, high school or workplace that is a supported network, he or she will be added to that specific network. If an individual provides a general e-mail address, such as Yahoo.com, Mail.com or HotMail.com, he or she will be given access to a regional network. Regional networks are designated by location and have no relation to educational or business supported networks. An individual can belong to several networks.

WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION IS POSTED ON PROFILES?

Personal information

Teens post a wide range of personal information on their profiles. Websites invite new members to provide personal data (such as marital status, body type, ethnicity, Zodiac sign and occupation), as well as information about personal



interests (such as hobbies, music and movies).

Teens also complete online surveys to display detailed personal information such as physical features (hair, weight, eye color, piercings and tattoos), dating status, sexual preferences, drinking and smoking preferences and career and education goals.

The following image shows an example of interests posted on a profile.

Jenny's Interests	
General	Music, dance, chilling, playing the guitar.
Music	As long as you have an ipod you are welcomed! Lol I'm kidding..
Movies	She's the Man, Drummer, Lake house.
Television	I don't really like watching a lot of TV but I love That 70's Show!
Books	The Shell House, Shakespeare's four comedies, Broken House.
Status:	Single
Here for:	Friends
Orientation:	Straight
Body type:	Slim / Slender
Ethnicity:	White / Caucasian
Religion:	Christian - other.
Zodiac Sign:	Aquarius
Smoke / Drink:	No / Yes.
Children:	Someday
Education:	High school
Occupation:	Student



Photos and videos

Social networking websites allow members to upload photos onto their profiles for others to view. Some websites allow members and visitors to their profiles to post comments about photos.

For example, from a main profile page on MySpace.com, click on “View My Pics” to see the photos posted on a profile. A page similar to the following image will be displayed. To view comments, click on each photo.



Comments

Social networking websites usually provide a “Comments” area on profiles, where friends post text on another member’s profile. Anyone who visits a profile can view comments posted on it.

Teens often post comments written in an Internet “lingo” made up of abbreviations and acronyms. A list of the Top 20 Internet Acronyms is provided at the front of this guide

On Facebook.com, comments are located on “The Wall.” Scroll down a profile page until you find “The Wall” at the bottom of the profile.



Blogs

“Blog” is short for “weblog,” which is an online journal or diary. Members of social networking websites post blogs about a variety of topics, such as their personal interests, opinions or concerns (such as politics or the environment).

On Xanga.com, members blog, share photos (“photoblogs”) and join “bloggings” with other members who share common interests.

Members also post blogs about daily life. Teens may blog about the places they visit – for example, their schools, the swimming pools or shopping malls they visit, or the social events they plan to attend. When teens blog about their frustrations, their emotions can overtake common sense and they may inadvertently give away personal details.

For example, in a blog entry, a teen might write:

*My parents will never believe me again.
I lied to them ONCE and now everything I do
they don't trust me.
I was with my friends and we were just hanging at school.
I should
have been doing my homework and
I had practice, but I just didn't want to go. My
Mom caught me. She pulled up and all
could see was our big black hummer and I
knew I was in so much trouble.
She was so mad when we got home, her face was as red
as our front door. I feel so stupid.
Now they will never trust me again. I'll probably
never leave Ash Street again. I'm sooooo grounded!*

This blog provides information that could be very useful to an Internet predator:

- (1)the teen lives on Ash Street;
- (2)the house has a red front door; and
- (3)the teen's mother drives a black Hummer.

A predator could easily locate this teen if her city is disclosed elsewhere on her profile or on a friend's linked profile.

Linking of “friends”

Members of social networking websites link their profiles with the profiles of “friends.” A member can create a “friends” list and invite other members to join the “friends” list, or accept invitations from other members to be added to their “friends” lists.

The following image is an example of a “friends” list.



This feature appeals to teens who want to spend time online with friends. Unfortunately, teens also use “friends” lists to fuel popularity contests. The larger the list of friends, the more popular a teen appears to be. Some

websites allow members to rank friends on a “top friends” list and to rank photos.

A large “friends” list can be dangerous when a teen adds “friends” (strangers) he or she meets online. Internet predators can look through profiles that are linked by “friends” and use this information to become part of a teen’s friends network. With the personal information shared on linked profiles, a stranger can approach a teen with a clever e-mail, instant message or comment with familiar information. The teen may trust the stranger thinking that he or she is a “friend of a friend.”

“Public” and “Private” Settings

Social networking websites are usually “public.”

Anyone who visits a “public” profile can view information posted on it.

Photographs, videos, blogs, comments, friends’ photographs and comments on the profile can be viewed by anyone—friend or stranger.

On some websites, members can designate their profiles as either “public” or “private.” On MySpace.com, a member can limit access to his or her profile by changing the set-up from “public” to “private.” MySpace.com automatically sets the profiles of members who are age 14 or 15 to “private.”

Other social networking websites are “closed” networks. Access to a member’s profile on Facebook.com is limited to members in the same supported network (the member’s university, high school, workplace or region) and to others who are the member’s friends.

However, a “private” profile or “closed” network is no guarantee of safety. For example, on MySpace.com, teens can choose to limit their “private” profiles to friends only or to all

MySpace.com members under age 18.

Teens with “private” profiles can also add strangers to their “friends” lists, giving those strangers access to personal information. The danger is that these unknown “friends” could be sexual predators. This example shows two separate “friends” that were added to a profile, but they do not know the person that added them.

E-mail, instant messages and chatrooms

Social networking websites often allow members to send e-mails and instant messages to each other, or allow members to join groups and chatrooms.

Instant messages and chatrooms are particularly unsafe for teens because chat and banter with strangers can quickly turn sexual in nature.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT IF MY CHILD HAS A PROFILE?

Start by asking your child. Your child may have profiles on more than one website. Social networking websites have searching capabilities to help people find their friends within the network. Use this feature to find out if your child has a profile. Searching for your child's email address on a social networking website is the fastest and most accurate way to find your child's profile. If you do not know your child's e-mail address, search for your child's name.

On MySpace.com, common names often return hundreds, if not thousands, of search hits. To narrow a search, limit the area by zip code. Other websites allow you to limit a search to a geographic area, such as a "metro" area on Xanga.com.


If you suspect that your child has a profile on a social networking website but cannot locate it, try searching the website for your child's friends. If you find a public profile for one of your child's friends, navigate through his or her friends list to see if your child is a member of the network.

On MySpace.com, you can also use the "Find a Friend" tool or the "Classmate Finder" tool, or do a general search for your child using the "Search" tool bar. Try different search options, such as your child's cell phone number, sports teams or nickname.

Search MySpace Profiles

Search for

Find Someone You Know

 **Find a Friend**
Select search by: ☒ Name ☐ Display Name ☐ Email

Example: Tom Jones or Tom or tjones@hotmail.com

Find Your Classmates

 **Classmate Finder**
School Name:
Country:
State/Province:

To search for your child on Facebook.com, you must be a member of Facebook.com. After creating an account, you can use the “Search” function to search all of the Facebook.com networks. If you locate your child’s profile, you will not be allowed to view it unless you belong to one of your child’s supported networks or your child adds you to his or her “friends” list.

On your home computer, you can search Internet history from your Internet browser to check what sites have been visited. There are many different browsers available. Three popular browsers are Internet Explorer, Safari, and Firefox. As you browse, look for website addresses of social networking sites, such as MySpace.com, myYearbook.com, Tickle.com, Fly.com, Facebook.com or Xanga.com.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD HAS A WEBSITE PROFILE?

The single most important thing you can do is talk to your child. Sit down with your child and review any profiles they have created or visited. Encourage them to share their experiences online. Here are some questions you can ask:

- What do you use the Internet for?
 - Do you have an e-mail address? How many? What are they?
 - Do you have a profile? How many?
 - How private do you think the information you post on the Internet is? Who might see it?
 - Have you ever been contacted by a stranger on the Internet? How did you respond?
- Has anyone ever used the Internet to say something hurtful to you? What happened?
- What do you do to respect other people's rights online?
 - Have you seen sexual images or remarks on homepages or profiles? What did you do in response?

If you find that your child is using a social networking website and want to view your child's entire profile, delete it or modify it, you will need the e-mail address and password that your child uses to sign onto the website.

HOW DO I DELETE MY CHILD'S PROFILE?

If you decide to delete your teen's profile, try to gain his or her cooperation first. Talk to your child about your

concerns for his or her safety and other options for socializing with friends.

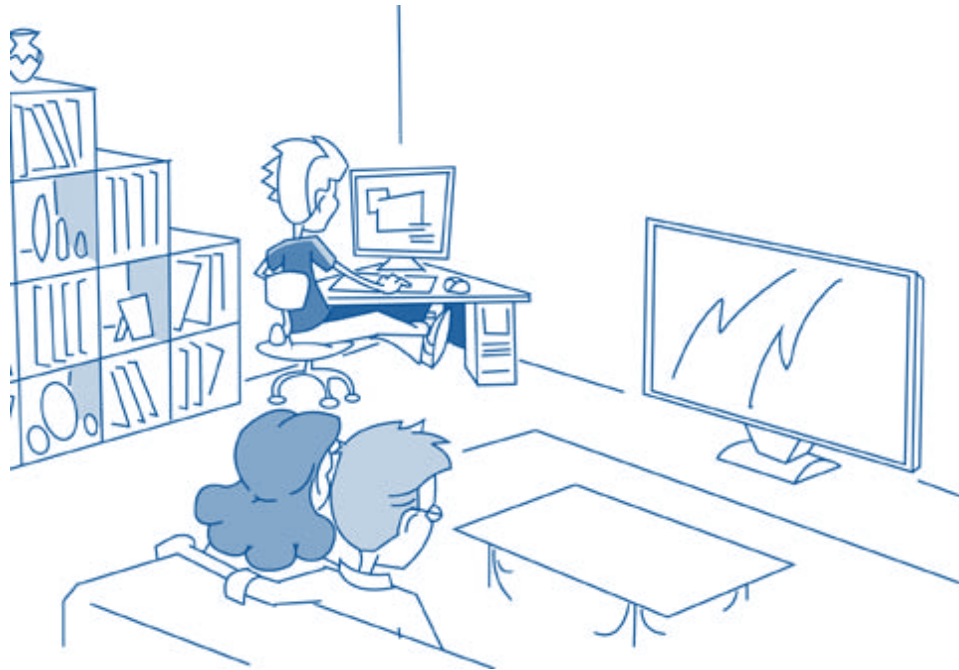
Otherwise, your teen may go “underground” and set up another profile that is harder to trace or is on another social networking website.

Deleting a profile typically requires several steps. Social networking websites provide instructions on how to delete accounts. It is important to carefully follow each step required, or the profile will not be deleted.

After you follow the deletion steps, always check to make sure the profile is actually deleted. It can take days or even weeks for a deletion to take effect.

WHAT IF I DECIDE TO ALLOW MY CHILD TO HAVE A PROFILE?

At a minimum, educate your child about safety issues. You may also want to consider monitoring your child’s online activities on an ongoing basis.



Social networking websites have links to safety tips covering subjects such as inappropriate content, misrepresentations of age and harassment. Following are some general safety tips that can be shared with teens who network online:

- Do not post information that enables a stranger to locate you. This includes personally identifying information such as: first name; last name; the name of your school or sports teams; the town you live in; or where you hang out.
- Never agree to meet in person someone whom you met online.
- Be careful about the photos you upload to your profile; do not post sexually suggestive images. Also, think about how the photos you post could affect your reputation if viewed by a college admissions counselor or employer.

- Do not reply to harassing messages. Tell a parent about any harassing or bullying situation.
 - If the harassment involves classmates, report it to the school. If the behavior calls for it (such as threats or physical intimidation), inform local police.
 - Do not reveal your password to others (except your parents). Doing so puts you at risk of being impersonated.
- Parents of teens who maintain profiles on social networking websites may want to monitor their children's online activities.

Monitoring can include the following:

- Keep a current record of your child's login information, including all e-mail addresses, login names, display names and passwords.
- Regularly check your child's network of friends on each website. If there are people on the list that you do not know, ask your child who they are and how they met them. Remove "online only" friends on your child's profile. Remember, people aren't always who they say they are.
- Frequently check the content of your child's profile. Is your child posting inappropriate personal information, photos, videos, blogs or comments? Is your child engaging in harassing or other inappropriate conduct? If so, remove the content.

Check the account settings on your child's profile. For example, you can modify the "Account Settings" on a MySpace.com profile to make the profile "private," or to check on users whom your child has blocked.

- Agree with your child upon a set of rules for using the Internet. A sample Family Contract for Internet Safety is provided at the end of this guide.

If your child is exposed to inappropriate sexual material on a social networking website, there are several things you can do. Report sexually explicit material, child enticement or unsolicited obscene material to local law enforcement and the CyberTipline at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

To learn more, visit www.missingkids.com.

You can also report inappropriate activity on a profile to the website. For example, on MySpace.com, click the “Report Inappropriate Content” link at the bottom of the profile.

Deleting a profile on MySpace.com

To delete your child’s MySpace.com profile, you need his or her user name and password. You also need the login information for the e-mail account used to create the MySpace.com profile.

First, log in to your child’s MySpace.com account. From the main profile, click on “Account Settings.”



MySpace.com

From the “Change Account Settings” page, click on the “Cancel Account” link.

Change Account Settings

NOTE: Changing your default email or name can make it hard for your friends to find or recognize you on MySpace

[-View My Profile-](#) [-Edit My Profile-](#) [-Cancel Account-](#)

My Account Settings	
Email Address:	<input type="text"/>
Change Password:	-Change Password-

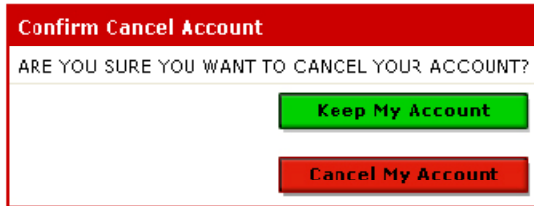
MySpace.com

The next page should look similar to this:

Cancel MySpace Account

WARNING: Cancelling your MySpace account will **PERMANENTLY REMOVE** all of your profile information from MySpace, including your photographs, comments, journals, and your personal network of friends. This information cannot be restored.

You may re-register your current email address after cancelling, but you will need to rebuild your personal network from scratch.

A screenshot of a web dialog box titled "Confirm Cancel Account" in a red header. Below the header, the text "ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO CANCEL YOUR ACCOUNT?" is displayed. There are two buttons: a green button labeled "Keep My Account" and a red button labeled "Cancel My Account".

Confirm Cancel Account
ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO CANCEL YOUR ACCOUNT?
<input type="button" value="Keep My Account"/>
<input type="button" value="Cancel My Account"/>

MySpace.com

Clicking the “Cancel My Account” button from here will not, by itself, remove your child’s account. Instead, you must take additional steps. After you click on the “Cancel My Account” button on this page, a message similar to the following will display.

Cancel MySpace Account

We're sorry you're leaving MySpace!

Please briefly explain in the form below why you're cancelling. You can really help us improve MySpace!

- If you've been bothered by the amount of email you're getting from other users on Myspace, you can stop notification emails **without cancelling**

[Click here](#) to change notification settings.

Click "Cancel My Account" to submit your cancellation request.

NOTE: You will receive an email from MySpace instructing you on how to confirm your cancellation request. You must follow the instructions in that email to complete cancellation of your account. Thank you.

Cancellation Comments:

Keep My Account

Cancel My Account

MySpace.com

As stated on this page, the account will not be cancelled until: (1) MySpace.com sends a cancellation request e-mail to confirm the request; and (2) you receive the e-mail; and (3) you follow the instructions in the e-mail. For this reason, you must have the e-mail account information that your child used to create the MySpace.com account.

Another e-mail address will not work. If you try changing the e-mail address on the "Account Settings" page to your e-mail address, MySpace.com will send a verification request to your child's original e-mail address to verify the e-mail change. Thus, if you merely change the e-mail address and then try to cancel the MySpace.com profile

using the new e-mail address, MySpace.com will not delete the profile.

After the second “Cancel My Account” button is clicked, a message similar to the following will display.

Account Cancellation Request Sent

Your request to cancel your MySpace Account has been sent. You will receive an email shortly with instructions for confirming that you wish to cancel.

You must follow the instructions in that email to complete cancellation of your account. Thank you.

MySpace.com

The e-mail account used to initiate your child's MySpace.com account will receive a cancellation message similar to the following.

From: "MySpace Admin" <[redacted]@message.myspace.com>  Add to Address Book
To: [redacted]@yahoo.com
Subject: Account cancellation request
Date: Mon, 10 Jul 2006 20:12:39 GMT

Hi [redacted],

We have received your request to cancel your MySpace account.

In order to complete the cancellation process, please click on the link below:

<http://www1.myspace.com/misc/cancel.cfm>

If you have problems cancelling your account, please click the link below:

<http://viewmorepics.myspace.com/misc/contact.cfm>

We will cancel your account within 48 hours, after which you will no longer be able to log in.

Please note that cancelled accounts may not be reactivated and all of your account information, including your friend network, will be removed from Myspace.

IF YOU NO LONGER WISH TO CANCEL YOUR ACCOUNT

simply ignore this message. We will not cancel your account unless you follow the above instructions.

Yahoo e-mail

Follow the instructions delivered in this e-mail to delete the account. **If the instructions are not followed, the account will remain active.** If you do not receive the confirmation e-mail, try again. You can also edit your child's MySpace.com profile to request removal. In the "About Me" section, type "remove me," then send an

e-mail to customer service at MySpace.com and request that the profile be deleted. If your child is under the minimum age of 14, report the profile to MySpace.com (with the URL for the profile) as an underage profile and request its removal.

Deactivating a profile on Facebook.com

Facebook.com allows members to “deactivate” their accounts. However, the information within a profile remains on Facebook.com, giving the member an option to “reactivate” the account at a later time. Thus, you may want to strip all of the information from your child’s Facebook.com profile, change the contact e-mail address and change the password on the account before you proceed with the deactivation procedure.

To deactivate and strip your child’s Facebook.com profile, you will need his or her username and password. First, log into your child’s Facebook.com account. To change the password on the account, click on the “My Account” link from the navigation bar on the left.



Facebook.com

By default, the “Settings” page will display. The first and second choices on this page are the “Change Contact E-mail” and “Change Password” options.

The screenshot shows the Facebook settings interface. At the top, there are three tabs: 'Settings' (selected), 'Networks', and 'Mobile'. Below the tabs, the 'Change Contact Email' section is visible. It includes a heading, a descriptive paragraph about the contact email's purpose, and a form with a radio button to 'Keep my current email address' (which is selected) and another radio button to 'Enter a new email address'. Below this is a blue 'Change Contact Email' button. The 'Change Password' section follows, featuring a list of password requirements: 'Make sure your CAPS-lock key isn't on', 'It must be at least 6 characters long, but more is better', 'Using both letters and numbers is even better', and ''QUAils' isn't the same password as 'quails''. Below the list are three input fields labeled 'Old Password:', 'New Password:', and 'Confirm:'. A blue 'Change Password' button is at the bottom of this section.

Settings Networks Mobile

Change Contact Email

Your contact email is the address where we'll send you notifications about friend requests, group and event invitations, photos you're tagged in, and more. Your contact email must always be a valid address.

Contact Email: ☒ Keep my current email address ☐ Enter a new email address

Change Contact Email

Change Password

- Make sure your CAPS-lock key isn't on
- It must be at least 6 characters long, but more is better
- Using both letters and numbers is even better
- 'QUAils' isn't the same password as 'quails'

Old Password:

New Password:

Confirm:

Change Password

Facebook.com

To prevent your child from reactivating this account in the future, specify a new e-mail address and create a new password that your child does not know.

Next, strip the profile of all personal information, photos, friends, wall posts, notes and mini-feeds. (Mini-feeds can be stories, blogs or notes written by the account holder. The minified area also contains all profile history activity.)

You will need to go into each section and delete these items one at a time.

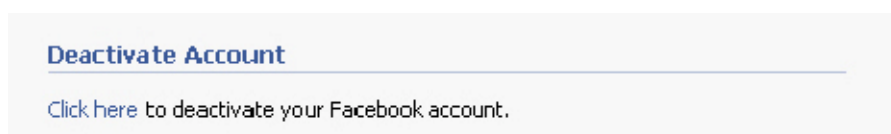
To start the process of stripping, click on the “My Profile” link from the navigation bar on the left. You can see the individual areas marked below where personal information can be stored.

Browse through each section and delete all entries.

The screenshot shows a Facebook profile page for a user in Boise, ID. The left sidebar contains a navigation menu with links: My Profile (with an 'edit' link), My Friends, My Photos, My Notes, My Groups, My Events, My Messages, My Account, and My Privacy. The main content area is divided into several sections: a profile picture, a status update, a list of friends, friends in other networks, a photo album titled 'Our hawaii trip!', and a notes section. The right sidebar contains a 'Mini-Feed' of recent activities, a 'Today' section with a welcome message, and two identical 'Information' sections, each with a 'Contact Info' and 'The Wall' subsection. The 'The Wall' sections both show 'No wall posts' and 'Nobody has said anything... yet.' The page is titled 'facebook' at the top, with navigation links for home, search, browse, invite, help, and logout.

Facebook.com

After you have modified the e-mail contact information, changed the password and stripped all information from the profile, you are now ready to deactivate the account. Click on the “My Account” link from the navigation bar on the left. On the “Settings” page, scroll to the bottom and click on the “Deactivate Account” link.



Facebook.com

The following confirmation screen will appear.

A screenshot of the Facebook account deactivation confirmation screen. The title "Confirm Facebook Account Deactivation" is in orange. The text asks if the user is sure and mentions that the account can be reactivated. There is a checked checkbox for "Opt out of receiving emails from Facebook" with a note explaining that friends can still invite to events. A required text field is present with a placeholder "This box must have text." and a yellow warning icon. At the bottom are "Deactivate" and "Cancel" buttons.

Confirm Facebook Account Deactivation

Are you sure you want to deactivate your account? We'll miss you.

You can reactivate your account by logging in with your email and password, and then reconfirming your account.

☒ Opt out of receiving emails from Facebook.
Note: Even after you deactivate, your friends can still invite you to events, tag you in photos, or ask you to join groups. If you opt-out, you will NOT receive these email invitations and notifications from your friends.

Please let us know why you are deactivating. (required)

This box must have text.

Deactivate Cancel

Facebook.com

Within the deactivation content, notice that it states, “You can reactivate your account by logging in with your email and password, and then reconfirming your account.” This

is why it is a good idea to delete all information within the profile before continuing.

There is a check box to “opt out” of receiving e-mails. This box should be checked. If it is not, the new e-mail contact you specified can still receive e-mails sent to this member’s account, such as invitations to events and to other groups.

The last area on the deactivation confirmation page asks why the account is being deactivated.

You must type at least one character in this field to continue.

After clicking the “Deactivate” button, the following screen will appear to verify the account is deactivated.



Facebook.com

Family Contract for Internet Safety

I WILL...

- Tell my parents about people I meet online. I know adults will pretend to be kids sometimes to get kids to talk to them.
- Tell my parents right away if someone sends me any pictures or e-mails that make me uncomfortable.
- Tell my parents if someone online asks me to do something I am not supposed to do
- Talk to my parents about rules for using the Internet, and I will follow them. We will decide about the time of day I can be online, how long I can be online, and the places on the Web that are okay for me to visit.
- Be a good online citizen and not do anything that hurts other people or is against the law.

I WILL NOT...

- Give out my address, phone number, school name or address, parents' names, or any other personal information to anyone I meet on the Internet.
- Call anyone I met online without asking my parents first.
- E-mail pictures of myself to anyone I do not know.
- Buy or order anything online without asking my parents for permission first.
- Fill out any form online that asks me for information about my family or myself without asking my parents for permission.
- Answer any e-mails or messages from someone I do not know.

- Agree to get together with someone I meet online.

Student Signs Here

I will help my child follow these rules and will allow my child to use the Internet as long as these rules are followed.

Parent(s) Sign Here