



# What's Cyberbullying?

## Lesson Plan

Estimated time: 45 minutes

**Essential Question: What is cyberbullying, and how do you deal with it?**

### Learning Overview and Objectives

*Overview:* Students will explore how it feels to be cyberbullied, how cyberbullying is similar to or different than in-person bullying, and learn basic strategies for handling cyberbullying when it arises.

Students discuss positive and negative aspects of interacting with others online. They learn the definition of cyberbullying and help the teacher fill in a chart that compares in-person bullying with cyberbullying. They then read a story of a student who is cyberbullied, identifying the players involved and how the target might feel.

#### objectives

*Students will:*

- Empathize with the targets of cyberbullying
- Recognize some of the key similarities and differences between in-person bullying and cyberbullying
- Identify strategies for dealing responsibly with cyberbullying

### Materials and Preparation

*Materials*

- **That's Cyberbullying Student Handout**

*Preparation*

- Make copies of the **That's Cyberbullying Student Handout**, one per group of four or five

*Parent Resources*

- Send home the **Cyberbullying Parent Tip Sheet**
- Send home the **Connected Culture Parent Tip Sheet**
- Send home the **Connected Culture Parent/Teacher Intro Video**

### Key Vocabulary

- **Cyberbullying:** The use of digital media tools such as the Internet and cell phones to deliberately upset or harass someone else
- **Target:** The person being cyberbullied
- **Empathize:** To imagine the feelings that someone else is experiencing



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### teaching plans

#### Introduce

**ASK** *What are some positive aspects of going online?*

Sample responses:

- *Finding information quickly*
- *Meeting people with similar interests*
- *Communicating with people around the world*
- *Having fun*

**EXPLAIN** that to really enjoy the power of the Internet, it is important for students to learn how to responsibly handle any situation they might encounter online so they can keep their experiences positive.

**ASK** *What are some of the ways that people hurt other people's feelings online?*

Sample responses:

- *Joking comments that people write about me online that may seem like putdowns to others*
- *When my friend badgers a girl in our class*
- *When my friend logs in to my other friend's account and makes me think it's him*

#### Teach 1: Explore Bullying v. Cyberbullying

**ASK** *How do you think it feels to be bullied, and why?* (Guide students to reflect on their personal experiences and to put themselves in the shoes of others who have been bullied. Common feelings: humiliated, sad, angry, helpless)

**REVIEW** Key Vocabulary with students. Ask students if they have heard these words before, and what they think the words mean. Then share the definitions with students and ask them to generate examples.

**DRAW** a two-column chart on the board. Label one side "Bullying" and the other side "Cyberbullying."

**EXPLAIN** that there are similarities and differences between in-person bullying and cyberbullying. Let students know that both can be very hurtful to the target, but that they should be aware of the differences between the two as they learn how to deal with cyberbullying.

**ASK** *What are some of the similarities and differences between bullying and cyberbullying?*

(Fill in the chart with students' responses.)

Sample responses:

Similarities:

- *Both can make kids feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, helpless, sad, and angry.*

Differences:

- *Kids often use more hurtful and extreme language online than offline.*





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- *Cyberbullying can happen 24/7, whereas regular bullying generally stops when kids go home.*
- *Cyberbullying is often very public. Posts can spread rapidly and to a large, invisible audience because of the nature of how information travels online.*
- *Cyberbullies sometimes attack anonymously, whereas with traditional bullying it is often clear who the bully is.*
- *In-person bullying can cause physical and emotional harm, while cyberbullying causes only emotional harm (though it can lead to physical bullying later).*
- *The age and size of a person are often less important with cyberbullying because people are not face to face. For example, even teachers can be targets.*

## Teach 2: Identify Cyberbullying Roles

**DISTRIBUTE** the **That's Cyberbullying Student Handout**. Have students read the scenarios. Have them read, "Feeling Uncomfortable," "Recognizing Cyberbullying," and "Use Common Sense!", which will aid them in filling out the Handout.

**DISCUSS** the students' responses when they are done.

### ASK

- *Who are the cyberbullies?* (The two girls who are not invited to the sleepover.)
- *Who is the target?* (Sondra)
- *Is this a cyberbullying situation? Why or why not?* (Yes. The angry girls have created a cyberbullying situation because their behavior is intentional and harassing.)
- *How do you think Sondra might feel, other than embarrassed?* (Explain that when the students put themselves in Sondra's shoes, they empathize with her. To be a good friend, it is important to empathize with the targets of cyberbullying. The website that the girls created is mean, but Sondra may still feel regretful. Maybe she wishes she had invited the other girls, or that her parents' rules had been different.)
- *Why do you think the two girls created the mean website about Sondra?* (They felt left out. They did not like Sondra anyway, and they now had an excuse to be mean to her.)
- *Imagine someone saying that they hate you and making fun of you everywhere you go at school. Now imagine someone doing that on the Internet. How are these two situations similar? How are they different?* (Guide students to think about how in-person bullying and cyberbullying both make targets feel bad, but that many more people that you don't know will witness the bullying online because it is so public and attacks spread so fast. Also, you can physically get away from the in-person bullying by removing yourself, but it's hard to get away online.)
- *What advice would you give Sondra about how to handle the situation?* (Guide students to think about the "Use Common Sense!" tips at the bottom of the Student Handout. Sondra could save and print out evidence on the website, talk to a friend, and tell a trusted adult – someone who she believes will listen and has the skills, desire, and authority to help.)

**ASK** *What do you think the people who are bullying Sondra would say about their behavior?*





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Sample responses:

- *They might say they were only kidding, they didn't mean any harm, or it was just a joke.*
- *Students creating a website might also say that it is a matter of free speech. (Point out that whether or not the First Amendment permits it, bullying with a website is unkind and hurtful. Moreover, it may be against school rules and grounds for disciplinary action.)*

**EXPLAIN** to students that good experiences online are much more common than bad ones. However, just as in the real world, situations online can arise in which they might encounter something uncomfortable. Point out that in this lesson they can learn how to deal with some of those upsetting experiences.

**INVITE** students to share their own stories of bullying or cyberbullying situations, without using actual names. Encourage them to discuss how the target felt. Use the prompts below if students are having trouble remembering incidents.

Possible prompts:

- *Have you ever seen kids' webpages or messages that caused another student distress?*
- *What happened? Why? Remember, don't use real names.*

## Wrap Up and Assess

The following items assess student mastery of the lesson objectives.

**ASK** *What are some words or phrases to describe how it feels to be cyberbullied?*  
(Embarrassed, upset, depressed, hurt, powerless, frozen with fear)

**ASK** *How is cyberbullying the same and/or different than in-person bullying?* (Guide students to recognize that cyberbullying is a form of bullying, but that cyberbullying often spreads faster, further, to more people, and can occur 24/7. It is important for students to know about these distinctions so they can better deal with cyberbullying situations and the vulnerability they likely will feel if they are attacked online.)

Sample responses:

Similarities:

- *Both can make kids feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, helpless, sad, and angry.*

Differences:

- *Kids often use more hurtful and extreme language online than offline.*
- *Cyberbullying can happen 24/7, whereas regular bullying generally stops when kids go home.*
- *Cyberbullying is often very public. Posts can spread rapidly and to a large, invisible audience because of the nature of how information travels online.*
- *Cyberbullies sometimes attack anonymously, whereas with traditional bullying it is often clear who the bully is.*
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- *The age and size of a person are often less important with cyberbullying because people are not face to face. For example, even teachers can be targets.*

**ASK** What are some ways to handle a cyberbullying situation?

(Guide students to refer back to the “Use Common Sense!” portion of the Student Handout.)

Sample responses:

- *Sign off the computer. It's best to ignore the attacks and walk away from the cyberbully.*
- *Don't respond or retaliate. If you are angry and reply, then you might say nasty things. Cyberbullies often just want to get a reaction out of you, so don't let them know that their plan has worked.*
- *Block the bully. If you get mean messages through IM or a social networking site, you should take the person off your buddy or friends list. You can also just delete messages from bullies without reading them.*
- *Save and print bullying messages. These could be important evidence to show your parents or teachers if the bullying does not stop.*
- *Talk to a friend. When someone makes you feel bad, sometimes it can help to talk the situation over with a friend.*
- *Tell a trusted adult. (A trusted adult is someone who you believe will listen and has the skills, desire, and authority to help you.) Telling an adult isn't tattling. It's standing up for yourself. And even if the bullying occurs at home, your school probably has rules against it.*



### Extension Activity

Students write emails to Sondra. Let students know that Sondra has written to Dr. Chip Micro, a famous TV personality who helps people having difficulties with others online. Have students pretend they are Dr. Chip Micro and have them provide advice to Sondra over email. Let them know that they should: (1) empathize with Sondra, (2) understand the difficulty of her situation, and (3) offer to help or do something about the situation.

### Alignment with Standards — National Educational Technology Standards for Students® 2007

(Source: International Society for Technology in Education, 2007):

#### 2. Communication and Collaboration

- a. interact, collaborate, and publish with peers, experts, or others employing a variety of digital environments and media
- b. communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats

#### 5. Digital Citizenship

- a. advocate and practice safe, legal, and responsible use of information and technology
- d. exhibit leadership for digital citizenship

Common Sense Media is an independent, nonprofit resource that helps families and educators teach kids how to be safe and smart in today's 24/7 media world. Go to [www.commonsensemedia.org](http://www.commonsensemedia.org) for thousands of reviews and expert advice.

