CyberSmart!

# Dealing with Online Bullies

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## Overview

Students reflect on the rewards of cyberspace and then consider bullying scenarios in which they examine their personal comfort levels. They learn to recognize such feelings and responsibly handle the unacceptable behavior of others.

## Objectives

- Discuss the rewards of going into cyberspace
- Describe and compare comfortable and uncomfortable feelings
- Identify strategies for responsibly dealing with online bullies

## ISTE® National Technology Standards

- Performance Indicator # 3

## Site Preview

- No Internet site is used in this lesson.

## Online Resources

- Visit sites providing background information on Feeling Comfortable.

## Materials

- Activity sheets (2)

## Introduce

- Discuss with students some positive aspects of going into cyberspace. (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 in cyberspace.

## Teach 1

- Distribute Activity Sheet 1.

- Have students complete the sheet and share their responses. NOTE: Postpone discussion until students have read and applied the information on Activity Sheet 2.
- Explain that, just as in the real world, good experiences in cyberspace are much more common than bad ones. However, just as in the real world, there is bullying in cyberspace.

## Teach 2

- Distribute Activity Sheet 2 and, after students read "Feeling Uncomfortable," have them find all the words in this paragraph and on Activity Sheet 1 that are used to describe such emotions.
- Discuss with students some characteristics of bullying. (generally defined as a repeated activity in which one member of a group is targeted for verbal abuse, spreading of hurtful rumors, and threats of exclusion from the group; face-to-face bullying may involve physical aggression, while online bullying cannot)
- **Ask:** *What do you think the people who are bullying Sondra and Andrew would say about their behavior?* (They might say they were only kidding, they didn't mean any harm, or it was just a joke. Students publishing a Web site 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 hate Web site is unkind and hurtful. Moreover, it may be against school rules and grounds for disciplinary action.)
- Optional: Tell students that using a school computer to bully would certainly be against school rules. Furthermore, with sufficient duration and intensity, bullying can be considered harassment-an illegal activity that can be investigated by the police.

## Teach 3

- Have students revisit Activity Sheet 1 and discuss how their answers might be changed or enhanced. Guide students to consider the following in their discussion:

  **The Web site about Sondra:** The angry girls have created a safety issue by publishing Sondra's full name-private identity information. This information is now available to strangers. Such bullying is wrong and unsafe and should be reported to Sondra's parents and to her school. She should save a copy of the Web page to provide to whomever she reports the incident to. How Sondra responds to this bullying behavior will affect the outcome. Point out that it was smart to talk to a friend about the problem.

  **Advice for Andrew:** Andrew should save and print copies of all the E-mails and show them to his parents or another trusted adult. Again, how he responds to this incident will affect its outcome and that keeping his anxiety to himself is not as effective as asking a friend or an adult for help.

## Close

- **Ask:** *What are some rewards of going into cyberspace?*
- **Ask:** *How do you know when you are uncomfortable in cyberspace?* Students should use the words that mean "uncomfortable" to them.
- **Ask:** *What are some safety rules for dealing with online bullying?*

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## Extend

The following activity can be added for students who completed this lesson in a previous grade.

- Remind students that they were once less adept at handling themselves online. Invite them to share some past personal experiences in which they felt uncomfortable in cyberspace. Allow them to explain how they would handle the problem, now that they are older and more knowledgeable about safety issues.


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Site last updated: routine monthly basis