

# THE WITS PROGRAMS

The WITS Programs bring together schools, families and communities to create responsive environments that help elementary school children deal with bullying and peer victimization. The WITS acronym stands for Walk away, Ignore, Talk it out and Seek help. The WITS Programs website gives access to a wealth of resources and strategies that children can use when faced with conflicts. See [www.witsprograms.ca](http://www.witsprograms.ca)

## WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

Cyberbullying is a type of bullying that takes place electronically using the Internet or cell phones and includes the following behaviours:

- Sending nasty or insulting messages over the Internet or on cell phones
- Sending or posting gossip, secrets or rumours about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships
- Pretending to be someone else and sending negative messages or posting material to get others in trouble or to hurt their reputation or friendships
- Purposely excluding someone from an Internet group, chat room or friend list
- “Just Kidding” making jokes that are at someone’s expense.
- Posting real or digitally altered photographs of someone online without their permission.

## WHAT IS NETIQUETTE?

Online manners like table manners, are learned behaviors. Teach your children about standing in the shoes of the child receiving the message.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Cyberbullying and cyberthreats.** By Nancy E. Willard. Published by Research Press (2007).

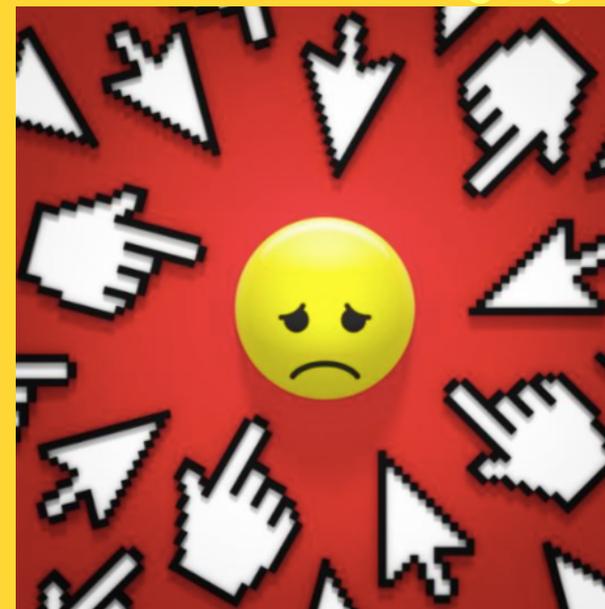
## Great Websites

- See 2019 report on Cyberbullying: Identification, Prevention, and Response Guide ([Cyberbullying-Identification-Prevention-Response-2019.pdf](https://www.preynet.ca/bullying/cyberbullying-identification-prevention-response-2019.pdf)).
- See more tips for parents for handling internet conflicts at Promoting Relationships Eliminating Violence. Cyberbullying [www.preynet.ca/bullying/cyberbullying](http://www.preynet.ca/bullying/cyberbullying) and at Media Smarts <http://mediasmarts.ca/parents>
- See online games for grades 4 to 8 to learn about safer use of the internet at Media Smart: <http://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/educational-games>

*Young children may not know they are cyberbullying.*

*They may think they are being funny or are “just kidding”!*

- Help your child to know the difference! Is the target laughing too?
- How does the child receiving the message feel?



# PREVENT CYBERBULLYING

A RESOURCE FOR PARENTS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN



Walk Away  
Ignore  
Talk it Out  
Seek Help

**WITS PROGRAMS**  
FOUNDATION

# WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO GET INVOLVED?

## BE AVAILABLE. SET CLEAR RULES.

- Keep computers in a shared space in your home – not in a child’s bedroom.
- Know everything that your child does online. Scanning the net can expose children to unwanted images and material.
- Know your child’s passwords.
- Teach your children to never post online or send anything they wouldn’t want the entire world to see or read. Children should not post pictures alone.
- Discuss the importance of treating others with kindness and respect when sending electronic messages, not just in person. Teach Netiquette!
- Encourage your child to come to you if someone says or does something online that makes them uncomfortable.
- Children are not always aware of the consequences of their actions. Knowing what cyberbullying is and talking about its seriousness may prevent children from engaging in or becoming victims of or silent bystanders to cyberbullying.

## HOW IS CYBERBULLYING DIFFERENT FROM OTHER FORMS OF BULLYING?

- It often looks anonymous. It does not occur face-to-face so people think their online identity is unknown but phone numbers and Internet addresses can be traced.
- It can be often more cruel. People say things online that they wouldn’t say in person, because you can’t see the result on someone’s face.
- It is far-reaching. Electronic messages are not private. They can be easily forwarded to an entire school or community, or posted on a website for the whole world to see forever.
- It can take place 24/7 – not just on the playground or at school – and invades the child’s home and personal spaces as well as the school environment.
- A single incident of cyberbullying can be experienced as multiple attacks with repeated and long term consequences. Content that is taken offline can reappear or be circulated again.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD IS A VICTIM OF CYBERBULLYING...

Cyberbullying can have negative consequences, such as low self-esteem and school avoidance. If your child tells you that he or she is being bullied online:

- Listen and provide support
- Save the evidence: phone and Internet records can be traced
- Tell the person to STOP if their identity is known
- Report the incident(s) to school administrators
- Notify the police. Cyber bullying is an illegal activity