



STOP | THINK | CONNECT™

## Social Networking & Cyberbullying Tips

Social networks are a great way to stay connected with others, but you should be wary about how much personal information you post and take basic precautions before going online.

The first step is to **STOP. THINK. CONNECT.** Take security precautions, understand the consequences of your actions and behaviors and enjoy the benefits of the Internet. Always remember to **Keep a Clean Machine.** Having the latest security software, web browser, and operating system are the best defenses against viruses, malware, and other online threats.

### Social Networking Tips:

- **Own your Online Presence:** Privacy and security settings exist for a reason. When available, set the privacy and security settings on websites to your comfort level for information sharing. It's ok to limit how and with whom you share information.
- **Once Posted, Always Posted:** Protect your reputation on social networks. What you post online stays online. Think twice before posting pictures you wouldn't want your parents or future employers to see. Recent research (<http://www.microsoft.com/privacy/dpd/research.aspx>) found that 70% of job recruiters rejected candidates based on information they found online.
- **Post Only about Others as You Have Them Post about You.** It's the golden rule online.
- **When in Doubt, Throw it Out:** Links in email, tweets, posts, and online advertising are often the way cybercriminals compromise your computer by getting you to click on something or share information when you shouldn't. If it looks suspicious, asks you to act immediately or offers something that's too good to be true - even if you know the source - it's best to delete or if appropriate, mark as junk email.
- **Make Passwords Long, Strong and Unique:** Combine capital and lowercase letters with numbers and symbols to create a more secure password. Passwords are private information and not to be shared with friends.
- **Your Online Reputation can be a Good Thing:** Recent research (<http://www.microsoft.com/privacy/dpd/research.aspx>) also found that recruiters respond to a strong, positive personal brand online. So show your smarts, thoughtfulness, and mastery of the environment.
- **Be Honest if you're Uncomfortable:** If a friend posts something about you that makes you uncomfortable or you think is inappropriate, let them know. Likewise, stay open-minded if a friend

approaches you because something you've posted makes him or her uncomfortable. Share with care. People have different tolerances for how much the world knows about them respect those differences.

- **Keep Personal Information Personal:** Be cautious about how much personal information you provide on social networking sites. The more information you post, the easier it may be for a hacker or someone else to use that information against you by stealing your identity, accessing your data, or committing other crimes such as stalking.
- **Know and Manage your Friends:** Friends are people you know and trust. Some of the fun of social networks is creating a large pool of friends from many aspects of your life. In general, a smaller group of known people is better. Use tools to manage the information you share with friends in different groups or even have multiple online pages. If you're trying to create a public persona and want to share ideas, photos or other information with the larger public, create an open profile or a "fan" page that encourages broad participation and where you limit the posting of any personal information. Use your personal profile to keep your real friends more synched up with your daily life.
- **Safer for me More Secure for All:** What you do online has the potential to affect everyone – at home, at work and around the world. Practicing good online habits benefits the global digital community.

### Cyberbullying Tips:

- **Know what Actions to Take:** If someone is harassing or threatening you, remove them from your friends list, block them, and report them to the site administrator.
- **Avoid Escalating the Situation:** Responding with hostility is likely to provoke a bully. Depending on the circumstances, consider ignoring the issue. Often, bullies thrive on the reaction of their victims. If you or your child receives unwanted email messages, consider changing your email address. The problem may stop. If you continue to get messages at the new account, you may have a strong case for legal action.
- **Document Cyberbullying (or other Unwanted Contact):** Keep a record of any online activity (emails, web pages, social media posts, etc.), including relevant dates and times. Keep both an electronic version and a printed copy.
- **Be an Upstander:** Speak up if someone is bullying your friend. Stop untrue or harmful messages from spreading. Report the situation to a trusted adult and on social networks. Refuse to be a passive bystander. For more resources, visit <http://www.ikeepsafe.org/cyberbullying-2/be-an-upstander-and-prevent-cyberbullying/>