



Cyberbullies: How They Operate

Bullying doesn't just happen on school grounds anymore. (Photo: Carina Salvi)



Okay, let's break down this cyberbullying thing. How does it work, anyway? What are they really doing? Here's the scoop on how cyberbullies operate:

What They Use: They use profiles, email, instant messaging, blogs, bulletin boards, chatrooms, photo and videophones, digital images posted online, text messaging and cellphones, handheld communication and gaming devices and Web sites.

How They Get Access: They often pose as their victim, doing things or saying things to get them into trouble online. They may even break into their victim's accounts by either misusing or guessing their passwords, and then spam their victim's friends or change the password -- even locking someone out of their own account!

Once They're in: They may start sharing really embarrassing secrets, like someone's sexual activities or preferences or relationships -- whether they're true or not! They may post real (or Photoshopped) pictures on websites and in blogs, even porn sites, they may place personal ads posing as the victim, or sign them up for email lists and disgusting content. They may do things to get their victims thrown off the site too! They can do a lot of damage.

Beating the System: Have you ever paid attention to your "terms of service" rules? We didn't think so. But cyberbullies have. They sometimes use the terms of service rules to their advantage, by provoking an angry response from their target and then reporting the angry response as a terms of service violation. These are called "notify" or "warning" wars. Bullies can also hack their victim's computers, erase or change files or send them viruses.

Basically, they'll make your life really difficult ... and potentially really embarrassing!