

Tackling hate online

Companion guide to support young people

Find tips to help children and young people understand what online hate looks like and to encourage conversation about challenging it when they see it.



The online world is an essential part of young people's lives; it's a space for learning, leisure, information and communication. With an increase in online hate and abuse against groups of people based on their race, religion, identity and more, children and young people may find it difficult to form independent, unbiased opinions and attitudes about those they interact with.

From online gaming to social media, children and young people encounter users from all parts of the world and all backgrounds, so it is important for them to develop their critical thinking about the information they see.

Parents, carers and educators can provide initial support by demonstrating empathy and openness and creating opportunities for children and young people to share their experiences and discuss any concerns.

5 tips to support children and young people

Use the following tips to help young people discuss their understanding of online hate and how it can impact their digital wellbeing.

1. Have open, honest and ongoing conversations

Conversations about online hate are often reserved for when a problem comes up. However, [talking about your child's digital life as a normal part of everyday conversation](#) can **help them feel more comfortable coming to you when they do have questions**. So, talk about what they see online, ask them to tell you about the issues you see in the news and encourage them to take action when it's needed.



2. Talk about the impacts of online hate

Online hate seems to be everywhere with many users becoming desensitised to it. **Children and young people might not even realise how they themselves spread online hate** through playful banter among friends or through the interactions they make with online content. Explore how online hate can lead people to avoid things they enjoy, even leading to negative [mental wellbeing and self-harm](#). Then explain the actions they can take to counter it such as through [reporting features](#) and reaching out to victims.

3. Explain how to be an upstander and when it is safe to do so

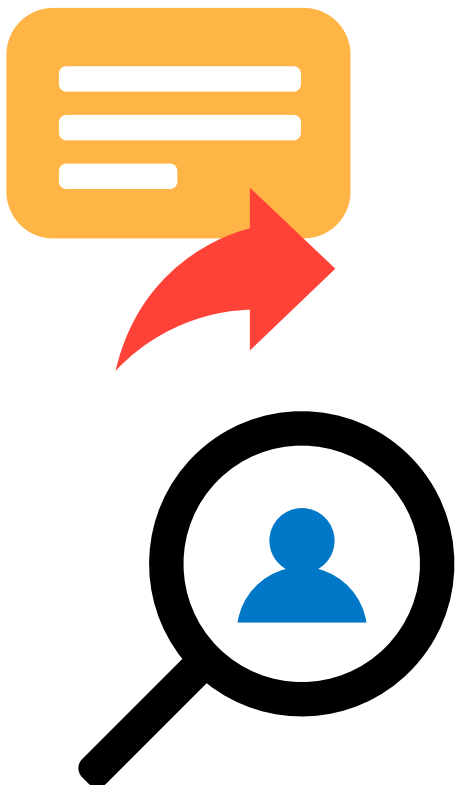
A bystander is someone who sees online hate happening but does nothing. However, **an upstander takes action to stop the hate**, even if it doesn't personally affect them. This might be as simple as reporting online hate in-platform. It could also look like sharing resources in the comments or reaching out to victims to offer support. It's important to talk to children about what it means to be an upstander and how that is different from engaging others in an argument where tempers can run hot. Empower them to [reach out to you](#) if they're ever unsure about how to stop an incident of online hate.



4. Encourage them to respect differences and celebrate uniqueness online

Following people with **different points of view and from diverse backgrounds** can help ensure that children and young people see a balanced picture of the world around them. So, talk to them about the people and content they follow, and encourage them to seek out people different from them.

Talk with them about the supportive messages they can share with creators or groups of people to spread positivity and challenge hate online.



5. Continue your support and share helpful resources

An incident of online hate that has affected your child in any way may continue to affect them even after the issue is dealt with. So, it's important that your child knows where they can get help in addition to coming to you. Some useful resources may include:

- [Childline](#): A helpline that children can call, email or chat online with. There are also [message boards](#) available to find support from the community.
- [The Mix](#): A helpline for under-25s that young people can call or message with options from group chat to discussion boards and more.
- [Meic \(Wales\)](#): A helpline that allows children in Wales to chat online, call or text when they need support.
- [Samaritans](#): A charity that helps support people with their mental health, offering options to contact them through calls, email, letters and more.
- [Ditch the Label](#): Forums for young people to discuss issues and interests with others who might have had similar experiences to support their mental health and wellbeing.

Guidance for the Classroom

If you're an educator, this online hate quiz is a great interactive tool to use in the classroom as a starter, assessment, activity or homework task. Explore the suggestions below to tackle online hate in the classroom.

Activity 1: Gauging Knowledge

Use this quiz at the beginning or end of a lesson around the topic of online hate to assess their understanding of the topic, leading to further lessons to help consolidate their knowledge.

Activity 2: Class discussion

This quiz is designed to encourage deep discussion on a variety of topics. Teachers have the opportunity to structure an entire lesson around the quiz.

- **Option 1:** Ensure each student (or partners/ groups of students) has access to a device. Have them complete one question at a time, pausing to discuss the suggested questions or question topic as a class. This is likely to lead to some insightful conversation, but make sure you have ground rules in place to ensure positive engagement.
- **Option 2:** Have students compete against each other and discuss each question with one another. Circulate the room to monitor these discussions and ask them to explain their thoughts or what they've seen online. Consolidate the discussions at the end of the activity through a class-wide discussion about online hate.

Activity 3: Project starter

Once students finish the quiz, ask them to choose one question topic to research in more detail. Create guidelines for what kind of project or presentation you would like – do they need to create a PowerPoint, a poster or something else? This could be part of a school-wide campaign against online hate that includes decorating hallways or presenting to their year groups in assemblies.

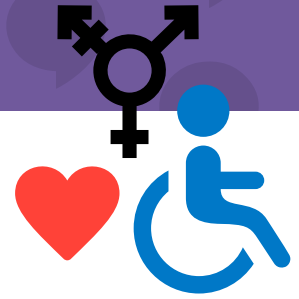
Alternatively, have students do the quiz for homework and then research on their own.

Activity 4: Take the learning home

Assign the quiz for your students and their parents or carers to do together at home. You might wish to create a set of guiding questions to help parents understand. Additionally, your students could write a reflection on online hate once they complete the quiz, including the actions they will take to counter it online.



Helpful glossary of terms



When you are introducing the concept of online hate to children, there might be complex words they don't understand, so it is important to take time to help them learn what they mean. Here is a short glossary of terms that can help explain some of these terms.

Algorithm

Rules a computer or programme follows to solve a problem. For example, on social media, algorithms study users' actions such as liking or commenting on content and then suggest related content users might like.

Bystander

Someone who sees something happening like online hate or cyberbullying and doesn't do anything to help. For example, if they see a hateful video, they keep scrolling rather than reporting it.

Discrimination

Treating people poorly because of a characteristic like race, gender or sexuality. For example, if someone treats a person poorly because they are Muslim, they are discriminating against them based on their religion.

Disinhibition

When someone acts without thinking about how others might be impacted. For example, on social media, many people say hateful things that they would never say to someone face-to-face. The lack of immediate feedback helps create disinhibition.

Echo chamber

A result of algorithms on social media where users only see content that supports their views. For example, if someone 'likes' and comments on hateful content, they will start to only see hateful content, which will lead to them believing the hate is all there is. Like an echo, you only hear the same thing back.

Free speech

Also called 'freedom of expression', this is a law in the UK that says the government cannot arrest someone for speaking out against them. It is sometimes used as an excuse online for people to say hateful things, but they can still be banned and receive consequences online for their words.

Harassment

Making someone feel scared, stressed or threatened because of your behaviour towards them. It is against the law to harass someone in person or online in any way. An example of harassment could be sending a person hateful messages on all their different social media accounts.

Hate speech

Abusive or threatening language that is written or spoken and that discriminates against a person or group of people because of their race, religion, gender or other characteristics. For example, calling someone a racist name is hate speech.

LGBTQ+

An acronym that stands for [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual, Queer/Questioning and more.](#) The acronym is sometimes used interchangeably with LGBT and LGBTQIA+. It refers to people who have similar identities as those listed above as well as others like non-binary and pansexual. Gender reassignment and sexual orientation are two protected characteristics.

Online hate

Language, videos, images and other online content [that targets a person or group of people with hate.](#) It includes posting, sharing and interacting with content that promotes hate. It will often include hate speech and discrimination in different forms.

Online toxicity

Rude or nasty online behaviour that might be aggressive in nature. It's likely to be demonstrated through videos, comments and other online interactions. It could include excessive foul language and may also include hate speech.

Protected characteristics

These are characteristics that are protected by law. They include:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- being married or in a civil partnership
- being pregnant or on maternity leave
- race (including skin colour, nationality and ethnic or national origin)
- religion or beliefs
- sex
- sexual orientation

Discrimination of protected characteristics is illegal in work places, education, public spaces and other areas.

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people in the UK from discrimination.

Radicalisation

When someone starts to believe extreme views or beliefs about something harmful, they are radicalised. [Radicalisation](#) might be used to try and control someone, to spread hate about a group or to get more supporters for their beliefs. It might be against a group of people in religion, politics or other parts of society such as against the LGBTQ+ community. It is a form of grooming that could result in violence and serious harm.

Trolling

Internet slang where a person or group of people post content that is meant to get strong reactions of emotion. This may include off-topic hateful comments in unrelated communities. It is unhealthy behaviour that should be reported on the platform.

Upstander

An upstander is a person who sees something wrong and takes action to stop it. Unlike a bystander, an upstander will help stop the wrong from happening. They might report hateful content, share helpful advice and resources or reach out to victims of online hate who need someone to talk to. An upstander does not argue with bullies or trolls.

