**11–13s**

Tackling online hate: What you need to know

If you've completed the Tackling online hate interactive quiz or just want to learn more about the topic, this summary advice and guidance can help you make the online world a little more positive.

Use it on your own or together with friends or family to build your understanding and help stop online hate.

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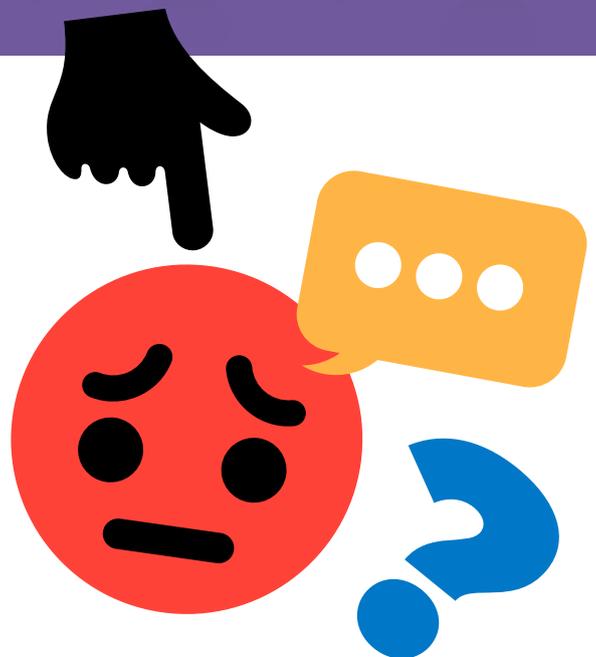
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1. It is illegal to discriminate against someone with a protected characteristic. Which of the following are protected characteristics?

What you need to know

Protected characteristics include:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment (transition from the sex they were assigned at birth to the one they identify as. For example, if someone was assigned male at birth but identifies as female, they might transition to become female)
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex (being male, female or nonbinary)
- sexual orientation (the sex someone is attracted to. For example, a man attracted to a man)

'Protected' means it is against the law for people or companies to treat you differently or take away opportunities because of these characteristics.

For parents & carers

The idea of protected characteristics and law can be difficult for children to understand, but it's good to start the conversations early so they can recognise that when something they see online targets a protected characteristic, they should take action by reporting and blocking on the platform and talking to you or another trusted adult.

Remind them that while people are entitled to their opinion about something, that doesn't mean an online platform has to allow something that is hateful or targets a group of people.

Learn more about protected characteristics.

Discuss these questions

- *Why do you think these characteristics have been made to be against the law?*
- *How could having laws against this kind of hate help people feel safe online?*
- *Have you ever seen online hate against one of these characteristics?*
- *Are there any characteristics on this list that surprise you?*
- *How could knowing about protected characteristics help someone spot hate online?*
- *How do the platforms you use help protect their users from online hate? Where can you find this information?*

2. Online hate is a form of harmful behaviour. Which of the following can be seen as harmful behaviours?

What you need to know

When we communicate with others online, it's important think about how your words or actions might make them feel.

Sometimes what we think is a joke or is helpful might actually be very harmful and lead others to feel upset or hurt. Harmful behaviour can lead to bullying and spread online hate even if we didn't mean it, especially when it comes to those protected characteristics like disability, race, religion, identity or gender.

Before you share something online, whether it's a comment, message, video or photo, think about how this could affect those who see it. How will it make them feel? And will those feelings be the same for everyone? For example, if you know one person will laugh, that doesn't mean everyone will laugh.

If you're ever unsure, it's better not to share; instead, ask a trusted adult for a little guidance.

For parents & carers

Often, children and young people might share comments online without understanding the impact of their words. They might say it as a joke or because they don't know any better, but it is often not meant to hurt. However, it does. So, it's important for them to practice not only learning how to think before they share – this might include typing out what they want to say and re-reading it or asking you for a second opinion to give themselves time to think – but also how to apologise and take actions to fix their mistakes.

Explore interactive activities from Digital Matters to help children learn more about positive interactions online.

Discuss these questions

- *Have you ever said anything that you regretted? What did you do to fix the situation? Is there something you could have done differently?*
- *If someone says something nasty or hateful online 'as a joke', what could you do to stop it?*
- *Have you ever had to block or report someone online? What was it for? Was it easy to do?*
- *If you've never blocked or reported someone online, do you know how? Talk through the process for your favourite app, game or platform.*

3. A person reveals they are gay to their close friend but no one else. After the two have a falling out, the person's close friend threatens to tell everyone in their group chat. What example of online hate is this?

What you need to know

Outing is a word used to describe when someone threatens to tell others that someone else is gay, trans, or another identity under LGBTQ+. It is a form of bullying that leads to online hate. For instance, outing could lead to others calling the victim names or using hateful slurs against them. This kind of treatment will lead the victim to feel hurt, angry and isolated.

If you ever see outing, threats or other hateful language against the LGBTQ+ community or other groups, you have the power to stop it and become an upstander who helps the victim. Report the user or content to the platform so that the moderation team can take action to ban or remove the user from the platform.

If the online hate you see upsets you, make sure you also talk with a trusted adult like a parent or counsellor such as those found on Childline.org.uk.

For parents & carers

While online hate and bullying can sometimes be hard to talk about, especially when it comes to explaining different terms, it is an important part of helping children identify hate when they see it. If they can name the type of hate they see online, they are more able to properly identify it when they report it, which can help lead to quicker action from the moderation team.

Discuss these questions

- *Have you ever seen online hate against the LGBTQ+ community? How was it handled?*
- *How might this kind of hate impact someone who is trying to understand their identity?*
- *In addition to reporting a user spreading online hate, what else could you do to help support a victim of online hate?*

4. What are the correct actions to take when coming across a nasty comment against someone's religion online?

What you need to know

Sometimes it feels easier to ignore online hate than to take action, but the only way to stop online hate is for everyone to take action when they see it happening! The best way to do that is by being an upstander and using a platform's reporting features, not calling them names or bullying them back. When you report someone or block them, they won't know it was you, so you know that you can stay safe.

Instead of scrolling on by or getting on with your game, take a moment to report the user who is spreading hate. If everyone does this, it will help keep things positive so that everyone can enjoy their time online.

Speak with a trusted adult if you're ever unsure about something you come across online. They can help you figure out the next best actions to take, especially if that means reporting it in another way or blocking the user.

For parents & carers

With your child, explore the apps and platforms they use or the games they play to see what kind of moderation tools are in use. How do they report online hate? Where is the block function? Are there any other tools they should make use of? If you both know how to stop online hate and how easy it is to use these functions, your child will better understand the process and hopefully make more use of the features when needed.

Explore a range of articles about different apps and platforms to learn more about your child's favourites.

Discuss these questions

- *Have you ever seen online hate happening to someone else online? What happened?*
- *Was there ever a time where you saw something nasty online? What did you or someone else do?*
- *If you've seen online hate or something nasty, why do you think the person or people sharing that content did so?*
- *How could you get along with someone who believes in a different religion from you?*
- *Why might someone get upset about someone making fun of their religion? How could you support them?*

5. Sometimes really close friends and siblings 'banter' with each other for laughs. What problems could banter cause in some relationships?

What you need to know

Sometimes what one person finds funny isn't the same as someone else. This is especially true when it comes to online hate. If a person laughs at a racist or homophobic comment, that doesn't mean it is okay to make that comment or that everyone else will also find it funny.

It's important that when you're talking to someone, you think about:

- How close your relationship is
- If someone could be offended
- If it is true, kind or necessary

If you aren't very close to a person, teasing or some comments might offend them. Even if you are close to someone, they could still feel offended, so if you're unsure, it's better to keep it to yourself, especially if isn't true, kind or necessary.

Always speak with a trusted adult like a parent, teacher or counsellor on support sites like Childline.org.uk if you're unsure or if you've said something you regret so you can get help to make things right.

For parents & carers

Sometimes if a child does something wrong, they may be afraid to get help to make it right. For example, if they make a nasty comment online that hurts someone else, they might know how to make it right and may be afraid to admit their mistake. So, it's important to create a safe space that helps them feel comfortable to come to you as needed. You can do this by:

- Having regular conversations about what they do and see online or about cyberbullying
- Talking to them casually like on a walk or during the drive home from school
- Staying calm if they come clean about something they've done
- Find a solution together so they learn from their mistakes

Discuss these questions

- *What do you know about 'banter'? Have you ever traded banter with a friend?*
- *Have you ever accidentally said something nasty that you meant as a joke? Did everyone take it as a joke?*
- *Think about if you said something offensive to someone by accident. What actions could you take to make things better?*
- *What do you think people should do more of online to help everyone have positive experiences?*

6. Someone with a lot of followers posts a video that talks about the LGBTQ+ community. They say that people in this community are 'sick' and 'confused'. A friend watches the video and then sees other videos and commenters saying the same thing. Soon, all of their recommendations are for content like this, and they start believing it and sharing with other people. How might this negatively affect the way they treat people in the LGBTQ+ community?

What you need to know

Social media and other websites use something called an algorithm. Algorithms suggest content to you that is based on your interests and based on other content you've liked or watched. This means that if you watch a video that spreads online hate about the LGBTQ+ community or another group, you might start seeing a lot more similar content. This could make someone start to believe that the online hate is true, so they might start treating people in one of those groups poorly.

It's important that when you watch content online, you think about it carefully. Is everything being said true? How do you know? What is the purpose of it? Is it meant to make people angry?

Sometimes hateful content gets people to leave more comments, which means more people will see the video. This means the creator will likely earn more money from the video, even if people don't like the content.

If you come across hateful content and you leave a comment, this shows a lot of algorithms that people actually like the video! So, it's much better to report

videos that spread online hate instead of telling the creator why they're wrong).

For parents & carers

While this age group is underage for many social media accounts, most of which require a user to be 13 or older, they might still find their way onto different social networks or content platforms.

As such, it's important to explain how their interactions with content might shape what they see online. Even if the comments on a post complain about hate or misinformation, algorithms don't recognise this as negative engagement. Instead, it shows that the content is popular.

Therefore, your child needs to know that the best thing to do is to report and block this content so that the moderation team can take action instead of an algorithm.

Learn more about age minimums of popular social media platforms to understand what is right for your child.

Discuss these questions

- *Have you ever come across a video that make a lot of people angry? How do you know it did this?*
- *Have you ever seen a lot of content you didn't agree with on a platform you use? What did you do to stop seeing it?*
- *Have you ever left an angry comment on content that was hateful or that you didn't agree with? Did you do anything else to stop the content?*
- *Remember that most platforms let you customise what kind of content you see. Check out your settings to make positive changes to your suggested content.*

7. Sometimes people say nasty things online that they would never say in real life. What are some reasons for this?

What you need to know

When we sit behind a screen or browse a device, we are pretty much anonymous to those we meet online. This can help keep us and our private information safe, which is a good thing. However, sometimes this makes it easier to say things we'd never say in person.

If someone can't see how their words affect a friend or stranger, they might feel more likely to say something hateful. This is often because there isn't any feedback to see right away like there would be when talking to someone face-to-face. It makes people feel a little braver or think a little less about the person behind the screen.

Always remember that there are real people reading what you write online. If you wouldn't say it in person (or if you wouldn't want your mum or dad to see it), keep it to yourself or ask a trusted adult for a second opinion on whether it's okay.

For parents & carers

At this age, it can be hard for children to understand that what they say is affecting a real person. With many people represented by a computer-generated avatar, it's easy for all kinds of people to treat other users poorly, not just children. This is called disinhibition.

Ask them to consider who might be typing or reading on the other side of the screen. If they read the messages from someone else, how would they feel?

Discuss these questions

- *Why could seeing someone's face help some people think more carefully about what they say?*
- *Do you think online apps and platforms spread more or less hate? Why do you think this?*
- *Have you ever seen a friend or loved one say something online that you've never heard them say in real life? What was it/was it hateful and why do you think they did that?*
- *What could someone do to make a user on the other side of the screen feel more 'real'?*

8. Someone who is Muslim posts a video about Islam that tells viewers about the Quran (Islam's religious text). It is informative and doesn't include any content against protected groups or characteristics. However, under the video, there is a comment telling the creator that Islam is an evil religion, then calls the creator nasty names. What could you do to stop this hate speech?

What you need to know

When you report something online, try to make sure you report the correct content. However, it is better to report something than worry about being wrong, and content that doesn't break the community guidelines won't be taken down.

That being said, in this case, while the video content is informative and doesn't spread online hate, some of the comments do, and it's the comments that need to be reported, not the video. This will help stop the commentors from spreading online hate while allowing the content creator to keep sharing information that will help lessen misunderstanding that leads to online hate.

Taking action to report or block will help stop the hate speech but commenting kind words for the creator will help them feel supported as well, so it's okay to do that too as long as you are old enough according to the community's guidelines.

For parents & carers

Explore the community guidelines of your child's favourite platforms with them. Show them where to find these guidelines on most sites along with what kind of content they include.

Often, the guidelines offer information on what content is okay for the platform, what actions might be taken for content that isn't allowed and what age user should be. This might also be in the Terms of Service.

Encourage them to get into the habit of exploring these things to help them better understand their platform and to help them keep an eye out for things that break the rules. Doing this will also help you understand the platform a little more to feel more secure in whether it is appropriate for your child.

Discuss these questions

- *Have you ever read the community guidelines or terms of service for your favourite platform? Why or why not?*
- *Why could it be important to read community guidelines when it comes to hateful content online?*
- *Have you ever seen a content creator or other person with a lot of followers or subscribers targeted by online hate? Did you or could you have offered any support? How?*
- *What do you think might cause someone to share hateful comments under informative, well-meaning content?*

9. A male friend makes a nasty comment about a girl who is playing the same video game. He goes on to say girls aren't as good at video games as boys. What action should someone take to stop the online hate?

What you need to know

Sometimes, we need to speak out against online hate. We just need to be careful that when we do this, we don't take part in arguments or let our anger lead the way. Instead, think carefully about what you want to say to help inform people why their words are wrong.

Talk with a trusted adult to get some advice on the best things to say and resources to share to help stop online hate before you post, especially if you're worried about something turning into an online argument.

Writing down how you're feeling is very important as well and can help you feel better. However, it won't stop the online hate, so you need to make sure you take action online to stop it and then speak with a trusted adult.

For parents & carers

Talk with your child about the right way to communicate online, especially when it comes to speaking out against online hate. It can be easy for someone to engage someone in an argument on social media or in video games, so make sure they know not to engage.

Together, work on creating a response that supports those targeted while informing the perpetrator and any other users why the hate is misinformed. Doing this without becoming angry is likely to be more effective.

Encourage them to also recognise that while informing people is important, hate still needs to be reported on the platform.

Explore more about treatment of women and girls online to help you understand what to look for.

Discuss these questions

- *What kind of language could you use to challenge misconceptions that lead to online hate?*
- *How do you know if someone is just saying things to get a rise out of others? This is called trolling and is a harmful behaviour that leads to lots of anger.*
- *If you start to feel angry about something, what could you do to calm down so that you think clearly?*

10. Someone posts a video where they share their struggles with their hearing loss and how they have been bullied. They do this to try and spread awareness. Some of the comments tell them they can still communicate with British Sign Language (BSL) or through writing, so they don't have to feel disabled. What would be the best response to these kinds of comments to help inform people?

What you need to know

Remember that even well-meaning comments can spread online hate and that not all online hate includes name-calling. Sometimes misinformation can lead to online hate as well.

Instead of getting angry at misinformed comments, it's a good idea to politely challenge the confusion with facts and helpful resources.

In this question, while someone means well with their BSL comment, it actually might make the owner of the video feel like their struggles aren't valid or important. Just because they are able to overcome the challenges they face, that doesn't mean their experience has been easy. In fact, not all deaf people know BSL nor do all BSL speakers know standard English.

Instead of diminishing a person's experience, ask questions like 'Do you use BSL?' and 'Do you feel like BSL makes a difference to your struggles?' or anything that helps educate.

If a commentor isn't using nasty names, they might have simply made a mistake, so calmly informing them is the best way to go.

For parents & carers

Explore the different ways children can tackle online hate along with the different types of hate they may come across. Is it caused by misinformation that can be rectified through conversation and resource-sharing? Or is it something far worse that needs to be reported?

Stopping online hate requires more than platform block and report functions. Open conversation and helpful resources can make a big difference in the spread of online hate.

If your child has SEN or disabilities, see how to support them online so they can have positive online experiences.

Discuss these questions

- *Misinformation is false information that people share because they think it's true. Have you ever seen someone share misinformation? In what ways might it have been harmful?*

- *Have you ever accidentally shared misinformation? How did you find out it was false?*

- *What kind of information could you share with someone spreading online hate to help them learn why their comments are wrong?*

- *If you're ever unsure about whether something is true or not, what could you do?*

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