Help! My Partner is Harassing Me Online



Signs of Online Harassment

Harassment is unwelcome or unwanted behaviour from another person that makes you feel scared, threatened, or humiliated. It can take place anywhere: in person, over texts or direct messages, on social media, on gaming apps, etc.

If your current or former partner:

- Sends you constant text messages or direct messages
- Sends you threatening messages
- Makes harmful or embarrassing posts about you online

This could be harassment, and it is not okay.

Getting constant messages can feel overwhelming and stressful. You don't deserve that.

What Can You Do

Sometimes you may be unsure if what is happening to you is harassment. Trust your gut. If it feels wrong, it matters. Here are some actions that you can take when harassment is happening to you:

1. Talk to Someone and Make a Safety Plan

You don't have to deal with harassment alone. Tell someone you trust, like a friend, trusted adult, counsellor, or support worker. They can listen, support you, and help you decide what you want to do next.

Together, you can make a safety plan. A safety plan can help you think about:

- Ways to feel safer online and offline
- What to do if the harassment gets worse or changes
- Who you can contact if you need help
- What changes you may want to make to your accounts, devices, or routines

- What to do if you see the person at school, on a team, or somewhere else

You can use the Kids Help Phone safety planning tool , our Safey Planning Checklist, or ask a counsellor, support worker, or trusted adult to help you make a plan.

Your safety plan should work for you. You don't have to make every change at once, and you can change your plan if your situation changes.

2. Save Proof of the Harassment

You may want to report the harassment you are experiencing to an authority (for example, your school principal or the police). In this case, it is helpful to have proof, also called evidence, of what happened. Even if you don't want to report harassment right now, saving proof of what is happening keeps your options open if you change your mind later.

How to Save Proof

- Take screenshots or screen recordings of messages, posts, or calls
- Make sure the screen shots or screen recordings save dates, times, usernames, and phone numbers
- Keep copies of the screenshots/recordings somewhere safe (like a new email only you can access)
- Try to save messages before blocking or reporting, in case they disappear



Safety Tip: Some apps (like Snapchat) notify the sender when you take a screenshot. Test this out with a trusted friend before taking a screenshot of the harassing message so that you know what the sender will see.

1. Protect Your Accounts and Privacy

If someone is harassing you online, changing some of your privacy and account settings may help limit what they can see or learn about you. This can be especially important during or after a breakup.

Before making changes, consider whether your current or former partner has access to your phone, accounts, or passwords. If you think they do, consider using a device they cannot access to get help or make changes. A trusted adult or support worker can help you decide what changes make sense for you.

You can:

- Set your accounts to private or limit who can see your posts and stories.
- Review your friends and followers and remove people you don't know or trust.
- Check who can tag or mention you in posts.
- Review who can see your location through apps such as Snap Map. Find My, or other location-sharing features.
- Check which devices are signed in to your account and who has access.
- Change passwords or other security settings if you think someone else may know them.

After a breakup, think about what information your former partner can still see. They may still have access to shared accounts, location sharing, old passwords, or other information from when you were together. Consider removing their access to these accounts, creating and using new accounts for yourself, and limiting what information you add to or share through these accounts.

Remember: changing your privacy settings can reduce what someone can see, but it may not stop the harassment completely. They may try another account, phone number, or ask other people for information about you.

2. Decide How You Want to Handle Contact

You do not have to read or respond to harassing messages. Blocking or limiting contact can give you some space and may stop someone from calling or messaging you through a particular account.

Before blocking someone, think about what might happen afterward. For example, blocking may stop them from messaging you directly, but it may also mean that you cannot see what they are posting about you. They may also try to contact you through another account, number, or person.

If you want to stop contact, you can:

- Block their phone number or account.
- Change who is allowed to message, call, tag, or mention you.
- Test the blocking feature with a friend first, so you know what each person will be able to see after someone is blocked.

Stopping contact or blocking may not work for everyone. You might feel you need to maintain contact because you go to the same school, are on the same team, have friends in common, or for another reason. You may also want to keep messages as evidence. If you need or choose to keep some contact, you still have options. The options below help you limit contact and put you in control of when you engage with the person.

You can:

- Mute their messages or notifications.
- Let calls go to voicemail.
- Give their number a special ringtone, so you know when they are calling and can decide whether to answer.
- Ask a trusted adult to help you manage or review messages.

Blocking and privacy tools work differently on different apps. Before making a change, check what the feature actually does and what you will and will not be able to see afterward.

3. Think about Reporting the Harassment

Reporting can be another option when someone is harassing you. You get to ask questions and get help understanding your options before deciding what you want to do. A trusted adult or support worker can help you think about where you might report, what could happen next, and what feels safe for you.

Depending on what is happening, you may be able to report to:

- An app or social media platform. You can report harassing messages, accounts, images, or posts. The company may review the content and could remove it or take action against the account.
- Your school. If the harassment involves another student or affects you at school, you can tell a tech, counsellor, principal, coach, or another school staff member you trust
- Your phone company. Depending on what is happening, your phone company may have options for dealing with unwanted calls or messages, like helping you change your phone number at no cost.
- Police or legal support. Some forms of harassment, threats, stalking, or other technology-facilitated abuse may have legal options. A trusted adult, support worker, or legal professional can help you understand these options, including whether talking to police or asking about a peace bond might be appropriate.

You do not have to figure this out alone. Different types of reporting can have different results, and reporting may not always stop the harassment right away.

Before you report: If it is safe to do so, save evidence first. A post, account, or message could disappear after it is reported. Follow the evidence-saving steps in Step 3: Save Proof of Harassment.

If You Report to Your School

Start by telling someone you trust at school what is happening. This might be a teacher, counsellor, principal, coach, or another staff member. Show them

the evidence you have saved and explain how the harassment is affecting you.

After you report, keep a record of what happens:

- Write down who you spoke with and when.
- Save emails or messages you receive from the school about the harassment.
- Write down what the school takes and whether the harassment continues.
- If you feel that nothing is being done, keep a record of that too.

Ask a trusted adult to help you with this if keeping track of everything feels overwhelming.

Remember, love is not control. You deserve respect online and offline.

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence is part of a continuum of violence that can be both online and in-person. If you or someone you know is experiencing technology-facilitated violence, you are not alone. Encourage them to chat with a trusted adult, connect with the Kids Help Phone to create a safety plan, or use ShelterSafe.ca to find a shelter/transition house near you to discuss options and create a safety plan. You don't need to stay in a shelter to access free, confidential services and support.