

Glossary

Social Media, Cyberbullying, & Online Safety Terms To Know

Sameer Hinduja, Ph.D. and Justin W. Patchin, Ph.D.



In our Glossary below, we define the terms you need to know in the realm of social media, cyberbullying, and online safety, so that you are increasingly informed about technological jargon as you work with the youth under your care.

Acceptable Use Policy (AUP): A policy that schools and other organizations create to define the responsibilities and appropriate behaviors of computer and network users.

Android: Operating system created by Google. Android powers smartphones and tablets.

Anonymizer: An intermediary website that hides or disguises the IP address associated with the Internet user. Generally, these sites allow a person to engage in various Internet activities without leaving an easily traceable digital footprint.

App: Abbreviation for “application,” it is a piece of software, primarily referring to those used on smartphones, tablets, and other touch-based devices.

Ask.fm (app): An app (and web site) where users can ask and answer others’ questions with the option of doing so anonymously.

Bash Board: An online bulletin board on which individuals can post anything they want. Often, posts are malicious and hateful statements directed against another person.

Blocking: The denial of access to particular parts of the Internet. Usually a message will be shown on screen to say that access has been denied. For example, Facebook users can block other users from sending them messages or seeing their posts.

Blog: Interactive Web journal or diary, the contents of which are posted online where they are viewable by some or all individuals. The act of updating a blog is called “blogging.” A person who keeps a blog is referred to as a “blogger.” The term was created by combining “web” and “log.”

Buddy List: A collection of names or handles (also known as screen names) that represent friends or “buddies” within an instant messaging or chat program. They are useful in informing a user when that person’s friends are online and available to chat.

Bullicide: Suicide that results directly or indirectly from bullying victimization. The relationship between bullying and suicide is complex and for that and other reasons, many researchers have concerns with the utilization of this term.

Bullying: Repeated and deliberate harassment directed by one in a position of power toward one or more. Can involve physical threats or behaviors, including assault, or indirect and subtle forms of aggression, including gossip and rumor spreading. The term bullying is usually reserved for young people and most often refers to these behaviors as they occur at or near school.

Catfishing: In the online world, catfishing refers to the practice of setting up a fictitious online profile, most often for the purpose of luring another into a fraudulent romantic relationship.

Chat: An online real-time conversation, typically carried out by people who use nicknames instead of their real names. A person can continually read messages from others in the “chat room” and then type and send a message reply.

Chat Room: A virtual online room where groups of people send and receive messages on one screen. Popular chat rooms can have hundreds of people all communicating at the same time. Typed messages appears instantly as real-time conversation. All of the people in the room are listed on the side of the screen with their screen names.

Cookie: A file on a computer or other electronic device that records user information when visiting a website. Cookies are often used to identify the websites that the device has visited, save login information and customization preferences, and enable the presentation of more personalized information or content.

Cyberbullicide: Suicide resulting directly or indirectly from cyberbullying victimization. The relationship between cyberbullying and suicide is complex and for that and other reasons, many researchers have concerns with the utilization of this term.

Cyberbullying: Intentional and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices.

Cyberspace: The electronic “universe” created by computer networks in which individuals interact.

Cyberstalking: Repeated harassment using electronic devices and networked technology that includes threats of harm, or that is highly intimidating and intrusive upon one’s personal privacy.

Cyberthreats: Electronic material that either generally or specifically raises concerns that the creator may intend to inflict harm or violence to others, or to himself or herself.

Dashboarding: When online users (usually on gaming consoles) rapidly switch from online in-game play to the home screen for their console or other devices. Gamers do this when they are losing badly, and don’t want the game to register their demise, or lack of kills, or another metric that demonstrates poor performance.

Decoy Apps: Apps used to store private information, such as photos, videos, voice recordings, or texts. They look like everyday apps such as a calculator so offer a secure way to hide certain information. They also are called vault, secret, or ghost apps. A teen may use this on their phone to secretly store sexual pictures and videos that they don’t want their parents seeing.

Digital evidence: Tangible signs, proof, information, or data that demonstrate some behavior. This could be a screenshot, a record of Internet activity, a saved piece of content, etc.

Digital Footprint: Evidence of a person’s use of the Internet, typically focusing on dates and times of specific websites visited. This includes anything that can be linked to a user’s existence, presence, or identity. See also, “cookie.”

Digital Immigrant: A person who has not grown up with digital technology, such as smartphones, social media, and the Internet, but has adopted it later. Many adults are referred to as digital immigrants, because they have known a time when these technologies didn’t exist.

Digital Native: A person who has grown up with digital technology, such as smart phones, social media, and the Internet. Many adolescents or young

adults would be classified as digital natives, because they have not known a time without these technologies.

Discord (app): Discord is an app and website that allows individuals who share an interest (e.g., a specific video game, hobby, or topic) to communicate via video, voice, text chat, and screensharing. You can even integrate it with your gaming console and join others’ servers, set up your own, and create channels/categories. While mostly used for gaming, it has communities for tons of other uses such as Netflix shows, anime, schoolwork, dance, books, and more.

E-mail: Electronic mail. Allows Internet users to send and receive electronic messages to and from other Internet users.

Fabotage: Slang for ‘Facebook Sabotage’ and used to describe hijacking, and meddling with, someone’s Facebook account while it is unattended.

Facebook (app): The most popular social media site with over 2.4 billion active monthly users (as of June 2019). Users create personal “profiles” to represent themselves, listing interests and posting photos and communicating with others through private or public posts and messages.

Filtering: The act of restricting access to certain websites or social media platforms. For example, a filter might compare the text on a web page against a list of forbidden words. If a match is found, that web page may be blocked or reported through a monitoring process. Generally speaking, a filter allows or denies access based on previously specified rules.

Finsta: combining the words Fake and Instagram, a finsta is a secondary Instagram account which is usually meant for a smaller, private audience, and allows the user to share pictures and videos in an unfiltered and more natural way without having to make each shot perfect or socially acceptable.

Firewall: Hardware or software that restricts and regulates incoming and outgoing data to or from computer systems. Firewalls allow or disallow accessing certain websites or social media platforms.

Flaming: Sending angry, rude, or obscene messages directed at a person or persons privately or an online group. A “flamewar” erupts when “flames” are sent back and forth between individuals repeatedly.

Following: The act of requesting another person to connect with your online social network (on Twitter, Instagram and similar sites).

Friending: The act of requesting another person to connect with your online social network (on Facebook).

Gamergate: Controversy involving issues of sexism and progressivism in video game culture, stemming from a harassment campaign conducted primarily through the use of Twitter (and other platforms).

Gaming: Participation in video (often online) games, which involve individuals adopting roles of fictional characters, thereby directing the outcome.

Gaming Console: A device designed for users to run video games on a television. Popular consoles include the Sony Playstation, Microsoft xBox, and Nintendo Wii.

Geolocation: The process or technique of identifying the geographical location of a person or device by means of digital information processed via the Internet.

Geotagging: The process of adding geographical information to various pieces of digital content in the form of metadata. The data usually consists of coordinates like latitude and longitude, but may even include bearing, altitude, distance and place names. Geotagging is most commonly used for photos and videos and can help people get a lot of specific information about where the shot was taken, or the exact location of a friend who logged on to make a post.

Griefing: When a player in an online game deliberately irritates and harasses other players within the game.

Grooming: Some people use online mediums across the Internet to connect with children so that they can exploit them or even blackmail them for sexual purposes. Befriending a child in this way is called grooming.

GroupMe (app): A group chat app that allows you to create groups (such as family, relatives, friends, team members, whatever you want) and send text, memes, hyperlinks, images, and video. It works on every smartphone and even on the Web, and it allows you to quickly send messages without having to compile a list of addressees.

Hacking: The act of circumventing security and breaking into an authorized location (a network, computer, file, etc.), usually with malicious intent.

Happy Slapping: An extreme form of bullying where physical assaults are recorded on electronic devices like phones, and then sent to others or posted online. This term is more commonly used in the United Kingdom.

Harassment: Unsolicited words or actions intended to annoy, alarm, or abuse another individual. Often based on a protected status (e.g., sex, race, disability, or sexual orientation).

Harm: Physical, psychological, or emotional injury to someone.

Hashtag: A descriptor or label preceded by the pound (#) sign that helps others easily find content related to that word or phrase. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, for example, allow users to look up and click through hashtags to find other users' content that are also listed (tagged) with that hashtag.

Houseparty (app): A video chat app quite popular among teens. You can add friends based on the phone numbers you have stored in your contacts list, or search for their usernames. Once you open the app, you can join "rooms" (chats) with other friends who are currently using the app.

Influencer: An individual who can sway an audience through a digital platform. This term is often used in relation to social media marketing, promotion, and other related efforts.

Instagram (app): An app where users can apply filters to photos and videos before posting them for others to like and comment on. User can also share their content on other social networks like Facebook and Twitter.

Instant Messaging: The act of real-time messages sent and received between two or more people over a network such as the Internet. This can occur through software such as WeChat, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Viber, and Facebook Messenger.

Internet: A worldwide network of computers communicating with each other via phone lines, satellite links, wireless networks, and cable systems.

iOS: Operating system created by Apple Inc. iOS powers iPods, iPhones, iPads, and Apple TVs.

IP Address: "Internet Protocol" address. A unique address assigned to a computing device that allows it to send and receive data with other computing devices that have their own unique addresses.

IRC: "Internet Relay Chat." A network over which real-time conversations take place among two or more people in a "channel" devoted to a specific area of interest. See also "chat" or "chat room."

ISP: "Internet Service Provider." The company that provides an Internet connection to individuals or companies. ISPs can help with identifying an individual who posts or sends harassing or threatening words.

Kik (app): A service which facilitates cross platform (iOS and Android) instant messaging across phones or tablets in an attractive interface. Users can send links, pictures, videos, group messages, etc.

Meme: A virally-transmitted cultural symbol or social idea. Most modern memes are captioned photos or videos that are intended to be funny, often to

publicly ridicule human behavior. Others are popular for depicting traits or experiences that many others can totally relate to.

MMORPG: Acronym that stands for: "Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game." A game in which large numbers of individuals from various locations connect and interact with each other in a virtual world over the Internet.

Monitoring: The recording and reporting of online activity, usually through software, which may log a history of all Internet use, or just of inappropriate use.

Mydol: A chatbot app that is gaining in popularity. It simulates chatting with your favorite k-pop (Korean pop star musician) star. A chatbot is a computer program designed to mimic a conversation with human users. They can sometimes be very natural in their responses, fooling people into believing they are talking to a real person. Some users have mentioned that the conversations can quickly turn to sexual in nature.

Netiquette: "Network etiquette." The unofficial rules of accepted, proper online social conduct.

Network: Two or more computers connected so that they can communicate with each other.

Newbie: Someone who is new to, and inexperienced with, an Internet activity or technology. Also referred to as a newb, n00b, nob, noob, or nub.

Offender: The one who instigates online social cruelty. Also known as the "aggressor."

Periscope: An application (owned by Twitter) that allows user to broadcast live streaming video, and thereby lets other people see what the broadcaster is doing or seeing in real time.

Pharming: Pronounced 'farming', this is a method by which scammers try to get personal/private information from users by directing them to false, bogus, – or 'spoof' – websites which look legitimate in their web browser.

Phishing: A technique used to gain personal information, usually by means of fraudulent e-mails.

Photoshopping: The process of altering digital images so that the main subject is placed in compromising or embarrassing situation. For example, a person might photoshop a picture to append an animal's face to a human's body (or vice versa), or something much worse.

Pinterest (app): Is an online pinboard and visual discovery engine for finding ideas like recipes, home and style inspiration, and more. Users create, share, and link to boards and "pins" of visual content (largely pictures, memes, and related creations) from across the Web.

Profile: When considered in the context of online social networking, this is a user-customized page that represents that person. Here, a person's background, interests, and friends are listed to reflect who that person is or how that person would like to be seen. Pictures, biographical and contact information, and other interesting facts about the user are often included as well.

Proxy: Software or a website that allows one's Internet connection to be routed or tunneled through a different connection or site. If a user's computer is blocked from accessing certain websites or programs, the user could employ a proxy to redirect the connection to that site or program. For example, if a software filter prohibits a user from directly visiting Facebook, a proxy website could be used to circumvent the filter and provide access.

Rage quitting: A condition in which gamers, through steady provoking, simply cannot take being killed (cheaply or otherwise) anymore and leave a online game mid-match.

Revenge Porn: Sometimes known as nonconsensual porn – defined as the act of distributing intimate photography through different means without the individual's consent

School Climate: The quality, character, social atmosphere, and 'feel' of the school, mostly exhibited by patterns of behavior and interactions among and between students and school personnel.

Screenshot: An image that is captured of what is shown on a phone, tablet, or computer screen.

Secret: An app that gives users the ability to share what they are thinking and feeling with friends from their phone's contact list, while remaining anonymous.

Sexting: The sending or receiving of sexually-explicit or sexually-suggestive images or video via phone or the Internet.

Sextortion: Threats to expose a sexual image in order to make a person do something or for other reasons, such as revenge or humiliation.

Shoulder Surfing: Peering over the shoulder of someone to see the contents on that person's computer, tablet, or phone screen.

Skype (app): A popular application that enables users to set up profiles, make free phone calls, text chat, and video chat through their computer or mobile device from any point around the world.

SMS: Acronym that stands for: "Short Message Service." A communications protocol that allows short (160 characters or less) text messages over cell phone.

Snapchat (app): Very popular with youth and young adults, users of this app share text messages, pictures, and videos with friends from their contact list, which generally can be viewed for a period of between 1 to 10 seconds (unless set to "infinity") before disappearing. See also, "snaps."

Snapchat Premium (or Premium Snapchat): This expression simply means that the user of the account is willing to share with you snaps that are sexual in nature in return for payment. These users often share their Cash App or Venmo details so you can directly send them money, and they will "subscribe" you to their informal service of sending you their nudes.

Snapchat Filters: When users of Snapchat are in particular places, specialized "filters" are available to superimpose onto their "Snap," providing fun, artsy backgrounds, pictures, and word art highlighting that location.

Snaps: Pictures or videos sent between users on Snapchat.

Social Networking Sites: Online services that bring together people by organizing them around a common interest and providing an interactive environment of photos, blogs, user profiles, and messaging systems. Examples include Facebook and Instagram.

Spam: Unsolicited electronic mail—usually commercial in nature—sent from someone unknown to the recipient.

Tablet: A mobile computing device growing in adoption and popularity. They are smaller than a laptop and bigger than a smartphone, and provide much of the same functionality as both.

Texting: Sending short messages via phone.

Text Bombing: When someone sends large numbers of texts to another, not allowing that person to use their phones because of the annoyance, or because the phone gets overloaded with constant incoming messages.

TikTok (app): Previously known as Musical.ly, this app allows users to create and share their own engaging and creative video clips up to 15 seconds long (e.g., lip-syncing to a popular song and dancing around, restating comedic lines from a favorite movie).

Threat: Making a statement of taking an action that implies or suggests harm to someone else.

Tinder (app): An online dating app that allows people to be matched based on physical attraction. It initially finds potential matches based on filters like gender and location. If two users like each other's pictures, they are able to chat.

Trolling: Deliberately and disingenuously posting information to entice genuinely helpful people to respond (often emotionally). Often done to inflame or provoke others.

Tumblr (app): A social networking site where users can post blogs and follow other people's blogs. The blogs are largely filled with artistic media, content, poetry, creative writing, and multimedia based on user interests (as well as the latest in memes and pop culture). Tumblr makes it easy to share images, GIFs, videos, music, text, links, and more in a very aesthetically-pleasing and customizable way.

Tweet: A short (280 character [or less]) message posted on Twitter.

Twitch (app): An app and website that allows anyone to live-stream (or upload and share previously-broadcasted videos) themselves doing anything - sharing stories and news, playing a video game, providing commentary on other content they are watching, or whatever else they might be interested in broadcasting - all while interacting with viewers in a text chat on the screen at the same time). Popular Twitchers (live-streamers) build and cultivate devoted communities of fans where hundreds and even thousands log on to watch their broadcasts of whatever it is they want to share with the world.

Twitter (app): Social networking and "microblogging" service that allows users to post what they are doing using up to 280 characters per tweet. It is often used to share images, videos, memes, and links; tweet images can be "tagged" with up to 10 other Twitter users so they can be alerted that they are mentioned or referenced in the post. The service had 321 million monthly active users as of February 2019. See also, "tweet."

Twitterstorm: A sudden spike in activity surrounding a certain topic on the Twitter social media site. A Twitterstorm is often started by a single person who sends his or her followers a message often related to breaking news. Using a certain and often original hashtags, the tweet quickly spreads as people are notified of the message and then reuse the hashtag with subsequent retweets and tweets.

Unfriend (or unfollow): The act of removing a friend from a social circle found on your social media site so they can't see and don't have access to your posts, captions, comments or anything else you'd like to restrict to a certain audience. Although unfriending has similarities with blocking a friend, it is different in the context of social media. Blocking a person prevents that person's name from appearing in search results as well as prevents that person from contacting the person who has blocked him/her, whereas unfriending would not result in any of these and would just show that the person is no longer in the other person's social circle.

Viber (app): An instant messaging and VoIP app (similar to Skype). Users can also exchange images, video and audio media messages. As of January 2019, it had 260 million monthly active users.

Victim: The person who is on the receiving end of online social cruelty. Also known as the "target."

Vimeo (app): A video-based social network very much like YouTube, but with a different range of features and functions, and geared towards creatives rather than general users making random videos. For example, paid users can share their videos without ads.

Vine (app): A video app owned by Twitter (and that is now defunct) which allowed users to capture moments in six seconds and share them with others.

VoIP: Acronym that stands for: "Voice over Internet Protocol." The transmission of voice over an Internet connection. Allows users to make phone calls using the Internet instead of a phone line.

Web: Short for "World Wide Web" and representing the sites and pages linked together via the Internet.

Webcast: A live or pre-recorded audio and/or video session that uses the Internet to broadcast.

Webcrastinate: To waste time by browsing around the world wide web instead of getting on with the things one should be doing.

Webdrawls: The act or process of going without the use of the internet which one has become addicted.

WhatsApp (app): A cross platform messaging application that allows users to send texts, pictures, videos, links, user locations, documents, and more. It

allows for connections based on one's phone number. It has at least 1.6 billion monthly active users as of Spring 2019.

Whisper (app): An app that allows users to share their secrets anonymously with other users using text and images. Individuals input their secret (or another self-disclosing message) into the app, select a relevant picture as a background, and then post it for others to like, comment on, and share with others.

Wireless: Communications in which electromagnetic waves carry a signal through space rather than along a wire. Refers primarily to wireless Internet access (Wi-Fi) available in an increasing number of places.

Wireless Device: Electronic devices that can access the Internet without being physically attached by a cable or data line.

YouTube (app): is a wildly popular video sharing app and site owned by Google where registered users can upload and share videos with anyone able to access the site. It has over 2 billion average monthly users and over 30 billion average daily users, with 300 hours of video uploaded every minute.

