

Help! My Ex is Harassing Me Online

Breakups are a difficult time for any couple, but they can be an especially difficult and potentially dangerous time for teens in abusive relationships. Even if you're able to leave the relationship safely, the abusive partner can still cause harm from afar in a variety of ways. Technology and social media create new spaces where abuse can take place. This is called [digital dating violence or digital abuse](#), and it is just as unacceptable as any other form of abuse.

Even if your ex-partner did not exhibit abusive behaviors during the relationship, there's still a possibility that feelings of anger, hurt, sadness, loneliness, or loss of control could lead them to become abusive online. They could hack into your email accounts or send unwanted emails, post unwanted messages or pictures on social media sites, or create fake profiles to harass you and people you know. If your ex is harassing you online, here are some ways to handle it:

- Clearly tell your ex to stop harassing you, if you feel safe doing so. It's important to let your ex know that what they are doing is abusive, preferably in a way that lets you keep a record of your request either by saving the text or email you send, [take a screenshot](#) or [video screen recording](#) of a message you send online. After you have told your ex to stop the harassment, do not respond to any future communications.
- Save everything. You might wish to delete the unwanted messages immediately, but try to keep a record of any communications your ex sends. Save emails and chat logs, [take a screenshot](#) or [video screen recording](#) of status updates, direct messages, comments, pictures, or websites.
- [Take steps to increase your online privacy](#). Check to make sure that the settings on any social media site you belong to are set to maximum privacy. Change your passwords, block or unfriend your ex, and don't provide details of your social plans or whereabouts online – this includes avoiding “checking in” to places on Facebook or using location features on apps like Snap Map on Snapchat.
- If your ex is harassing you via email, create a separate email account with a hard to guess password to use only with people you trust. This way, you can communicate with

friends and family via the new email address and you won't have to see your ex's emails every day. Again, save any abusive emails that your ex sends to you, but do not respond to them.

- Let people in your [support system](#) know that your ex is harassing you, if you feel comfortable doing so. Make them aware of your [safety plan](#) so they aren't tagging you when they check in to places or otherwise mentioning your location online. It's important not to go through this alone and for others to be aware of your ex's behavior. If your ex tries to contact people you know, ask them not to respond and to keep records of those communications as well.
- If you believe you are in danger or at risk of danger and/or if the harassment continues or escalates, you might consider taking legal action. Canada has criminal and civil [laws against cyberstalking](#), and it could help to speak with a legal advocate about [Peace Bonds](#) or other legal measures. If you choose to pursue legal recourse, a record of your ex's abusive communications would be useful.

If you are experiencing digital dating violence from an ex or current partner, a good resource is the [DIY Feminist Guide to Cybersecurity](#).

You are Not Alone. If you or someone you know thinks they are experiencing digital dating violence, chat with a trusted adult or seek help from one of the organizations listed below. Often digital dating violence may be part of a continuum of gender-based violence that can be both online and in person. There are confidential safe support services available for you.

- [PEACE Program for Children and Youth is counselling program for children and youth experiencing violence.](#)
- [Kid Help Phone's crisis line is available 24/7 by call or text](#)
- [VictimLink BC is a referral and information service for victims of crime](#)
- [KUU-US Crisis Line Society is a crisis phone line for Indigenous Youth](#)
- [Society for Children and Youth BC's Child and Youth Legal Centre provides legal support for children and youth.](#)

Spark Teen Digital Dating Violence Project

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