



A Girl's Guide to the Digital World

How to log-off of digital drama!

Cyberbullying. De-friending. Sexting. Mean Tweeting. To many moms and mentors these terms may seem like a foreign language. To girls, however, these words represent a new concern that they have to deal with daily: digital drama. Girls' self-esteem and confidence can be impacted immensely as they navigate social media and contend with these issues.

Technology will always evolve, but one thing remains the same: with support and guidance, girls can navigate complex issues with confidence. Here are a few tips to help spark a discussion with a girl in your life about positive and responsible behavior online.

1 } *Online friendships: Identify the Difference between a Friend & Frenemy.*

Facebook or Fakebook? Just because someone requests to be your 'friend' online doesn't make them a true friend offline. Get to know the real friends in your life by spending time with them in person. And remember true friendships take time to cultivate and require care, patience, honesty and respect.

- **It's OK to Say No.** Friend requests on Facebook come in by the dozens but that doesn't mean you always have to accept. If you don't know the person, consider carefully if you want them having access to all of your personal information before you make them your "friend".
- **Make Time for Real-Time Fun.** Make real time memories with your friends by having them over to your house after school or spending time with them on their turf.
- **Face to Face Works Best.** Don't leave all your convos for the digital space. If you have something important to talk to your friends about, don't do it via text or IM; make a date to discuss in person.

2} Privacy: Do You Really Want Everyone to Know Everything?

Everything you post online has a digital lifespan long after you've hit send. You may have had a blast at the party this weekend, but do you really want everyone to see those pics of you? Do you want everyone to know you're having a fight with your BFF? Some moments and memories are meant to stay offline. Protect yourself and those you care about by being cautious about what you post online.

- **Watch what you share.** It's fun to share posts and tag each other online, but just know that anyone can copy and paste your pics. Remember that what happens in cyberspace stays in cyberspace.
- **Be in control.** Change your general privacy settings. You can control who sees what.
- **Avoid Posting When you're Upset.** If you're having a bad day, talk to someone you trust in person or over the phone. Not everything needs to be spread online, and having a real person for support will make you feel better.

3} Rumors: Controlling the Conversation about You.

It used to be when something mean was said at school you could go home and leave it behind. With cyberbullying, you can't escape it and the pain can be worse than a physical fight. Words can be weapons against someone's self-esteem. If you wouldn't want the rumor you are spreading to be said about you – then don't repeat it!

- **Remove Yourself from the Situation.** If someone posts a mean comment about you, report it as online abuse. Delete it from your page and un-tag yourself from the post. If one of your friends posts a picture you don't like, untag yourself and ask them to remove it.
- **Speak Up.** If you know of someone who is being a cyber-bully or you have been bullied, talk to an adult immediately and ask for help.
- **Keep it Positive.** Engage in GOOD gossip. Make it a habit to say nice things about your friends online. And to their face!

4} Self-Image: Paint a Positive Picture of Yourself.

Does your online persona match your offline behavior? Remember that everything you post or share online sends a message about you to others. And while we can't always control what other people will think about us – we can control how we choose to be seen.

- **Think About It.** When in doubt, pause before you post. If you are unsure of how a certain post, picture or comment is going to be perceived – don't post it.
- **Share All Your Sides.** Choose to post a variety of pictures to show the real you: some silly, some goofy, some all dolled up and some just chillin'.
- **Share Things That Make You Feel Good.** If there is a song that makes your day better or a picture that made you smile, share it! Positive posts are likely to be shared and RT'd.

5 } *Mobile Conversations: Think Before You Text.*

Texting can be a fun, immediate way to bond with your friends and make plans on the fly. It can also create miscommunication, misunderstandings, or worse – mistakes that can hurt you or someone you know.

- **Don't Text and Drive.** Just don't do it. Not even a little bit. Even if you think you are a master texter, texting while driving leaves you distracted and prone to make mistakes. No text is worth hurting yourself or someone else. And if your friends think they can manage texting and driving, speak up and say something. Let them know you'd feel more comfortable if they didn't – or get another ride home.
- **Is This a Picture You Would Show Your Grandparents?** Ask yourself this question before you ever send a photo to a friend or boyfriend. Even if you think it's a joke or think it's no big deal, just imagine what it would feel like to have every picture or text you send plastered on a billboard for everyone to see. Once you text a photo you have no control over where it goes or who sees it, so if you wouldn't show it to your grandparents, don't send that photo!
- **Would You Say This Face-to-Face?** Sometimes we can feel tempted to say outrageous or flirtatious things in a text to get someone's attention, but if you wouldn't feel comfortable saying those words to them in person, then it is a sign that you are in over your head. Don't allow someone to talk you into sexting or texting in a tone or manner you are not comfortable with. Listen to your gut; if you feel uneasy about it, then it's not the right thing to do. Remember, once you put something down in a text it can be forwarded and copied to strangers.

Our partners the Girl Scouts of America, Girls Inc. and Boys & Girls Club of America

develop educational tools to motivate and inspire girls to talk about and reflect on issues relating to self-esteem. For additional information on how to speak to a girl in your life about becoming a good digital citizen, please visit our partners at:



These tips were developed in partnership with Dove® Global Self-Esteem Ambassador Jess Weiner. Access free tools and resources to inspire a girl in your life at Dove.com.

