

## **Combat hate speech & help build a safe school for all our students**

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Ultimately, hate speech is an area where sharing your own family's values — around [compassion](#) and tolerance, [appropriate communication](#) and [empathy](#) toward others — sets a stable path forward for your kids to follow even in unsettled times.

### **Conversation starters**

- What is hate speech? Look up the definition of hate speech and talk about whether your kids have encountered it. It may have been just a word, or it may have been in a video or a meme. How can you tell if someone is trying to be funny or their words are intended to hurt?
- How does hate speech affect people? How would you feel if you were a member of the group targeted by cruel language? Does it matter if you're exposed to it a lot or a little? Are people with different social statuses — for example, a popular kid versus a loner type — affected differently?
- What's the difference between hate speech and cyberbullying? If someone is trying to hurt someone, or knows that they're hurting someone, and does it repeatedly, that's cyberbullying. When someone expresses vicious views about a group or toward an attribute of a group, that's hate speech.
- What's your role in online hate speech? Do you feel safe calling out the person or people using hate speech? Would it make you feel cooler to do that, or would it make you feel uncool — like you're not part of the group? Would you block people using hate speech? Would

you ignore them? Would you stand up for the person or group of people being targeted?

- How far does the right to free speech go? Is there a clear boundary between free speech and hate speech? What is it? Should people have the right to say and do whatever they want online? If people's feelings are hurt or they're offended, they can just go on a different site, right?
- What responsibility — if any — do technology platforms have? Should Instagram, for example, be held accountable to victims of hate crimes committed by users who posted hate content? Should they try to bring people together, either through dedicated spaces, new algorithms, or other methods?
- Why are certain people attracted to hate groups? It's natural for tweens and teens to want to join groups, and sometimes groups devoted to hurting others make certain kids feel more powerful. Kids who have pent-up anger or insecurity about other things in their lives may be attracted to groups that feel protective and united. Can you imagine why someone might be swayed by hate speech rhetoric?

### **Practical ways to manage hate speech**

- Report it. Hate speech violates most sites' terms of service. You can report people without their knowing that you're the one who turned them in.
- Block it. You can block people who use hate speech, but this can be tricky socially for some kids.
- Don't share it. Forwarding any form of hate speech is wrong — but it can also get you into trouble because it can be traced back to you.
- Call it out. If your kids feel confident enough to confront the hate speech poster without fear of attack, then they should do it.

- Fight it. Nurture the values of empathy and compassion in your kids. Challenge them to [consider how other people feel](#) and how they would want to be treated.
- Read age-appropriate news from reputable sources. [Try these best news sources for kids](#).
- Learn more. Hate often stems from ignorance. Media designed for your kids' ages can help them learn about history and people's struggles in terms that they can understand and relate to. Try our lists [Books About the Holocaust](#), [Books About Racism and Social Justice](#), and [Books That Promote Tolerance and Diversity](#).