A Little Means A Lot
How you can be an Online Active Bystander

Everyone who uses the online space is a digital citizen!

As good digital citizens, we can all do more to make our online spaces safer and help those experiencing online abuse. We can do this by being Online Active Bystanders, both as individuals and organisations. A part of our social responsibility as digital citizens is to help those who experience online abuse by being Online Active Bystanders.

We believe that online bystander intervention is an important way to empower individuals to be good digital citizens and ensures that everyone plays their part to create safe online spaces. According to YouGov, a quarter of the population have witnessed racist abuse online.

We are encouraging you to intervene if you witness abuse online, so that we can help everyone to positively reclaim the online space. We're asking you to make a small change that will mean a lot to those experiencing online abuse.

This guide will show you five easy ways that we can all make a difference to address and reduce online abuse.

→ **READ this guide**
→ **WATCH how to Spot, Report & Support**
→ **SHARE with your friends, colleagues and networks**

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Our Key Terms

Digital Citizenship

Individuals engaging positively, critically and competently in all digital spaces.

All individuals have a right to safely and freely engage in online spaces without discrimination.

Digital citizenship is respecting and championing the human rights of all individuals online, and encompasses three key elements: individual, social and institutional responsibilities.

Online Active Bystander

A tool that encourages individuals to intervene (when it is safe for them to do so) and support a person who is being abused or harassed online.

Calling out harmful online behaviours and supporting individuals who are experiencing abuse allows individuals to reclaim online spaces, and demonstrate to their friends and online community that they too have the power to instill the norms that can make online spaces safer.

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1. Spot

We can all be guilty of scrolling past when we see abuse and hate online. Stopping and being mindful of it means we can start taking action.

Don't dismiss it, ignore it or expect it.

We use the phrase 'online abuse' as an umbrella term to capture a plethora of tactics and harmful acts experienced by individuals online. Online abuse can include – but is not limited to – offensive or discriminatory comments and insults, threats of physical or sexual violence, stalking, harassment, bullying, impersonation, defamation, denial of service attacks, online impersonation, deadnaming, or violations of privacy such as 'doxxing' (posting private details online such as a person's address or phone number with the aim to cause alarm or distress) or sharing intimate and private images of a person online without their consent.

Abusive content can be easily shared across platforms, allowing it to proliferate at speed, and can be difficult to contain. It is the reach, speed, amplification and permanence of abusive content online that makes it distinct from offline abuse.

2. Support

Support the person experiencing online abuse. You can send them a direct message, share your favourite meme or send supportive pictures, and let them know they're not alone.

You can be practical too: document the abuse and take screenshots of it. This will help deal with some of the impact of online abuse and ensure it is easier to report. We have a guide on documenting online abuse here.

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3. Report

Report the online abuse to the social media company, the authorities, or other organisations that may be able to provide support.

Reporting abuse helps ensure organisations take action and understand the scale of the abuse taking place.
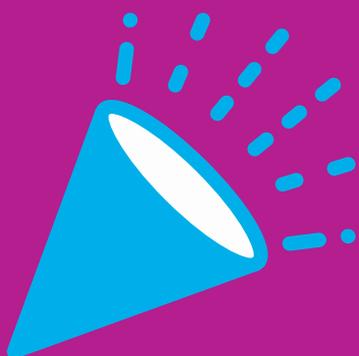
4. Reply

Reply to the original post, engaging with it as intended - this can help to take attention away from the abuse and focus back on what the author originally wanted to discuss.

5. Amplify

Amplify the voice of the person experiencing the abuse and other marginalised communities, by sharing their post with a supportive message. This helps to ensure the voice of the original poster is louder than that of those being abusive, and helps to address the silencing effect of online abuse.

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How can your organisation be a good Online Active Bystander?

If you are part of an organisation where your staff or supporters are facing online abuse, below are a few more actions you can take.

1. Publish a Statement of Solidarity

Publish a statement of solidarity with the victim - if one of your staff or supporters is facing online abuse, having support from their organisation is vital.

Publish a post underlining that you support them and that online abuse is unacceptable.

Do not make reference to the contents of the abuse or post screenshots; instead amplify the voice of the person receiving abuse.

2. Continuously Amplify

Continuously amplify the voices of your staff and supporters online (including when there isn't online abuse).

3. Liaise with Authorities

Liaise with the authorities with or on behalf of the person who's experienced online abuse - with their permission.

4. Use your Influence

Use your influence to escalate the issue to social media companies.

5. Book Staff Training on Online Safety

Encourage staff training on online safety and digital citizenship. You can find out more here.

Found this helpful?

Great! We would love it if you'd consider donating to Glitch. Your support can help us equip more people with the tools and skills they need to survive and flourish in online spaces.

Feedback

Did you find our resource helpful? Is there anything we can do to make it even better for you? We'd love some feedback via this short form.

Thank you!

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