**Trolls**

Trolls seem to enjoy it when people get upset about what they post, and often shrug off complaints about their behaviour, claiming it was all in fun. Haters, however, can be genuinely angry about the views or actions of other people and seek to humiliate or punish them. Trolls and haters can both be very hurtful and can harm the mental health of those they attack[[1]](#footnote-1).

Being attacked online can be very upsetting: and the person being attacked will need support.

## Who are trolls and haters?

People who troll and hate online come from all walks of life. Some are unkind both online and offline, while others would not normally be unkind if you met them, face-to-face. Trolls are sometimes younger people who are not yet mature enough to understand the harm they are doing.

## Should I be worried?

Having an opinion on the Internet is everyone’s right. But having an opinion and expressing it as a deliberate act to upset someone, is no-one’s right.

Be aware that trolling and hate might happen if you express an opinion on a social media site, blog, wiki, forum, in an online game or on any site that encourages comments and interaction.

Don’t take trolling and hate personally and try not to respond. Remember that trolls and haters may not be rational or able to understand other people’s views - arguing can provide them with more opportunities for the hate to spread.

## What can I do?

To manage trolls and haters we need to: remove their audience, remove their power, and deprive them of the attention they seek. We can do this by:

1. Reporting the troll or hater to website administrators and if they appear again under a different name, report them again.
2. Ignoring comments. Remember: do not respond to nasty, immature or offensive comments.
3. Blocking the troll. Take away their power by blocking them. If they appear under a different name, block them again.
4. Backing other users up online. Support those who are the target of trolls and haters, without allowing the troll or hater to re-engage.

Remember that what trolls and haters say isn’t important. They’re not worth your time.

## When trolling and hate takes a toll

If trolling or hate is persistent and/or particularly nasty, then it might be considered cyberbullying. Keep evidence of the material.

Contact the social media site or platform where the trolling is happening to report it. Social media services are required to take down material believed to be cyberbullying in nature. Most social media services will have a Help or Report section on their site.

1. Source: Australian Government, eSafety, as at https://esafety.gov.au/women/take-control/online-abuse/trolling, as on 25th September, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)