

# Preventing Classroom

# Bullying:

## What Teachers Can Do



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## About This Booklet...

*Preventing Classroom Bullying: What Teachers Can Do* provides guidelines to help school staff to better understand and manage the problem of bullying in school settings. It was first published in April 2003 and was revised in February 2004.

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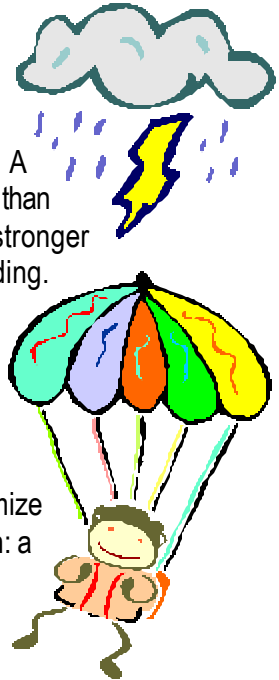
## Table of Contents

Bullying: What It Is & What Schools Can Do About It .....	3
Bullies: Turning Around Negative Behaviors .....	7
Victims: Preventing Students from Becoming 'Bully-Targets' .....	11
Bystanders: Turning Onlookers into Bully-Prevention Agents .....	14
Locations: Transforming Schools from Bully-Havens to Safe Havens .....	17
References .....	20
Bully Prevention Websites .....	21
<i>Safe at School: A Game for Stopping Bullies</i> .....	22

# Bullying: What It Is & What Schools Can Do About It

**Q:** What is school bullying?

**A:** School bullying can be described as a situation in which one or more students (the 'bullies') single out a child (the 'victim') and engage in behaviors intended to harm that child. A bully will frequently target the same victim repeatedly over time. A child who bullies can dominate the victim because the bully possesses *more power* than the victim. Compared to his or her victim, for example, the bully may be physically stronger or more intelligent, have a larger circle of friends, or possess a higher social standing. Bullying can inflict physical harm, emotional distress, and / or social embarrassment or humiliation.



**Q:** What conditions allow bullying to take place?

**A:** There are three essential components to any bullying situation. To start with, there must be a **bully**: an individual who voluntarily seeks out and attempts to victimize others. Another participant necessary for bullying to take place is a potential **victim**: a student who is substantially weaker than the bully in one or more significant ways. Bullying cannot happen, of course, unless there is also a **location** in which it can occur. School locations where bullying is common are often those with limited adult supervision, such as hallways, bathrooms, and playgrounds.

While not essential, student **bystanders** are a fourth important element that often impacts bullying: if witnesses are present when bullying occurs, these bystanders can play a pivotal role by choosing either to encourage the bully or to protect the victim.

**Q:** How big a problem is bullying in schools?

**A:** It is difficult to know precisely how widespread bullying is in any given school. Bullying tends to be a hidden activity, and both bullies and victims are usually reluctant to disclose to adults that it is taking place. The incidence of bullying also can vary greatly from school to school. Research suggests, though, that 7 percent or more of students may be bullies and perhaps 10-20 percent may be chronic victims of bullying.

**Q:** What are the different types of bullying?

**A:** Bullying can be *direct* or *indirect*. When bullying takes a *direct* form, the bully confronts the victim face-to-face. Examples of direct bullying would include situations in which the victim is verbally harassed or threatened, physically attacked (e.g., punched, kicked, pushed down), or socially embarrassed (e.g., taunted, refused a seat on the school bus).

In the case of *indirect bullying*, the bully attacks the victim's social standing or reputation—usually when the victim is not around. A student is engaging in indirect bullying if he or she spreads malicious gossip or writes insulting graffiti about a classmate, or organizes a peer group to

ostracize that classmate. Victims are at a particular disadvantage in indirect bullying because they may never discover the identity of the person or group responsible for the bullying.

**Q:** *Are there differences in bullying between boys and girls or at different age levels?*

**A:** Some evidence suggests that a general shift from direct to indirect bullying takes place as children advance from elementary to middle and high school. At any grade level, boys are more likely than girls to report that they are victims of physical bullying. Schools may also tend to overlook the possibility that girls take part in bullying, both because of gender stereotypes (i.e., that girls are 'less aggressive' than boys) and because girls may prefer to bully using indirect means such as hurtful gossip that are difficult for adults to observe.

**Q:** *Why do some children bully? What is the 'payoff' for them?*

**A:** There are several reasons that a particular student may be motivated to bully. For instance, the bully may enjoy watching a weaker child suffer, like the increased social status that comes from bullying, or covet the money or personal property that he or she can steal or extort from a victim. Children who bully are likely to feel little empathy for their victims and may even feel justified in inflicting hurt because they believe that their victims 'deserve it.'

A common myth about bullies is that they bully others to cover up their own sense of inadequacy or poor self-esteem. It appears that bullies actually possess levels of self-esteem that are about as positive as those of their non-bully peers.

**Q:** *What are the characteristics of a child who is victimized by bullies?*

**A:** There is no single descriptive profile to help schools to identify those students who are at risk for being targeted by bullies. One important indicator, though, is the presence or absence of friends in a child's life. Children who are socially isolated are easier targets for bullies because they lack a friendship network to back them up and support them against a bully's attacks. A second factor that can predispose a child to be victimized is age. Older children often bully younger children.

There are also two subgroups of bully victims that to present a clearer profile: *passive* victims and *provocative* victims. *Passive* victims may be physically weaker than most classmates, avoid violence and physical horseplay, and be somewhat more anxious than their peers. Lacking friends, these children are an easy target for bullying. *Provocative* victims may be both anxious and aggressive. They may also have poor social skills and thus tend to irritate or alienate their classmates. Bullies often take pleasure in provoking these provocative victims into an outburst through taunts or teasing, then sit back and watch as the teacher reprimands or punishes the victim for disrupting the class.

**Q:** *What impact does bullying have on its victims?*

**A:** Victims of bullying may experience problems with academics, because they are too preoccupied with the task of avoiding the bully to concentrate the teacher's lecture or school assignment. They may engage in specific strategies to dodge the bully (e.g., feigning illness and being sent to the nurse to avoid gym class) and may even develop an apparent phobia about attending school.

Bullying can also leave a lasting imprint on its victims. Victims of bullying are often socially marginalized to start with, having few if any friends. Unfortunately, as these children are bullied over time, they may experience increased rejection by their peers—who blame the *victims* for the suffering that they endure at the hands of the bully. In time, these victims too may come to believe that they themselves are responsible for the bullying. Individuals who were chronically bullied as children may show symptoms of depression and poor self-esteem as adults.

**Q:** *What role do bystanders play in helping or preventing bullying?*

**A:** The term ‘bystander’ suggests that those children who stand on the sidelines and witness incidents of bullying are neutral observers. In most instances, though, bystanders are much more likely to provide encouragement and support to the *bully* than they are to actively intercede to help the *victim* (Snell, et al., 2002). Furthermore, in situations in which a group of students is bullying a child, bystanders may actively join in by taunting, teasing, or ostracizing the victim.

Teachers are often surprised when they see a group of otherwise-friendly children egging on a bully or engaging in bullying behaviors themselves. One explanation for why bystanders may cross the line to help bullies is that, as part of a group, bystanders may feel less accountable for their individual actions (Olweus, 1993). Another possibility is that bystanders feel justified in bullying the victim because they have come to believe that he or she ‘deserves’ such treatment.

**Q:** *Schools are supposed to be well-supervised settings. How could widespread bullying happen there?*

**A:** Because bullying is a covert activity, adults seldom see it occurring. There are other reasons why bullying can go unchallenged in school as well:

- School staff may misinterpret aggressive bullying as harmless physical horseplay and therefore fail to intervene.
- When questioned by adults, victims often deny that bullying is taking place. (Victims may lie about the bullying because the bully is present during the questioning or because they do not believe that the adults in the school will be able to intercede effectively to make the bullying stop.)
- There may be too few supervising adults in those unstructured settings where bullying is most likely to occur (e.g., gym class, lunch room, playground). Or those supervising adults may not be trained to intervene early and assertively whenever they see questionable behavior between children.

**Q:** *What can schools do to stop bullying?*

**A:** All segments of the school community must work together to address the problem of bullying. This means that teachers, administrators, parents, and students need to cooperate as they assess the scope of the bullying problem in their school and come up with ways to respond to it effectively. While every school will adopt an approach to bully prevention that meets its unique needs, all schools would benefit from the following guidelines (Batsche & Knoff, 1994):

- Conduct a thorough building-wide assessment to uncover the extent that bullying is a problem in your school. Use multiple methods to collect information. Consider administering staff

surveys and anonymous student surveys, facilitating student and parent focus groups on the topic of bullying, analyzing the pattern of student disciplinary referrals to see if bullying patterns emerge, have adults observe and record bullying behaviors in less-supervised settings such as the cafeteria and on the playground, etc. Pool this information to identify significant patterns of bullying (for example, where and when bullying happens to occur most frequently; which students appear to engage in bullying behavior and which are victimized by bullies, etc.).

- Reach consensus as a staff about how your school *defines* bullying and when educators should intervene to prevent bullying from occurring. Rates of school bullying drop significantly when all staff members are able to identify the signs of bullying and agree to intervene consistently whenever they observe unsafe, disrespectful, or hurtful behaviors.
- Compile a 'menu' of appropriate consequences that educators can impose on students who bully. This menu should include lesser consequences that might be given for minor acts of bullying (e.g., mild teasing) and more stringent consequences for more serious or chronic bullying (e.g., inflicting physical harm, harassing a victim for weeks). Train staff to use the consequences-menu to ensure fairness and consistency when they intervene with bullies.
- Establish a policy for contacting the parent(s) of a student who has engaged in bullying. At the parent conference, school staff should attempt to enlist the parent to work with them to stop the student's bullying. If the parent denies that a problem exists or refuses to cooperate to end the child's bullying behavior, the parent should be told clearly that the school will monitor the child's behavior closely and will take appropriate disciplinary steps if future bullying incidents occur.
- Monitor the school's bully-prevention efforts on an ongoing basis to see if they have in fact reduced the amount of bullying among students and improved the emotional climate of the building. The school can use the same monitoring methods to track progress in bully-prevention as were first used to assess the initial seriousness of the bullying problem (e.g., focus groups, surveys, direct observation, tracking of disciplinary referrals). Share these results periodically in the form of a 'progress report' with school staff, parents, and students to build motivation throughout the school community for your building's bully-prevention initiative.



## *Bullies: Turning Around Negative Behaviors*

Bullying in school is usually a hidden problem. The teaching staff typically is unaware of how widespread bullying is in their building and may not even recognize the seriousness of bullying incidents that do come to their attention. Teachers who are serious about reducing bullying behaviors must (1) assess the extent of the bullying problem in their classrooms, (2) ensure that the class understands what bullying is and why it is wrong, (3) confront any student engaged in bullying in a firm but fair manner, and (4) provide appropriate and consistent consequences for bullying.

**Assess the Extent of the Bullying Problem.** By pooling information collected through direct observation, conversations with other staff, and student surveys, teachers can get a good idea of the amount and severity of bullying in their classroom. To more accurately assess bullying among students, a teacher can do the following:

- Drop by unexpectedly to observe your class in a less-structured situation (e.g., at lunch, on the playground). Watch for patterns of bullying by individuals or groups of students. Signs of *direct* bullying could include pushing, hitting, or kicking. Also be on the lookout for prolonged teasing, name-calling, and other forms of verbal harassment. If you should overhear students gossiping about a classmate or see evidence that an individual has been excluded from a group, these may well be signs of *indirect* bullying. Note the names of children who appear to be instigators of bullying, as well as those who seem to be victims.
- A single teacher alone is not likely to see enough student behavior to be able to accurately pick out bullies and victims in his or her own classroom. Ask other school staff that interact with your students (e.g., gym teacher) whom they have may have observed bullying or being victimized within your class or other classes in the same grade. Note the students whose names keep coming up as suspected bullies or victims. Monitor children thought to be bullies especially closely to ensure that they do not have opportunities to victimize other children.
- Create a simple survey on the topic of school bullying. Have your students complete this survey anonymously. Questions to ask on the questionnaire might include “Where does bullying happen in this school?” and “How many times have you been bullied this year?” If your school administrator approves, you may also ask students to give the names of specific children whom they believe are bullies.

NOTE: When administering this survey to students, you should also share with them the names of trusted adults in the building with whom they can talk in confidence if they are currently victims of bullying.

**Ensure That the Class Understands the Definition of ‘Bullying’.** Children may not always know when their behavior crosses the line and becomes bullying. Two important goals in asserting control over bullying are to create shared expectations for appropriate conduct and to build a

common understanding of what behaviors should be defined as 'bullying'. To accomplish these objectives, a teacher can:

- Hold a class meeting in which students come up with rules for appropriate behaviors. Rules should be limited in number (no more than 3-4) and be framed in positive terms (that is, stating what students should *do* instead of what they should *avoid* doing). Here are several sample rules:
  - Treat others with courtesy and respect.
  - Make everyone feel welcome and included.
  - Help others who are being bullied or picked on.
- Create a shared definition for bullying with the class by having them identify behaviors that are 'bullying' behaviors. List these behaviors on the board. If students focus only on examples of direct bullying, remind them not to overlook indirect bullying (e.g., gossip, excluding others from a group). Tell the class that when you see examples of bullying occurring, you plan to intervene to keep the classroom a safe and friendly place to learn.

**Confront Students Engaged in Bullying in a Firm But Fair Manner.** When a teacher communicates to the class that bullying will not be tolerated and then intervenes quickly and consistently whenever he or she observes bullying taking place, that instructor sends a clear message to students that bullying will not be tolerated.

Bullies are often quite skilled at explaining away situations in which adults have caught them bullying. When confronted, they may say, for example, "I was just kidding around" or "Nothing happened"—even when the evidence clearly suggests otherwise. You can avoid disputes with students by adopting the 'I-centered' rule for evaluating misbehavior.

- Tell your class that it offends or bothers you when you witness certain kinds of hurtful student behaviors (e.g., teasing, name-calling). Emphasize that when you see such behavior occurring, you will intervene, *regardless* of whether the offending student *meant* to be hurtful.
- If you witness suspected bullying, immediately approach the child responsible, describe the negative behavior that you witnessed, explain why that behavior is a violation of classroom expectations, and impose a consequence (e.g., warning, apology to victim, brief timeout, loss of privilege). Keep the conversation focused on facts of the *bully's observed behavior* and do not let the bully pull the victim into the discussion.
- If the bully's behaviors continue despite your surveillance and intervention, impose more severe consequences (e.g. temporary loss of playground privileges).

Here are additional tips to keep in mind when confronting students who bully:

- When you confront a student for bullying, do so in private whenever possible. A private discussion will remove the likelihood that the confronted student will 'play to the audience' of classmates and become defiant or non-compliant. If you must call a student on his or her bullying behavior in public, do so briefly and in a business-like manner. Then arrange to have



a private discussion with the student at a later time to discuss the bullying incident in greater detail.

- Find an adult in the school with whom the student who bullies has a close relationship. Enlist that adult to sit down with the bully to have a 'heart-to-heart' talk. The adult should be willing to discuss with the student the problems created by his or her bullying behavior, to express disappointment with the student's conduct and to encourage the student to stop his or her bullying. This conference is not intended to be punitive. However, the student should feel at the end of the talk that, while he or she is valued, the student's bullying *behavior* hurts and disappoints those who care about the student.

**Provide Appropriate and Consistent Consequences for Bullying.** Schools should remember that the relationship between a bully and his or her victim is coercive in nature, and that the bully always wields power unfairly over that victim. Strategies for addressing student conflict such as peer mediation, therefore, tend to be ineffective in bullying situations, as the bully can always use his or her power advantage to intimidate the victim. The most sensible disciplinary approach that teachers can use with bullies is to make sure that they are watched carefully and that adults follow up with firm consequences for each bullying incident. When providing consequences for bullying, the teacher should consider these strategies:

- Assemble a list of appropriate behavioral consequences for bullying. Include lesser consequences for isolated instances of bullying and greater consequences for chronic or more serious bullying. Share those consequences with your class. (In fact, you may want to enlist students to help generate items on the list!) Whenever a student is observed bullying a classmate, intervene and apply a consequence from the list. For example, a student who bullies during lunch might be required to spend several days seated away from his or her friends at a supervised lunch table.

If a group or class participates in a bullying incident (e.g., children at a lunch table socially ostracizing a new student), hold the entire group accountable and impose a disciplinary consequence on each group member.

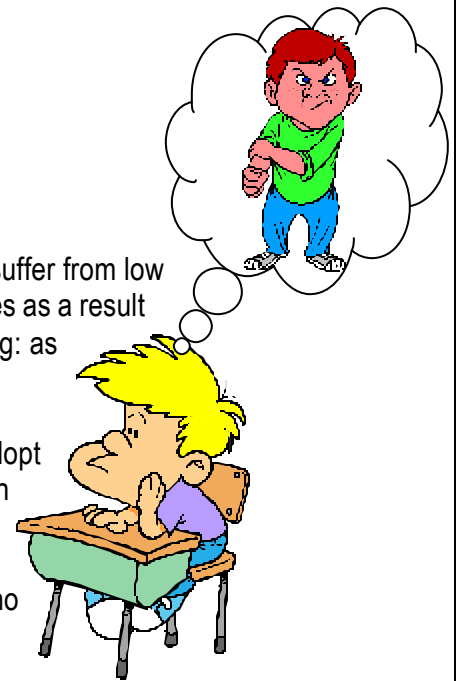
- If one of your students takes advantage of unsupervised trips from the room (e.g., bathroom break) to seek out and bully other children, restrict that student's movements by requiring that the student be supervised by an adult at all times when out of the classroom. When you are satisfied that the student's behaviors have improved enough to trust him or her once again to travel out of the room without adult supervision, let the student know that he or she is 'on probation' and that you will reinstate these school 'travel restrictions' if you hear future reports of bullying.
- When you observe a student engaging in a clear pattern of bullying, arrange a conference with that child's parents. At that conference, share with them the information that suggests that the child is bullying other students. Enlist their help to stop the child's bullying. (You will probably want the child to attend that conference so that he or she will understand clearly that the school is monitoring his or her bullying behavior and will impose negative consequences if it continues.)

- Develop a 'reward chart' for the student who bullies. Tell the student that you will put a sticker on the student's chart for each day that you do *not* receive reports from other teachers or from students and do not directly observed bullying or 'unkind behavior'. Let the student know that if he or she manages to collect a certain number of stickers within a certain number of days (e.g., 4 stickers across a 5-day period) for good behaviors, the student can redeem them for a prize or privilege.

## *Victims: Preventing Students from Becoming 'Bully-Targets'*

Children who are chronically bullied are often deeply unhappy in school, suffer from low self-esteem, and often find themselves socially rejected by their classmates as a result of the bullying. Teachers are likely to see another 'hidden' cost of bullying: as students are victimized, their grades frequently suffer.

The best way for any school to assist children victimized by bullies is to adopt a whole-school approach to bully prevention. (See the *References* section at the end of this handout for information about effective school-wide programs to stop bullying.) Even if working alone, however, teachers can take immediate action to make life easier for children in their classroom who are being bullied.



**Take Steps to Ensure the Victim's Safety.** Victims are often physically weaker or otherwise less powerful than the bully. They may blame themselves for the bullying and believe that adults cannot help them to deal with the bully. When adults intervene to help a victim, they should above all make arrangements to keep the victim safe from future bullying attacks. Consider these ideas as a means for better understanding how seriously victims are affected by bullying in your school or classroom and for helping these victims to stay safe in school.

- Some victims may be reluctant to come forward. Have children complete an anonymous questionnaire that asks them if they are bullied, whether they have witnessed bullying, and where and when bullying that they have experienced or observed took place. Act on students' feedback by taking steps such as increasing adult supervision in locations where bullying takes place to make them safe for all students.
- Select or create a 'safe-room' that is always staffed with adults (e.g., a well-supervised study-hall, 'drop-in' counseling center, Resource Room). During times of the day when the student is most likely to be targeted for bullying (e.g., lunch period), assign the student to the safe-room.
- Examine the victim's daily schedule. For any activities where there is likely to be little adult supervision, either make arrangements to *increase* that supervision or adjust the child's schedule to eliminate these undersupervised 'blind spots'.

**Help the Victim to Develop Positive Connections With Others.** When choosing a victim, bullies typically target children who have few or no friends. If a child has at least one significant friend in school, he or she is less likely to be bullied—and is usually better able to cope with the effects of bullying when it occurs. The teacher's goal, then, is to strengthen the social standing of the victim with classmates and other students and adults in the school. As people in the school community develop more positive connections with the victimized student, they may be willing to intervene to *prevent* the victim from being bullied. Here are ideas that may promote positive connections between the victim and other students or adults:

- Train socially inept children in basic social skills, such as how to invite a classmate to play a game or to seek permission from a group of children to join in a play activity.
- Pair students off randomly for fun, interactive learning or leisure activities. These accidental pairings give children a chance to get to know each other and can ‘trigger’ friendships. Consider changing the seating chart periodically to foster new relationships.
- If a child receives pull-out special education services, try to avoid scheduling these services during class free-time. Otherwise, the child loses valuable opportunities to interact with peers and establish or strengthen social relationships.
- Enlist one or more adults in the school to spend time with the child as ‘mentors’. (Once these adults begin to spend time with the child, they will then be likely to actively intervene if they see the student being bullied!) Give these adults ideas for how they can structure sessions with the student (i.e., playing board games, having lunch together, etc.) Suggest to the student that he or she occasionally ‘invite a friend’ to these activities.
- Train staff, older student volunteers, or adult volunteers to be ‘play-helpers’. Train them to organize and supervise high-interest children’s game and activities for indoors and outdoors. (When possible, select games and activities that are easy to learn, can accommodate varying numbers of players, and allow children to join in mid-activity.) Place these play-helpers on the playground, in classrooms, in a corner of the lunchroom, or other areas where students have unstructured free time. The play-helpers may also be encouraged to pay special attention to those children with few friends are likely to be socially excluded, making sure that these children are recruited to participate in organized play with adult support as needed.

**Teach Assertiveness Skills.** After a victim has been repeatedly bullied, he or she may find it very difficult to ‘stand up’ to the bully. One explanation for the bully’s power over the victim is that the bully has learned the victimized student’s vulnerabilities. If the victim then starts to resist being bullied, the bully is emboldened to persistently attack the victim (e.g., through teasing, social ostracism, or physical harm) until the victim is again overwhelmed and defeated. At the point where it has become chronic, bullying can be so ingrained that only decisive adult intervention can free the victim from this abusive relationship.

When a bully first approaches and attempts to dominate a potential victim, however, the targeted student still has maneuvering room and may successfully fend off the bully by using basic assertiveness skills. The bully’s goal when targeting a student is to exploit the victim’s perceived weakness(es) in order to gain dominance over him or her. If the potential victim maintains his or her composure, stands firm, and continues to behave appropriately even when provoked, the bully will find that the supposed victim is not so weak as he or she first thought.

A few simple assertiveness rules that you can teach to students are to:

- Respond to taunts, insults, or teasing with a bland response (“Oh”. “That’s your opinion.” “Maybe.”) Don’t let bullies see that they have upset you.

- Get away from the situation if you start to get very angry.
- Say “No” firmly and loudly if you don’t want to do something that someone tells you to do. Stand straight up and look that person in the eye when you say it.
- Refuse to let others talk you into doing something that you will be sorry for—even if they dare you!
- Report incidents of bullying to adults.

Be sure that your students do not confuse *assertiveness* with physical or verbal *aggression*. While the weaker victim will likely regret aggressively attacking the bully, he or she may well be successful by simply standing firm against the bully. And even if the potential victim is not entirely successful when using assertiveness skills during a particular episode, that student might still manage to stop the bullying from becoming chronic by showing the bully that he or she is not an ‘easy mark.’

# Bystanders: Turning Onlookers into Bully-Prevention Agents



Most students in a classroom or school do not bully others regularly and are not victimized by bullies. A common misconception about these student 'bystanders', though, is that they typically remain neutral or try to support the victim when they see bullying occurring. Unfortunately, the truth is that students who observe bullying are much more likely to encourage or assist the *bully* than to attempt to help the victim! With appropriate instruction and guidance, however, bystanders can be empowered to take an active role in preventing bullying from occurring and to report bullying to adults when it does take place.

To 'win over' bystanders as bully-prevention agents, the teacher should (1) make bystanders aware that their own behavior can encourage or discourage bullying, (2) teach skills that bystanders can use to intervene when they witness bullying, (2) hold bystanders accountable for their behavior in bullying situations, and (4) structure classroom and schoolwide activities to encourage bystanders to develop positive relationships with potential victims. Here are ideas for working with student bystanders:

**Train Student to Play an Active Role in Intervening in Bullying.** An effective way to reduce bullying is to teach bystanders that they can (and should) intervene to support the victim when they witness bullying. Consider using the 4-step lesson plan below to train students to be proactive 'bully-prevention' agents:

1. Introduce the term 'bullying'. Ask the group to come up with definitions and write these definitions on the board. Then summarize the student contributions to compile a single working definition for bullying. (An example of a simplified definition would be "*Bullying is when one person or group hurts another person on purpose by using mean words, physically harming the person, or damaging their property.*")
2. Tell students that bullying hurts the entire school and that everybody has a responsibility to help prevent it. Ask the group to brainstorm rules that the entire class can follow to prevent bullying. Write these rules on the board. Then work with the group to condense these ideas into a final set of rules of conduct.

NOTE: Limit the final set of rules to no more than 3-4 so that they are easy to remember. Also, if possible, state each rule as a 'do' statement (e.g., "Treat others with courtesy and respect") rather than as a 'don't' statement (e.g., "Don't yell at or insult others.").

A sample set of 'anti-bullying' rules may be:

- *Treat others with courtesy and respect.*
- *Make everyone feel welcome and included.*
- *Help others who are being bullied or picked on.*

3. Draw a distinction for the students between 'tattling' and 'telling'. *Tattling* is when a student tells an adult what another student did simply to get him or her into trouble. *Telling* is when a student tells an adult what another student did because that student's actions were unsafe or hurt another person. Say to students, "It is important that we tell adults whenever we see something that is unsafe or hurts other people."
4. [Optional but recommended] Invite individuals in your school who are 'trusted adults' (e.g., principal, school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, nurse) as visitors to your classroom. Tell students that these visitors are staff members to whom students can safely report incidents of bullying. Allow each visitor several minutes to introduce himself or herself and to tell students how to get in touch with them to report bullying or other issues of concern.
5. Tell students that, when they witness bullying, they should *never* encourage the bully or join in the bullying. (Remind them that bystanders who egg on or help the bully are considered to be as responsible for the bullying as the bullies themselves!) Instead, bystanders need to take action to stop the bullying:
  - In incidents of *direct* bullying, the bystander who feels *safe* confronting the bully should assertively remind the bully of the classroom rules for treating others and tell the bully to stop picking on the victim. If the bystander does *not* feel safe confronting the bully, the student should tell an adult about the bullying as soon as possible.
  - In incidents of *indirect* bullying by an individual or group (e.g., malicious gossip), the bystander should not participate in the bullying in any way. If possible, the bystander should also point out to the individual or group that they are engaging in bullying behavior. If the bullying persists, the student should tell an adult about the bullying as soon as possible.

Have the group think of other positive ways that a student could respond if they witness bullying and list those ideas on the board. (TIP: You may want to have students take the best of these suggestions and turn them into colorful posters to be displayed in the classroom.)

**Hold Bystanders Accountable for Their Actions.** Student onlookers need to understand that they are responsible for their actions when they witness a bullying incident. In particular, bystanders should know they will face negative consequences if they decide to join a bully in taunting or teasing a victim, cheer the bully on, laugh at the bullying incident, or otherwise take part in the bullying. (Help students to keep in mind that onlookers should side with the victim with a phrase such as *'Remember, bystanders should never become bullies.'*)

Whenever you or another adult witness that a bystander is participating in bullying, schedule a private conference with that student. Talk about the bullying incident and explain how the onlooker's actions (e.g., joining the bully in calling the victim names) were hurtful. Share your disappointment that the student bystander had not attempted to assist the victim and point out ways that he or she could have done so. Impose a disciplinary consequence that fairly matches the bystander's misbehavior.

**Build ‘Bonds of Caring’ Between Bystanders and Potential Victims.** When bystanders already know, and have a positive attitude toward, a student being picked on by a bully, they are more likely to attempt to help the *victim* rather than to support the *bully*. Here are some ideas that teachers can use to build bonds of caring between bystanders and potential victims:

- When students transfer to a different classroom or school midyear, they may have few friends in the new setting and therefore be an easy mark for bullies. To help these transfer students to develop relationships more quickly, create a ‘welcome committee’ of children whose task is to orient the new child to the school and to provide him or her with social companionship for the first several days. For example, the welcome committee could take the child on a tour of the school, show the student where instructional materials and supplies are stored, preview the classroom schedule, demonstrate common classroom routines such as transitioning between activities, and include the new arrival in playground games. While this welcome-committee orientation would at most last only a few days, it should give the new student a head start in building peer friendships that can protect children against bullying attacks.
- Older children often select younger children as targets for bullying. One proactive strategy to ‘energize’ student bystanders to intervene whenever they witness younger children being bullied is to promote positive relationships between older and younger students. You might consider assigning students to younger classrooms to serve as teacher helpers or peer tutors. Or you might train older students to be ‘playground helpers’, organizing and refereeing games and other outdoor activities. Or your entire class may ‘adopt’ another classroom of younger children and participate with them in various activities. The larger lesson to remember is that any time that you can arrange a learning or social situation in which older students interact in a positive manner with younger children under adult supervision, you forge bonds between those age groups and give older students a reason to wish to protect their younger counterparts from bullying.
- A subtle form of bullying can occur when children in a group or classroom decide to socially ostracize a target child. To guard against group bullying, assign a student to serve as ‘group ambassador’ whenever you form student groups for a learning activity. The ‘group ambassador’ is responsible for greeting anyone who joins the group, ensures that all members understand how they can participate in the group activities, and gives additional support and guidance to any student who needs it. (‘Group ambassadors’ should be trained to recognize when a student might need assistance and in how to provide that assistance in supportive, non-intrusive ways.) In a variation of this idea, lunch aides can appoint a different student each day to serve as a rotating ‘table ambassador’ at each cafeteria table. Again, this student would have responsibility for welcoming other children coming to the table and for intervening if other children attempt to bully a student.



## *Locations: Transforming Schools from Bully-Havens to Safe Havens*

Bullies are opportunistic, preying upon students whom they perceive as weak. Bullying cannot take place, though, unless the bully has a setting or location in which he or she is able to exploit and hurt the victim. The far corner of a classroom, a deserted hallway, the bathroom: these are all locations in which bullying may happen. Places where bullying is common are frequently deserted or poorly supervised.



The good news, though, is that when adults are present to supervise a particular setting, intervene quickly when they witness bullying behavior, and provide fair and appropriate consequences to the bully for his or her misbehavior, the rate of bullying in that setting will plummet. A teacher can work with other school staff to put locations off-limits to bullies by first identifying where bullying most often occurs in the school and then providing increased levels of trained adult supervision in those settings.

**Uncover Bullying 'Hot Spots' in the School & Community.** Crime analysts note that a small handful of locations in the community often serve 'magnets' for crime, with multiple criminal incidents reported to police (Schmerler et al., 1998). In schools, too, just a few locations tend to be the site of many incidents of bullying. Often, these locations are poorly supervised. When schools identify locations where bullying typically happens, they can take steps to make these places less attractive to bullies. Ideas that teachers can use to discover bullying locations in and around a school are to:

- Go on a school walking tour with your class. Ask students to identify 'safe' and 'unsafe' areas of the school, the times of day these areas are most safe or least safe, and the reasons that they are safe or unsafe. Record student comments. Or hand out maps of the school's interior and ask students to color in red those places that are least safe and in blue those places that are the most safe. (Also, consider asking other teachers to perform similar activities with their classes and compare your results with theirs to see if shared or dissimilar patterns are found.) Share these results with other members of your teaching team and your principal.
- Give students street maps of the neighborhood surrounding your school. (To make them easier for students to interpret, clearly mark well-known landmarks such as stores or fast-food restaurants on the maps.) Ask the class to identify any locations in the neighborhood where bullying or other unsafe behavior tends to happen and to mark these locations on the map. Also, ask class members to identify places in the neighborhood that tend to be *more safe* and to mark those on the map as well. When the students share the results of the activity with you, record their comments regarding both the unsafe and safe locations. Share these results with other members of your teaching team and your principal.

NOTE: You may also want to share the information that you collect on unsafe neighborhood locations with your School Resource Officer or a representative from your local police

department. Invite him or her to visit your classroom to give your students tips on how to stay safe when transiting to or from school.

**Put Strategies in Place to Make Locations Less Attractive to Bullies.** After you have identified locations in and around your school where bullying tends to occur, you can take simple but effective steps to make these locations less 'friendly' to bullies. Among strategies to consider are to:

- Perhaps the most effective way to decrease bullying is to increase the level of adult surveillance in hallways, stairwells, and other settings where bullying is frequently reported—and during the time(s) when it is most likely to happen. You may also choose to enlist older, trusted students to monitor identified locations. Adult and student monitors should receive training about what bullying behaviors to look for and how to intervene effectively with bullies.
- Help hallway, lunchroom, and playground monitors to learn the names of students (e.g., by inviting them into classrooms at the start of the school year to be introduced to students). Adults can intervene much more effectively in bullying situations when they know the names of the children involved and their assigned classrooms.
- Separate older and younger students when they are in less-supervised settings (e.g., playground) to prevent older children from victimizing younger ones.
- Train non-instructional staff (e.g., lunchroom aides) to intervene promptly when they see bullying, or suspected bullying, occurring in their areas. Work with these staff to design a list of specific intervention strategies that are likely to be effective (e.g., set up a 'time-out' table in the cafeteria; after one warning, a student who bullies is sent to that table for a 5-minute timeout).
- Increase the 'natural surveillance' of areas of the school (e.g., hallways) that are unsupervised for long periods of time by moving some whole-class or small-group activities to these locations. For example, students can complete a learning activity on the metric system by measuring the length of a hallway in meters. As public traffic moves more frequently (and unpredictably) through a previously deserted area, bullies will find fewer opportunities to pick on potential victims.
- Change your classroom layout or rearrange seating to eliminate any 'blind spots' where bullies can victimize students outside of your view. Circulate frequently throughout the classroom so that you can monitor student conversations and behavior.
- Have classrooms 'adopt' stretches of public space in your school (e.g., hallways) by agreeing to help keep that space clean and to put up posters that provide positive anti-bully messages (e.g., welcoming visitors, reminding students of appropriate behaviors, giving pointers on how to respond assertively to a bully). When a classroom asserts ownership over a public space, this action conveys the impression that the space is cared for and watched over, serving as a kind of extension to the classroom itself. As the public

space ceases to be anonymous and impersonal, bullies no longer have the assurance that they can operate in that location unseen and unnoticed.

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- US Department of Education (1998). *Preventing bullying: A manual for schools and communities*. Retrieved 3 April 2003 from: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/ssp/bullymanual.htm>

## Recommended Bully Prevention Programs

**No Bullying.** From not-for-profit Hazelden.

Visit the main Hazelden site at: <http://www.hazelden.org/>

Go to the Hazelden online bookstore to locate No Bullying teacher manuals, etc.:

<http://www.hazeldenbookplace.org/>

**Steps to Respect: A Bully Prevention Program.** For information, visit the Committee for Children website at: <http://www.cfchildren.org>

# *Selected Bully & Violence Prevention Websites & Internet Resources*

(Updated on 03 April 03)

## ***Early Warning, Timely Response***

(<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/Products/earlywrn.html>).

## ***Safeguarding Our Children: An Action Guide***

(<http://cecp.air.org/guide/actionguide.htm>).

These two guides were co-produced by the US. Departments of Education and Justice. Together, they contain valuable information on how a school can assess the degree of bullying, harassment, and violence in the building and how the entire school community can then take proactive steps to improve safety and reduce disrespectful or hurtful behavior.

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***Committee For Children*** (<http://www.cfchildren.org/>). This Seattle-based non-profit organization produces Steps to Respect, a respected school-wide violence prevention curriculum. The site features several well-chosen articles on school bullying and related topics.

## ***ERIC/CASS Bullying in Schools***

(<http://ericcass.uncg.edu/virtuallib/bullying/bullyingbook.html>). This ERIC Clearing House on Counseling and Student Services (ERIC/CASS) page provides links to a whole library of Internet resources to prevent or reduce school bullying. Materials are tailored to teachers, administrators, and parents. A good starting point to research the issue of bullying!

***No Bully*** (<http://www.nobully.org.nz>). Based in New Zealand, this site is co-sponsored by that country's national law enforcement agency. No Bully has sensible, compassionate advice for schools on how to intervene to break the cycle of bullying. It also provides guidance to parents whose children may be targets of bullies.

## ***Preventing Bullying: A Manual for Schools & Communities***

(<http://www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/ssp/bullymanual.htm>). First published in 1998 by the US Department of Education, this short, helpful manual gives schools specific and helpful ideas that administrators, teachers, and parents can use to assess the seriousness of bullying in their school and then do something positive about it. Included case studies of several districts that have dealt successfully with bullying in their schools.

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These resources were compiled by:

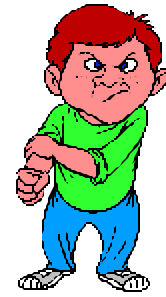
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# 'Safe at School!'

## A Game for Stopping Bullies



**Purpose.** 'Safe at School' is a game designed for 2 or more players. Players compete against a make-believe character, the Bully. The purpose of the game is for all players to use teamwork and their knowledge of effective bully-prevention strategies to get *at least one* of their game pieces into the 'Finish' box—before the Bully does! This game provides students with a fun opportunity to review essential concepts in bully prevention and also requires teamwork to win.

**Materials.** You will need the following materials to play 'Safe at School':

- 'Safe At School' game-board
- A game piece for each player & one for the (make-believe) Bully. (You can use poker chips, coins, or other tokens as game-pieces. Just be sure that you can tell each player's game-piece apart from the others.)
- A pair of dice.
- Two or more players and one Game Leader
- A copy of 'Bullying Challenge Questions' for the Game Leader
- One or more rewards for which players must compete against the Bully

**Preparation.** The 'Safe at School' game requires that students grasp basic bully-prevention skills. (The information that students should learn is contained in previous sections of this manual.) Prior to playing this game, students should know how to:

- Define *bullying*
- Recite the classroom or school-wide rules of conduct that address appropriate interpersonal behaviors (e.g., "Treat each other with respect.")
- Seek out trusted adults in the school to report incidents of bullying
- Respond *assertively* rather than *aggressively* when picked on by a bully
- Take responsibility to stop (or at least to avoid encouraging) bullies when they find themselves bystanders to bullying situations
- Intervene in bullying situations in ways that will keep them safe.
- Distinguish between 'tattling' and 'telling'
- Take appropriate action when faced with a variety of possible bullying situations

### Rules of the Game.

1. Each player places his or her game-piece in the 'Start' box.
2. During the game, players take turns throwing the dice. Each time that the dice is thrown, the Game Leader reads off a question from the 'Bullying Scenarios' sheet.
  - If the player answers the question correctly, that player moves his or her game piece across the same number of spaces on the game-board as appear on the dice.

- If the player does not answer the question correctly (despite encouragement and support from the Game Leader), that player does not move the game piece. The Game Leader (e.g., classroom teacher) has the final say about whether a student's response is acceptable. If an answer is partially correct or shows promise, the Game Leader can encourage the student to elaborate his or her response or provide helpful 'hints' that lead the student to the correct answer. The ultimate point in the game, after all, is to motivate students to review and fully understand bully-prevention concepts.
3. Whenever each of the players has taken a turn, the Game Leader then rolls the dice. This is called the "Bully's Throw". The Game Leader moves the Bully's game-piece the same number of spaces as appear on the dice.
  4. Whenever a player (including the Bully!) is lucky enough to finish his or her move on a circle with a blue star ("Bonus Star"), the player doubles his or her dice score and moves that additional number of spaces on the board. For example, if a player rolls a 5 on the dice and ends up on a Bonus Star, that player doubles the dice amount and moves *another* 5 spaces. NOTE: A player can use only one Bonus Star per turn.
  5. The object of the game is for *at least one of the players* to get to the 'Finish' box *before* the Bully does. To accomplish this goal, any player who rolls the dice and correctly answers a bully question may choose to forgo his or her move and instead donate his or her points to another player to help that player to catch up with or pass the Bully. Players may need to work cooperatively to 'beat the Bully'!
  6. If at least one player beats the Bully to the 'Finish' box, all players earn the reward selected for them.

#	'Safe at School' Bullying Challenge Questions	Acceptable response(s)
1	You walk up to two friends as they are talking and laughing in the hallway. You realize as you approach that they are saying very mean things about another student in your classroom. What should you do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell your friends to stop saying unkind things about a classmate.</li> <li>• Refuse to participate in the conversation.</li> </ul>
2	A new kid in your class walks into the crowded cafeteria and looks around. He seems unsure about where to sit. You don't know him very well...but there is a seat open at the table where you and your friends sit. What should you do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite the new student to join you</li> </ul>
3	You are on the playground and see an older student push a smaller kid around. There are no teachers around. The older student is a lot bigger than you. What should you do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get help; tell an adult</li> <li>• Band together with friends and confront the bully (assertively, not aggressively!)</li> </ul>
4	Name two trusted adults that you could go to if you need to talk with someone about bullying.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [The student names any two adults in school that are logical persons to discuss bullying issue]</li> </ul>
5	When a student leaves the classroom to get a drink, another student puts a tack on her seat. Several kids see this happen, including you. Some of the kids are laughing. The student will walk back into the classroom at any moment and might sit on the tack. What should you do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell the student who put the tack on the seat to remove it.</li> <li>• Remove the tack yourself.</li> <li>• Warn the student returning to her seat about the tack.</li> <li>• Tell an adult.</li> </ul>
6	You are walking into school one morning and notice that some unidentified person spray-painted graffiti on the wall near the entrance to the building. The graffiti insults a student that you don't know very well. A small group of kids are already gathering around the graffiti and commenting on it. What should you do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Join the group and tell students that whoever wrote the graffiti isn't playing fair, because they won't take responsibility for what they wrote.</li> <li>• Help to clean the wall.</li> <li>• Tell an adult.</li> </ul>
7	If you know a student who is being picked on a lot by bullies, what would you suggest the student should do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [Accept any response that includes positive steps that the victim can take: e.g., talk to a trusted adult, use assertiveness skills, etc.]</li> </ul>
8	On the playground, you see a group of boys that you are friends with pushing around a student from another classroom. At first, it looks like everybody is having fun, but then you notice that the student being pushed looks a little scared. What should you do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Join the group and suggest another game.</li> <li>• Tell the group to stop picking on the student.</li> <li>• Tell an adult.</li> </ul>
9	What are our rules for how people in this class should treat each other?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [Accept any response that includes relevant classroom rules for appropriate interpersonal conduct: e.g., "Treat others with respect", etc.]</li> </ul>
10	During math class, you notice that students are passing a note down the classroom row that you're sitting in. Each	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Throw away the note without comment.</li> </ul>



	student that looks at it laughs, and then passes it on. When the note gets to you, you see that it is a cartoon drawing of a girl in the class that most kids don't like; she is drawn to look like a witch and her name is on the drawing. What should you do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>If you know who wrote the note, approach them when you can and tell them not to send hurtful notes.</i></li> <li>• <i>Turn the note over to the teacher.</i></li> <li>• <i>Make an effort to be friends with the student being picked on. She can use your support!</i></li> </ul>
<b>11</b>	You sit next to a boy in your class named Jerry who almost everybody in the room finds annoying. Jerry bothers people by humming to himself a lot, tapping on the desk with his pencil, and squirming in his seat. Today, the teacher gives the class a bunch of directions and Jerry is not paying attention—as usual! Now, as the rest of the class gets to work, Jerry looks lost and confused: He is starting to get upset, and other kids are beginning to tease him. What should you do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Quietly approach Jerry and repeat the directions to help him get started.</i></li> <li>• <i>Approach an adult and let him/her know that Jerry needs help.</i></li> <li>• <i>Tell kids to stop picking on Jerry.</i></li> </ul>
<b>12</b>	You learn that some friends of yours plan to trick another student into inviting them all to a party at her house—and then not show up. They think that this will be a really funny idea. They expect you to play along with this trick. What should you do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Confront your friends and tell them not to play this trick. Ask them how they would feel if someone played a trick like this on them.</i></li> <li>• <i>Refuse to play along.</i></li> <li>• <i>Let the victim know that she is being duped.</i></li> </ul>
<b>13</b>	You are standing on the sidewalk in front of the school when you see a student walk by who is from the classroom next to yours. You yell out a joke about the student's clothes. Even though you were just kidding, you can see that you <i>really</i> hurt that student's feelings a lot. Now you feel pretty bad. What should you do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Approach the student and offer an apology. And be sincere.</i></li> <li>• <i>In future, don't make joking comments that could hurt others' feelings.</i></li> </ul>
<b>14</b>	You know that some kids in your school hang out in the hallway next to the gym during lunch and sometimes hassle students that walk by. These kids don't mess with you but they <i>do</i> like to pick on another student in your class who is shy and keeps to herself. Both you and the shy student need to walk past the gym to get to the cafeteria. How can you help this shy student?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Walk with the student to the cafeteria; confront the bullies if they pick on her.</i></li> <li>• <i>Tell an adult that bullies are hassling students down by the gym.</i></li> </ul>
<b>15</b>	How would you define <i>bullying</i> ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>[Accept any response that includes one or more of the following: (1) power difference between bully and victim; (2) chronic nature of bullying; (3) inflicting of physical harm, verbal harassment, emotional abuse, or social embarrassment or humiliation]</i></li> </ul>
<b>16</b>	When you walk to school, older students who walk the same route to a nearby high school will sometimes tease you and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tell an adult at school (e.g., School Resource Officer)</i></li> </ul>

	even slap you around. You are sick of it. What should you do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tell your parent(s)</i></li> <li>• <i>Take a different route to school until the problem is taken care of.</i></li> </ul>
<b>17</b>	A tough kid from another classroom walks up to you on the playground and says that, if you don't give him your lunch money, he will "flatten you." (He has never hassled you before.) If you give up that money, though, you won't be able to eat lunch! What should you do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Use assertiveness skills (e.g., tell the bully "No" firmly)</i></li> <li>• <i>Tell an adult</i></li> <li>• <i>See if your teacher will let you leave your lunch money in a safe place in the classroom every day until you need it.</i></li> </ul>
<b>18</b>	One day, you walk into the classroom late because you had a doctor's appointment. Students are grouped at tables doing a worksheet activity. You see an open chair next to a friend, so you begin to walk toward it. When your 'friend' sees you coming, though, she puts her books on the chair to block you from sitting there. The other kids at the table giggle. What should you do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Approach the table. Politely ask your friend to move the books so that you can sit at the table. If your friend refuses, calmly sit at another table.</i></li> </ul>
<b>19</b>	You have a few close friends in your classroom that you spend a lot of time with. There is another group of students in the room, though, that are always saying negative things about you and your friends behind your back. You are starting to get really annoyed at them. What should you do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Keep calm and don't try to retaliate by saying unkind things about other group in retaliation.</i></li> <li>• <i>If the comments really bother you, tell an adult.</i></li> </ul>
<b>20</b>	What is the difference between 'tattling' and 'telling'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tattling is when a student tells an adult what another student did simply to get him or her into trouble. Telling is when a student tells an adult what another student did because that student's actions were unsafe or hurt another person.</i></li> </ul>

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Finish

# 'Safe at School!'

A Game for Stopping Bullies



Start

