10 Ways to Be That Guy Online

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Chances are, if you use the internet, you know a little bit about online harassment. Especially (though of course not only) if you're (perceived as) a woman: a recent study showed that when your username appears to be female, you are 25 times more likely to experience harassment.

You might hear, or think, that we should ignore it—hey, it's not "real." But online harassment is actually hurtful, silencing, and even threatening IRL. So what can we do to change that? Here are our tips on how to Be That Guy online so that everyone feels safe and respected.

1. **Be That Guy Who Doesn't Harass People:** It's that simple. Look at what you post online honestly, and make changes if you need to. Keep it as respectful. Don't use sexist language. Don't post anyone's private information online. If you disagree with someone, critique their argument, but not them personally. Respect the ideas of others, and know when to move on and ignore.

2. **Be That Guy Who Understands It's A Big Problem:** Understand that there's a huge spectrum of online harassment, including insults, threats, stealing and sharing of private materials, hacking into accounts, and more. Understand that 77% of sexist comments are against women. Understand that online harassment has led to women filing police reports, canceling events, and leaving their homes. If you hear someone minimizing the effects of online harassment, speak up.

3. **Be That Guy Who Calls It Out:** If you see a problematic comment online, call it out. Don't attack the person making the comment, but point out specifically what you take issue with. Not sure what to stay? Start with, "This comment makes me feel uncomfortable because…" If they continue to harass, report them.

4. **Be That Guy Who Accepts No Excuse:** We can't shrug internet harassment off or tell people who experience harassment to toughen up. If you witness someone excusing harassment, let them know that it's not acceptable and it's up to us to set the standard. Everyone has the right to be online without fear of harassment or violence.

5. **Be That Guy Who Supports Women—And Pretty Much Everyone—Online:** When you agree with something a woman says online, support them. Like the post, write a supportive comment, or share with your friends. Join the chorus of guys who actively stand for respect for all. By visibly supporting women, you're helping to make a supportive and encouraging environment for everyone.

6. **Be That Guy Who Doesn't Mansplain:** Mansplaining is when a guy explains something to a woman that doesn't really need to be explained. It can come off as patronizing and clueless, and isn't actually helpful. Be mindful of how to engage with women online, and if you catch yourself trying to school someone, stop.

7. **Be That Guy Who Believes Survivors:** Survivors are often told that whatever happened to them is not a big deal. Many times they're completely ignored. Believe the women who come forward and, if they choose to share their story, support them publicly. Discrediting women survivors silences them. Support survivors to silence the harassers instead.

8. **Be That Guy Who Knows It's Never the Survivor's Fault:** People commonly blame survivors of online harassment by saying that the survivor shouldn't have been so brazen, shouldn't have posted certain pictures or information, or should have known to not engage on a particular website. Shift the blame. Know that the responsibility lies with the person who harasses. State this position publicly and you'll encourage others to do so too.

9. **Be That Guy Who Signal-Boosts:** Be aware of how your voice is received in your online communities, and use your voice to highlight those of women who talk about violence against women and share their experiences. Always give credit, show appreciation where it's due, and share supportive comments.

10. **Be That Guy Who Holds Digital Platforms Accountable:** Call on websites and platforms to enact and enforce anti-harassment policies. Report offensive comments. Signal-boost articles that call for better anti-harassment. Submit feedback to your social media and website communities on their policies. When we hold online institutions accountable, we make the internet safer—and more fun—for everyone.

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