

FAQs on Cyber Abuse

1. What is online abuse?

Threatening or abusive text messages, creation of embarrassing images or videos and sharing them, creating fake accounts, stealing online identities, and sexually explicit messages is online abuse. Online abuse happens on various platforms on the internet - social media, chat, forumss.

2. What to do when online abuse occurs?

When faced with online abuse, you can

- Check the policy of the platform where the abuse is happening and request the administrator to take action.
- File an FIR at the police station.

3. Can anyone take over my account or access my account without my permission?

No. If someone takes over your account or accesses your account without your permission, that person is guilty of the offence of unauthorized access under Section 43(a) of the Information Technology Act. The offender is liable to pay damages by way of compensation not exceeding one crore rupees to the person affected.

4. What is identity theft?

If the person has dishonestly stolen your password, electronic signature or other unique identifying feature, the person has committed a crime of identity theft and/or impersonation.

5. How can I report identity theft?

You can file a criminal complaint in a police station.

6. Can my private pictures be circulated on the internet without my consent?

- It is a crime to take, share or publish private pictures of a person without their consent. The offender is guilty of violation of privacy as per Section 66E of the Information Technology Act and can be imprisoned up to three years or fined up to two lakh rupees or both.
- If someone is taking and/or circulating pictures of a woman engaged in private acts without her knowledge, that person is guilty of offence of voyeurism under Section 354C of the Indian Penal Code.

7. Is it a crime to publish and share obscene material or sexually explicit material on the internet?

Yes, the punishment for publishing and sharing obscene material is a crime. The victims of such crimes under the information technology law can be male or female.

8. What can I do if someone is threatening to kill or hurt me?

If anyone is threatening you to cause death or to hurt you grievously or to destroy your property, you can file a complaint of criminal intimidation according to Section 503 of IPC. The punishment for criminal intimidation by an anonymous person can be imprisonment for up to two years or a fine or both.

9. When and how do you file a complaint?

There is no minimum threshold, for the amount of abuse or harassment you should have suffered before filing a complaint. In the first instance, it may be useful to report such instances to the platform on which the abuse is taking place.

10. Is it necessary to know the name of the person threatening me to lodge an FIR?

No, it is not.

11. How much information do you need to file a complaint?

Gather as much information as you can. Taking screenshots of relevant messages, conversations and comments can help your case.

12. Who should I approach to report online crimes?

For online crimes, you can approach the cyber-crime branch of the police. Unlike other crimes, cyber-crimes are usually not limited by jurisdiction within a state. You can report to the cyber-cell of any city, even if the offence was committed when you were in a different city.

13. What to do if I am unable to file a complaint in the cyber cell?

In case you are unable to file a complaint in the cyber cell, you can file an FIR with the local police station.

The women and child development ministry has also set-up a dedicated cyber cell to help women receiving online abuse.

