# **Responding to Online Hate: A Toolkit**

Coming across hate speech can be upsetting, but you don't have to face it alone. This guide gives you different options for how to respond, helping you choose what's right for you in that moment.

## **Option 1: Disengage and Prioritize Your Well-being**

Sometimes, the best response is to not respond at all.

* **Don't feed the trolls:** People who spread hate often want a reaction. Engaging with them can give them the attention they're looking for and make the situation worse.
* **Walk away:** If you feel hurt or angry, it's okay to close the app, turn off your phone, and take a break. Your mental health is more important than winning an online argument.

## **Option 2: Document and Report**

If the hate speech is serious, consider reporting it to the platform.

* **Take a screenshot:** Capture the hateful comment or message, including the date and the username of the person who posted it. This provides proof.
* **Use the platform's reporting feature:** Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have clear rules against hate speech. Reporting the content tells the platform that a rule has been broken.

## **Option 3: Respond Directly (with Caution)**

You might feel a need to speak up. If so, consider these approaches.

* **Educate, don't argue:** If you decide to respond, do it calmly. State a fact or express your opinion without getting into a heated exchange. For example, "Hate speech is not a form of free speech. It harms people."
* **Use humor (carefully):** Sometimes, a witty or sarcastic comment can defuse a situation, but be mindful that it could also escalate things.
* **Call out the behavior, not the person:** Focus on what they said, not who they are. For example, "That comment is hurtful and based on a harmful stereotype," rather than, "You are a bad person."

There is no single "right" way to respond. Your safety and comfort come first. Use this toolkit to choose the option that feels most empowering for you.