

What is stalking?



Unfortunately, in this day and age, we all need to know about stalking behaviors. This knowledge makes you more likely to notice this behavior before it escalates – giving you the ability to take steps to protect yourself.

Should you discover that you are being currently being stalked, either in-person, online, or via technology, it can certainly be unsettling and even dangerous.

If it happens to you, we encourage you to take steps to protect yourself and/or involve an authority figure who can help you.

What is stalking?

According to the Department of Justice (DOJ), stalking is defined as “a pattern of repeated and unwanted attention, harassment, contact, or any other course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear.”

And, similar to crimes of sexual violence, stalking is about power and control.

Stalking laws and definitions differ from state to state. To find out more about your state’s laws, we encourage you to visit the [Stalking Resource Center](#).

Stalking behavior can take many forms, which include:

- Making threats against someone, or that person’s family or friends
- Non-consensual communication, which includes repeated phone calls, emails, text messages, and unwanted gifts

- Repeated physical or visual closeness, like waiting for someone to arrive at a certain location, following someone, or continually watching someone from a distance
- Any other behavior used to contact, harass, track, or threaten someone

How new technology is used in stalking



One of the ways perpetrators stalk victims is through the use of technology. The term ‘cyberstalking’ refers to these types of interactions. The “use of technology to stalk” is a broad term that is used to cover all forms stalking that rely upon technology.

Some uses of technology to stalk include the following:

- Persistently sending unwanted communication through the internet, such as spamming someone’s email inbox or social media platforms like Facebook, Snapchat, etc.
- Posting threatening or personal information about someone on public internet/on-line forums
- Video-voyeurism, including installing video cameras that give the stalker access to someone’s personal and/or private life
- Using GPS or other software tracking systems to monitor someone without their knowledge or consent to do so
- Using someone’s computer and/or spyware to watch and track their computer activity

As technology and digital platforms continue to grow, so do the chances that someone could interact with you in an unwanted, sexual manner. Not all these behaviors are considered stalking, but they can be violating and make you feel uncomfortable. Learn more about the different ways people can [use technology to hurt others](#).

What are some common reactions to being stalked?

The DOJ uses the word “fear” to define the experience of being stalked, but there are other reactions that are just as important to consider. You might feel anxious, nervous, isolated, become stressed, or develop signs of depression as a result of someone’s stalking behavior.

What should I do if I’m being stalked?

If you think you are being stalked, please know you are right to be concerned about it – since stalking may escalate into other behaviors that are more dangerous.

Consider the following tips to increase your safety and effectively report the crime.

- Try to avoid the person stalking you. This can be difficult at times, especially if the person stalking you is close to you, your friends or your family.
- If you are being stalked through communication technology such as email or text messaging, make it clear that you wish the contact to stop. Once you’ve made it clear, don’t respond to any further communication.
- Keep any evidence you receive from the stalker, including (but not limited to) text messages, voicemails, letters, packages and emails – but, again, do not respond. You can do this by taking screenshots of conversations, printing out email exchanges, etc.
- Inform your family, friends, supervisors, and co-workers of the situation. Don’t keep the information to yourself.
- If you have children, agree on a code word that lets them know they need to leave the house or call the police.
- Do report the stalking to local law enforcement.
- Keep an accurate journal and/or log of all incidents connected to the stalking incidents.

- Become familiar with [computer safety](#), along with other ways to [stay safe online](#).

The information contained above is provided courtesy of the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization.