



Being an Active Bystander



This fact sheet will help you understand more about being an Active Bystander and what this looks like.

⚠ Warning ⚠ When researching this topic you may encounter material that is upsetting. Please speak to a teacher or a trusted adult if you are worried about anything you have seen.



What is being an Active Bystander?

Being an active bystander means speaking up or helping out when you see something wrong, like bullying, harassment, or someone being treated unfairly. Instead of staying silent or walking away, you choose to take action in a safe way.

This could mean saying something to stop the behavior, distracting the people involved, getting help from a trusted adult or authority, or checking in with the person afterward to make sure they're okay. It shows that you care and that harmful behavior isn't okay.

Examples of being an Active Bystander

There are many different ways that you can speak up and be an active bystander. We use the 5D method to provide us with 5 separate ways we can step in if we see inappropriate behaviour.

- **Direct** – Speak up clearly and calmly to address the harmful behavior.
- **Distract** – Create a distraction to interrupt the situation without direct confrontation.
- **Delegate** – Get help from someone else, like a teacher, supervisor, or authority figure.
- **Delay** – Check in with the person affected after the situation to offer support.
- **Document** – Record or write down what happened (only if it's safe), to help with reporting later.

The 5 Ds offer different options, so you can choose what works best in the moment without putting yourself at risk. When bystanders speak up or support someone, it can

stop the behavior, make the person affected feel supported, and even change how others act in the future. In short, the 5 Ds empower people to make a positive difference, even in tough situations.

Key Terms	Definition
Bystander	Someone who witnesses a situation but is not directly involved in it.
Active Bystander	A person who chooses to take action when they see harmful behavior, instead of staying silent or doing nothing.
Intervene	To step in or take action to try to stop a harmful situation or support someone in need.
Harassment	Unwanted behavior that makes someone feel upset, unsafe, or uncomfortable. This can be physical, verbal, or online.
Courage	The strength to do something difficult or risky, like standing up for someone even when it's uncomfortable.
Safety	Staying aware of your surroundings and choosing actions that don't put you or others in danger while helping.
Respect	Treating others with kindness, fairness, and recognizing their rights and feelings.
Prevention	Actions taken to stop something harmful from happening before it begins—like setting boundaries or promoting a positive environment.
Boundaries	Personal limits that define what is okay and what isn't in relationships, communication, and physical space.
Accountability	Taking responsibility for your actions and encouraging others to do the same—especially when behavior causes harm.
Safe Intervention	Your right to keep certain things (like thoughts, feelings, or belongings) to yourself unless you choose to share them.

Things to think about



Why Does Harassment Happen?

- People may **worry about their own safety**, being embarrassed, or becoming a target themselves if they speak up.
- When lots of people are around, individuals may **assume someone else will step in**, so they don't feel personally responsible to act.
- People might stay silent because they **don't want to go against the group**, especially if others are laughing or doing nothing.



Did You Know?

- When people speak up or intervene, it sends a message that harmful behavior won't be accepted, which can discourage it from happening again.
- Just making eye contact with the person being targeted or asking if they're okay afterward can help them feel seen and supported.
- When people take action, it helps build communities where everyone feels valued and protected.

What can you do?

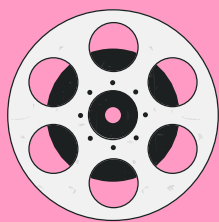
Pay attention to your surroundings and recognise when someone is being treated unfairly, bullied, or harassed.

Use the 5D's to safely and effectively intervene. But it's okay if you can't intervene directly—helping in any small way still counts, like finding someone who can.

Encourage kindness and respect in your community, school, or workplace so harmful behavior is less likely to happen.

Check back in with the person affected after the incident to see how they're doing and if they need any more help.

Set a good example – when you stand up for others, you encourage people around you to do the same.



Here are some videos and links that you may find useful:

[Gender Based Violence campaign #IsThisOK](#)

['Don't be that guy': 'Powerful' anti-sexual violence video targets men](#)

[Through Her Eyes \(A Short Film on Sexual Harassment\)](#)

Where to go for help

Parents/guardians/carers

Wider trusted family

Teachers/ Youth Workers

Childline 0800 1111

Yellow Door 02380 636312

No Limits

Police 999

Online support

[!\[\]\(a8f9309f944226d1420f5fed22e2b6e6_img.jpg\) www.childline.org.uk](#)

[!\[\]\(248b91fcdac4810ffd15cf33fb6aec6f_img.jpg\) www.nspcc.org.uk](#)

[!\[\]\(899d8b7697d64725bf017d3296cfcf1b_img.jpg\) www.themix.org.uk](#)

[!\[\]\(c1168d6a8b365d11e842ece304635fa7_img.jpg\) www.kooth.com](#)

[!\[\]\(cbd8541a32dfc32f356f5c6c994b0a21_img.jpg\) www.youngminds.org.uk](#)

[!\[\]\(d3e32d099174a7c248ec1f564ee4f69c_img.jpg\) www.barnardos.org.uk](#)

Final Thought



Being an active bystander means choosing to stand up, speak out, and support others when something isn't right. When more people take responsibility and act with kindness and respect, we create safer communities where everyone feels valued and protected.