

mean behaviour & tricky friends

how to respond cheat sheet

Type of mean behaviour	What it looks like	How to deal with it	Why it works
Mostly just to my face	Includes physical actions (like flicking rubber bands at the back of your head) or verbal actions (like insults – including online).	Stay calm and... Act like you don't care – for example, agree with them. E.g. <i>"You're so right, I am such a loser"</i> (said in a bored voice). OR Respond with humour or a witty comeback if possible. E.g. <i>"Nice insult – I give it 3/5 stars. Not very original though. Better luck next time!"</i>	This type of mean behaviour is about getting your reaction (upset or angry). Don't give them the satisfaction – maintain your composure!
Mostly in front of others	The behaviours are obvious to others/visible . They can be physical, verbal or online as well as circumstantial (e.g. only happens in Geography class).	1. Ask friends/bystanders/witnesses to 'disapprove' next time they see it happening (e.g. shake their head), or call it out by saying, <i>"We don't do that here."</i> 2. In-the-moment, you can also ask someone by name to help/support you, e.g. <i>"Hey Jordan, back me up here!"</i>	1. This type of mean behaviour is often about having an audience (e.g. making others laugh or think they're tough). People disapproving of their behaviour makes them look like bad guy in front of an audience (which isn't what they want). 2. Asking someone by name to help you increases the likelihood they'll intervene .
Mostly behind my back and/or hard to prove	Causes harm to your reputation, friendships, and self-esteem . They can be very subtle (make it seem like you're getting 'worked up over nothing') and include things like threatening looks, spreading rumours, gossiping, leaving out, revealing secrets, etc.	1. It's just started happening or it's happened a few times: Try and sort it out quickly/early on. Be calm, polite & curious. Say, <i>"I've noticed x behaviour. What's going on?"</i> Listen to understand. Say, <i>"How can we put this behind us and move forward?"</i> If they don't want that to happen, you can set a boundary, <i>"If this happens again, I will x."</i> 2. It's been happening a while or it keeps happening: Keep a record (write down what they're doing, how often and keep it factual). This shows a pattern of behaviour (bullying). Next, report it to a trustworthy adult and keep reporting it until it stops. Meanwhile, build social relationships with others who aren't part of that group – and look after your mental health!	1. Sometimes friends communicate in ways that are not ok. You can reset things by being upfront and using assertive communication . Calling out the behaviour also shows you're not going to just put up with it and let them treat you badly – and they won't just get away with it. 2. People who behave in this way try to look 'innocent' and don't want to get caught – so don't keep it secret! Their behaviour is also designed to make you feel bad about and doubt yourself – so, make sure you look after your wellbeing.

