

Dealing with online trolls

A It's always best to avoid trolls – both the ugly creatures in fairy stories and the equally ugly (on the inside at least) kind who spread their nasty comments by using a computer keyboard. If you look at the comments section of any online newspaper, you will find the second type at work, leaving shocking and unpleasant messages on all sorts of subjects.

B As a society, we value free speech, and, of course, there's a thin line between strong disagreement and messages that are completely unacceptable. But, basically, if someone's main goal is to spread hate and lies, to upset or embarrass someone, or even to scare the person, that person is a troll. Unfortunately, if you use social media, you are sure to have personal experience of trolling sooner or later. Trolls need victims, and they will find them in any online space where people communicate in public.

C If (or when) you meet one, remember that the ability to make you react is like food to a troll – so don't feed them! Trolls are not sensible people. They don't actually want a reasonable discussion, so there's no point at all in trying to have one. It may be tempting to insult or threaten trolls, but they will like this – it is "playing their game," and they are more likely to continue with it than stop. They are only trying to upset you, and if you don't give them a response, they have failed.



D Always remember that the troll is the one with the problem, not you. It's obvious that nobody who hides behind a keyboard to write things he or she would never dare say face to face can be a happy and secure person. In fact, newspaper reports of people who have been taken to court for threatening or inappropriate trolling almost always seem to describe sad and lonely lives. Trolls make us furious, but sympathy would probably be a more appropriate emotion.

Read the sentences. Then, choose **True** for true sentences, **False** for false sentences, or **Not Enough Information** when the article doesn't give you enough information to be sure.

1. The word “troll” has more than one meaning.

- a) TRUE
- b) FALSE
- c) Not Enough Information

2. Most comments on online newspapers are written by trolls.

- a) TRUE
- b) FALSE
- c) Not Enough Information

3. Only very intelligent people become trolls.

- a) TRUE
- b) FALSE
- c) Not Enough Information

4. Trolls don't like it if you post angry replies.

- a) TRUE
- b) FALSE
- c) Not Enough Information

5. Trolls are often unhappy people.

- a) TRUE
- b) FALSE
- c) Not Enough Information