



Fake Profiles

Responding to Fake Profiles

Fake profiles are accounts created using false or stolen identities, including accounts that impersonate you or pretend to be someone else in order to cause harm, confusion, harassment, or distress.

Fake profiles may be used to:

- Bully or harass you
- Impersonate you to damage your reputation
- Send messages pretending to be you
- Scam your contacts
- Share false or harmful content
- Evade previous blocks or bans

Impersonation can escalate quickly and may lead to harassment, stalking, extortion, or financial fraud.

If fake profiles are being used for credible threats, doxxing with imminent risk, stalking, or immediate danger, call 911.

If there is no immediate danger, preserve evidence and use platform reporting, non-emergency law enforcement, or legal-support channels.

Fake Profiles – Do This First

Assess Immediate Risk

Treat the situation as urgent if fake profiles:

- Are making threats or encouraging harm
- Are sharing private or identifying information
- Are contacting your employer, school, or family
- Are attempting extortion or impersonation for fraud

If any of the above are present, call 911.

Do Not Engage Publicly

- Do not argue with the fake account
- Do not “call them out” in comments
- Do not encourage others to harass the account

Public engagement often spreads the content further and benefits the impersonator.





Preserve Evidence Immediately

Before reporting or blocking:

- Screenshot or save:
 - Fake profiles (profile pages)
 - Usernames and display names
 - Profile photos
 - Posts, comments, or messages
 - URLs
- Record:
 - Dates and times
 - Platforms involved
 - Any patterns or escalation
- Do not edit or crop evidence if possible.

Contain the Harm

Report the Fake Profile to the Platform

Most platforms prohibit impersonation and fake accounts.

- Use the platform's impersonation or fake account reporting tools
- Select options such as:
 - "Pretending to be me"
 - "Harassment or bullying"
- Submit identity verification if requested
- Save confirmation emails or report numbers

Warn Your Network (Briefly and Safely)

Inform close contacts that fake profiles exist

- Ask them:
 - Not to engage
 - Not to share content
 - To report the profile instead
 - Keep messages factual and brief

Lock Down Your Accounts

- Increase privacy settings
- Limit who can tag, message, or comment
- Review friend/follower lists
- Remove publicly visible personal information

If Fake Profiles Keep Reappearing

Repeat impersonation is a strong indicator of harassment or stalking.





- Continue documenting each new account
- Report patterns to the platform
- Enable tools that block newly created or linked accounts
- Do not publicly react to each new profile

Report the Incident

When to Report to Authorities

Report fake profiles if they:

- Are part of ongoing harassment or stalking
- Are used to threaten or extort
- Are impersonating you for fraud
- Are causing significant emotional distress or safety concerns
- National Reporting
 - FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3)
<https://www.ic3.gov>
 - Federal Trade Commission (FTC) - report consumer fraud and scams at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/report-fraud).
- Ohio Resources
 - Ohio Attorney General – Identity Theft & Cybercrime Help
<https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov>
 - Hotline: 800-282-0515
- Geauga County
 - Geauga County Sheriff's Office
<https://www.geaugasheriff.org>
 - Call your local police department to file a report
 - Use 911 for active or escalating threats

If the Impersonator Is Someone You Know

If fake profiles are created by:

- A former partner
- A coworker or classmate
- A family member
- Someone with access to your personal information

Do not confront them alone.

Recommended steps:

- Preserve evidence quietly
- Seek law-enforcement or legal guidance
- Create a safety plan before escalation
- Avoid tipping them off while evidence is gathered





Emotional & Crisis Support

Impersonation and harassment can cause fear, humiliation, anxiety, and isolation.

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
- If you may hurt yourself or feel unable to stay safe, call or text 988.

You are not overreacting. This behavior is not harmless.

Recovery – Ongoing Protection

- Monitor platforms regularly for new impersonation
- Ask contacts to report quickly if they see fake accounts such as the below message:
 - “A fake account is pretending to be me. Please do not engage, click links, or send money/codes; report it to the platform.”
- Document any retaliation or escalation
- Revisit privacy settings periodically

How to Reduce the Impact of Fake Profiles

- Silence and documentation are better than public confrontation
- Early reporting limits spread and credibility
- Ask for help, impersonation thrives on isolation
- Trust your instincts when something feels “off”

