



Stalking and cyberstalking information leaflet

Stalking

The term "stalking" comes from hunting and means to pursue or approach stealthily. Stalking refers to a complex behavioural pattern that includes various acts. Repeated and deliberate harassment and following of a person can, for instance, result in that person's psychological or physical integrity being harmed or threatened on the long term.

The perpetrator, or "stalker", might engage in the following acts, among others:

- Sending unwanted gifts or depositing them in front of the house/flat
- Making contact persistently and constantly at any time of day or night via telephone calls, letters, emails or texting
- Monitoring communications made via email and texting – for instance by means of external access
- Harassment in online chats and social networks
- Intercepting and reading the affected person's mail
- Pursuing the affected person in the public space, waiting/lingering by the doorstep, waylaying at the workplace etc.
- Appearing at the workplace or making defamatory statements to the employer
- Unwanted online ordering in the name of the affected person
- Damaging or destroying the affected person's personal items
- Invading the affected person's living space
- Threats
- Actual physical or sexual assault

The perpetrator's acts are often linked to amorous delusion. The messages that the stalker conveys might include obscene and threatening content, as well as curses and insults.

Consequences for the affected person

- Helplessness
- Disruption of sleep and concentration
- Impairment of social life and personal freedom
- Avoidance of customary places
- Anxiety states
- Decreasing self-confidence
- Being forced to change place of residence and/or work
- Being subjected to physical or sexual violence by the stalker
- Suicide attempts due to persistent stalking situation

What can you do against stalking (anti-stalking rules?)

- Immediately break contact with the stalker. This act must be complied with and consistently maintained.
- You can convey to the stalker, on a single occasion, in a matter of fact and unambiguous way, that no further contact is wanted.
- Inform your confidants (possibly also employer, neighbours etc.) about the stalking behaviour. Ask these people to also break contact with the stalker consistently and permanently.
- Secure all evidence, such as text messages, emails, letters, answering machine messages, gifts, online chats, posts to social networks etc.
- Keep a stalking journal. In this, note down all events relating to the stalker, including what happened when, where and how.
- Obtain a new, second telephone number (prepaid). Important: the number known to the stalker must continue to operate. This enables you to gather further evidence.
- Only give your new telephone number to confidants.

- It is possible that the stalker might have installed spyware on electronic devices or otherwise gained access to shared electronic media.
- Do not take no for an answer when seeking help. Take your feelings seriously and do not doubt yourself.

Legal options

Stalking has been a specific criminal offence in Switzerland since the 1st of January 2026. In addition, a stalker's actions may constitute further criminal offences under the Swiss Criminal Code (SCC): The list shown here is not exhaustive.

Articles of the SCC	
Art. 122 ff	Assault
Art. 126	Acts of aggression
Art. 144	Criminal damage
Art. 156	Extortion
Art. 179	Misuse of a telecommunications installation
Art. 180	Threatening behaviour
Art. 181	Coercion
Art. 186	Unlawful entry
Art. 189	Indecent assault
Art. 190	Rape
Art. 198	sexual harassment



Cyberstalking

Unlike the stalking described above, cyberstalking takes place in virtual (cyber)space. Via use of the Internet or other electronic media, the affected person is persistently harassed, threatened, spied on, inundated with messages etc. by the stalker. It is not uncommon for the acts of cyberstalking to be combined with other aforementioned acts of stalking and for the stalker to be a person known to you

Cyberstalking is characterised by the following specific elements:

- Contact is not made in person, but indirectly, via electronic means of communication.
- The stalker's inhibition threshold is lower, due to the possibility of indirect communication.
- The stalker can send messages to the affected person at any time of day or night.
- The stalker can also incorporate third parties without any great effort -> by setting up a Facebook group, sending messages to the affected person's friends and relatives etc.

How can you recognise cyberstalking?

- You are inundated with messages via chats, texting or private messaging functions and/or your email account is disrupted by "email bombing" -> the stalker sends masses of emails, which block your email account.
- The stalker spies on you via data published online and based on information in social networks.
- Your relatives and friends are contacted by the stalker via email, texting, chats or social networks.
- The stalker publishes unwanted posts in social networks that you are a member of, or in which you have a profile, e.g. a post with insulting or defamatory content on your Facebook wall or makes photos or videos of you publicly available (often those from a previous relationship, such as nude photos or erotic videos).
- The stalker uses your identity. Under your name, the stalker creates a false profile in a social network, joins an online networking service, or orders goods from online shops.

The consequences include unwanted contact from strangers and delivery of goods that you did not order (entailing costs), as well as exposure and offence caused by statements made and photos uploaded in social networks under your name.

Consequences of cyberstalking

The consequences of cyberstalking are the same as those described above. However, as this all takes place in virtual space, it is also to be expected that large groups of people are reached simultaneously. It can become impossible for the affected person to obtain an overview of the situation.

What can you do against cyberstalking?

Alongside the aforementioned rules of conduct in cases of stalking, we also recommend acting in the following ways regarding cyberstalking:

- In social networks, reject any friend requests that you cannot clearly attribute to a person known to you.
- Protect your personal information by refraining from publishing your personal data, such as your address, telephone number, email address or birth date, in a publicly accessible manner online.
- Check who can see your information in all social networks in which you have a profile. For this purpose, use the possibilities provided by privacy settings.
- Adhere to rules that are recommended to you for setting up a password.
- If you use online personal advertisements, do not make your personal data known under any circumstances. Set up a separate email address for this purpose.
- In chats or other online situations, log out if you get harassed.
- Save unwanted social network posts on your computer or on an external hard drive. Subsequently, delete the posts online. If you lack the necessary rights to delete them, immediately inform those in charge (social networks) or the webmaster (websites).
- Also, in cases of cyberstalking, it is important to: break contact, inform those around you, secure evidence and press criminal charges if applicable.

Legal options

The legal options described above should also be considered in the event of cyberstalking. In addition to the aforementioned crimes, the following articles of the SCC also come into consideration in virtual stalking situations.

Articles of the SCC	
Art. 143	Unauthorised access to a data processing system
Art. 173	Defamation
Art. 174	Willful defamation
Art. 177	Insult
Art. 179	Obtaining personal data without authorisation
Art. 197	Pornography

In complex cases, also those that involve cyberstalking, we recommend bringing in a legal expert. Particularly in the virtual domain, invasions of personal privacy can also fall within the scope of data protection law and be difficult for laypeople from outside the legal system to understand, so this also speaks in favour of bringing in a legal expert

Where can you turn to?

Your subjective feeling is a key point of reference in cases of stalking. If you feel forced to change your behaviour and/or if you are greatly impaired in your everyday life, it is time to request professional support.

- We provide cost-free counselling for people affected by stalking and for their relatives. Do not hesitate to contact us.
- In emergencies, call the police on the emergency number 117.
- You will find a list of all victim support services in Switzerland here: www.opferhilfe-schweiz.ch

