

How Internet Trolling Affects Us All

If you have a strong social presence online, you may have experienced what many Internet users call “being trolled.” Being trolled, is something we all have to deal with increasingly as the Internet becomes more social. Here’s a brief introduction to trolling for anyone who isn't quite clear on what it actually means.

What Exactly Is 'Trolling'?

The Urban Dictionary has a bunch of definitions under the term “trolling,” but the first one that pops up seems to define it as simply as possible. So, it can be defined as: “Being a prick on the internet because you can. Typically unleashing one or more cynical or sarcastic remarks on an innocent by-stander, because it's the internet and, hey, you can.”

Those who aren't quite familiar with the Internet slang definition of “troll” or “trolling” might automatically think of the mythical creature from Scandinavian folklore. The mythological troll is known to be an ugly, dirty, angry creature that lives in dark places, like caves or underneath bridges, waiting to snatch up anything that passed by for a quick meal. In some ways, the mythological troll is similar to the Internet troll. The Internet troll hides behind his computer screen, and actively goes out of his way to cause trouble on the Internet.

Where the Worst Trolling Happens

You can find trolls lurking around almost every corner of the social web. Here are some specific places that are well known to attract trolls.

- YouTube video comments: YouTube is notorious for having some of the worst comments of all time. Go and have a look through the comments of any popular video, and you're bound to find some of the worst comments ever. The more views and comments a video has, the more troll comments it'll probably have as well.
- Blog comments: On some popular blogs and news sites that have comments enabled, you can sometimes find trolls cursing, name-calling and just causing trouble for the heck of it.
- Forums: Forums are made for discussing topics with like-minded people, but every once in a while, a troll will come in and start spewing negative words all over the place. If forum moderators don't ban them, other members will often respond and before you know it, the thread gets thrown completely off topic and becomes nothing but one big pointless argument.
- Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or practically any social networking site: Now that almost anyone can comment on a status update, reply to a tweet or send an anonymous question, trolling is absolutely everywhere that people can use to interact. Instagram is especially bad, because it's a very public platform that people use to post photos of themselves—inviting everyone and anyone to judge their appearances in the comment section.

Why Do People Troll on the Internet?

Every Internet troll has a different backstory, and therefore different reasons for

feeling the need to troll a community on the Internet. They may feel depressed, attention-starved, angry, sad, jealous or some other form emotion. What makes trolling so easy is that anyone can do it, and it can be done totally anonymously. Trolls can hide behind their shiny computers, screen names and avatars when they go out trolling for trouble, and after they're all done, they can carry on with their real lives without facing any real consequences. Trolling makes a lot of cowardly people feel stronger.

Dealing with Trolls

If a troll tries to provoke you, just ignore them. They're not worth your time or emotional distress. Try not to take anything personally. If you can, try to have a good laugh and think about how sad it is that people actually feel the need to insult complete strangers on the Internet.