



OMG GUESS  
WHAT!?!?!1!!?!?!?!?  
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what happened?

# Gossip abounds

**Fremont High School's gossip is aided by a returning anonymous chat app**

# Putting SCIENCE into the GOSSIP

Many people gossip. However, the word isn't negative by definition. Gossip is defined by social scientists as 'any talk about someone who isn't present, normally entertaining and something we can either approve of or disapprove of'. Robin Dunar, an evolutionary psychologist, first pioneered the idea that gossip helped human ancestors survive. David Ludden, professor of psychology at Georgia Gwinnett College and author of *The Psychology of Language: An Integrated Approach*, explains that people talk instead of "picking fleas and dirt off each other". This is where gossip begins. "They (people in the past) needed to have as much information as possible about the people around them in order to know what other people are like, who can and can't be trusted, who breaks group rules, who is friends with who, what other people's

personalities and viewpoints are and so on," Mark Leary, a PhD professor of psychology and neuroscience at Duke University who specializes in social and personal psychology, said. Gossip can also help emotionally. In a 2012 study, Matthew Feinberg, an assistant professor at the University of Toronto, found that the act of gossiping helps calm people. The heart rates of the subjects were found to quicken when they would hear about someone else's antisocial behavior or about an unjust situation, but once they would tell someone else about it their heart rates returned to normal. Gossip can also influence social rankings in young children and their peers. Children under fifth grade can see positive social consequences from gossiping. Students labeled socially aggressive were often popular and made social groups easier.

However, in modern times, gossip has a negative connotation. It spreads through schools like wildfire. Research suggests that 93% of schoolyard gossip between young kids isn't negative. However, the 7% that is, can cause detrimental harm. Gossip, also known as social aggression, often causes the child who has been targeted to suffer from "loneliness, depression and anxiety", according to psychologist Dr. Marion Underwood. Negative gossip pointed towards children can also affect their academic future. In fact, peer rejection (which includes gossiping and bullying) is one of the strongest predictors of a child's future academic success. While the person being gossiped about will suffer the most, eventually, even the person leading the gossip will suffer. While students who gossip while they're young experience

positive effects, these dwindle as they age. By ninth grade, the peers of students who gossip are more likely to see the gossipers in a negative light. Gossip isn't negative in definition. More commonly than not however, gossip remains harmful.

There are groups centered around gossip prevention. Word Effect spreads information on statistics and offers assistance.

80% of conversations consist of gossip. However, only 9% of total gossip is malicious and sharing negative information about other people.

Guys gossip more than girls 2:1.

Gossip allows you to know 100,000 people without actually knowing them.

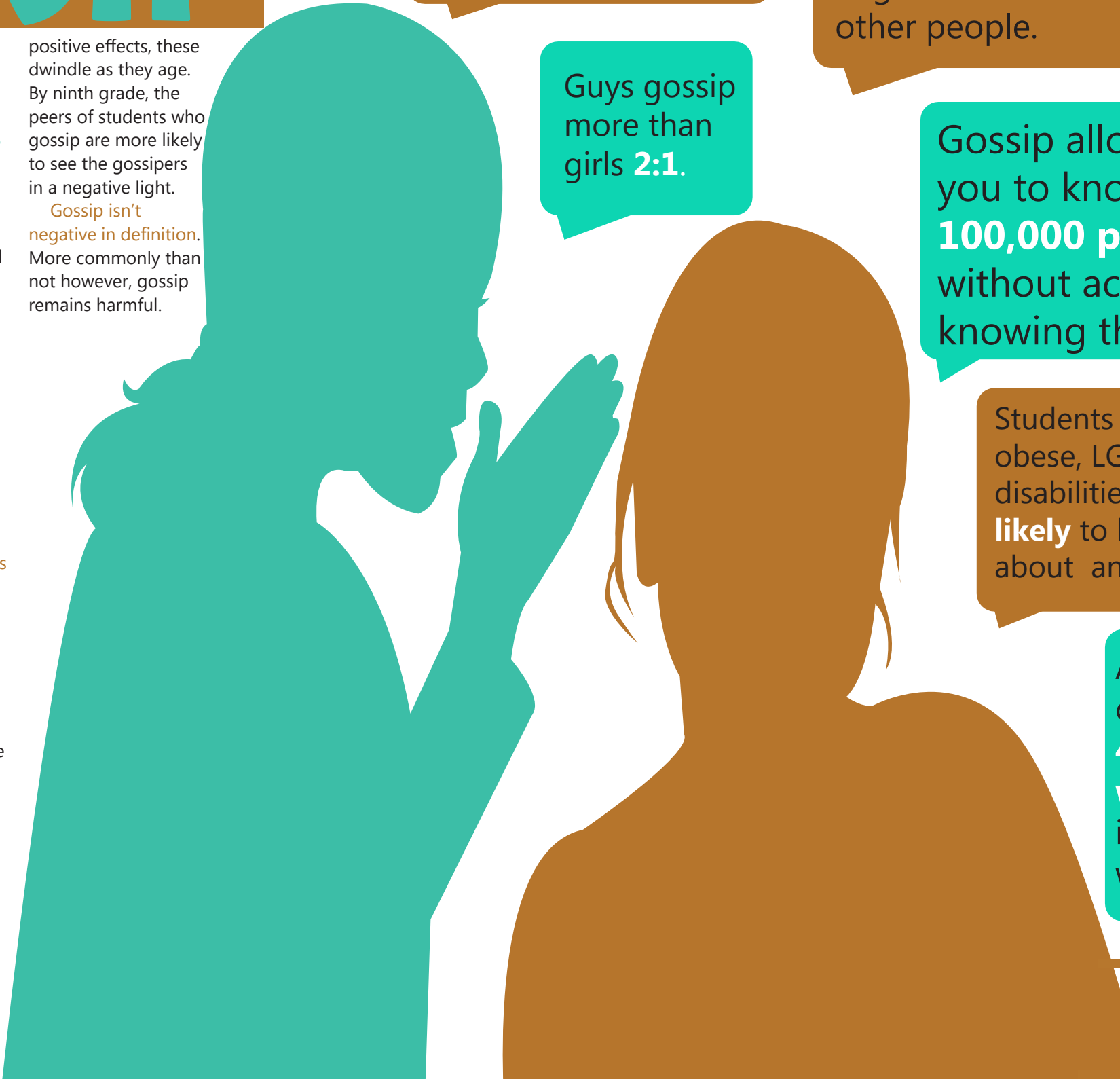
Students who are obese, LGBTQ+ or have disabilities are 63% more likely to be gossiped about and bullied.

Adults spent on average 40 minutes a week gossiping in their workplaces.

### So here's the big question

#### Is gossip covered as a first amendment right?

While first amendment rights cover a wide range of speech, a percentage of gossip does not fall under its protection. However, gossip needs to qualify to be legally prosecuted. It needs to be a 'true threat' (a threat made with intent for harm), incitement (encouraging violence or lawlessness), or harrassment (targetted, discriminatory, and repeated). Slander is another word for gossip.



A new trending app

is on the scene

The relaunch of cyberbullying and anonymity in an popular app has become a source of spreading gossip at Fremont High School. Yik Yak is an app that allows people to "anonymously" create discussion boards with others within a 5-mile radius about topics ranging from jokes to genuine questions and even threats. When signing up for the app all you need is a valid U.S. phone number to verify your humanity. The app was originally launched by Atlanta Ventures in 2013. Due to cyberbullying and threats, the app was shut down for several years. Since the relaunch in 2021, they have brought that "anonymous" feature back. Unfortunately the cyberbullying, threats and gossip resurfaced on the app. "The way people have been using the app is far from mature," junior Sheyli Leon said. "I think Yik Yak is an app used by immature people to spread other people's personal life. I think people go on the app to hear the gossip posted about other people's personal life as a 'joke' just for other people's entertainment." Many students have been using the app to

anonymously gossip about other students' and teachers' personal lives. "I heard about the app and didn't know what it was so I downloaded it and just saw name after name of many people I know," sophomore Cheyenne Smith said. In the app's community guidelines it states that bullying is not allowed and encourages it's users to downvote and report 'yaks' that don't follow the guidelines. While personal privacy is protected, it can be disclosed as required by and within the boundaries of the law. A downvote is a vote against a post by clicking on an arrow or other icon, which usually ends up affecting the post's rank or position on a website or app. In order for a 'yak' to be reported it needs to be downvoted or disliked at least 5 times before it can be removed or 'yaks' that are reported need to be reviewed by their team before it's removed. A common misconception about the app is that users, especially teen users, believe the app is totally anonymous, but that isn't necessarily true. "I think that people like the anonymity that being online gives them whether

it's this app or other apps," principal Myron Sikora said. "I think it's a lot harder to say some of the things that are said (on the app) when you're sitting face to face with somebody." In some cases police can even get involved. There was a case that involved a UNL student and the school chancellor. The student was arrested and charged with a felony for terroristic threats. Many of the threats the student made were related to allegedly planting a bomb in the chancellor's office. "Police departments have been able to go to the company and they have been able to track those things down," Sikora said. "If you're making threats toward people, schools, individuals or businesses they can track you down." Students have some protection of First Amendment rights like freedom of speech; however, speech that can be labeled as slanderous is not protected by the First Amendment. These are examples of defamation, which is the action of damaging the reputation of someone. When students post to Yik Yak or interact with other posts they should be cautious about what they say since they are responsible for their 'yaks' and the possible consequences that could come with it.

3h ago

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OPINION



# Yik Yak is spreading the juicy gossip yet again

Well, well, well. Yet again anonymous message apps have surfaced to break the unstable peace. Yik Yak - the returning anonymous messaging app - has decided to take Fremont High by storm. That storm is now a bit too aggressive. We all know that gossip has permeated the app. False statements are being shouted from the void. Yik Yak is synonymous with slander now. Really? We're actually doing this? I've seen Mean Girls too many times. Spreading hate around the school is definitely

not the way to go if we want to avoid the awkward gym discussion like the one in the movie. And I'll be honest, I'd refuse to participate in that trust fall activity. No burn book participation from me. I'm joking a bit as I write this but to be fully honest, this is a serious topic. The amount of pain that gossip and slander can give to people leads to some terrible situations. I don't think I need to go into the statistics of what bullying leads people to do for us to truly understand exactly how dangerous it is (bullied students are two to nine times

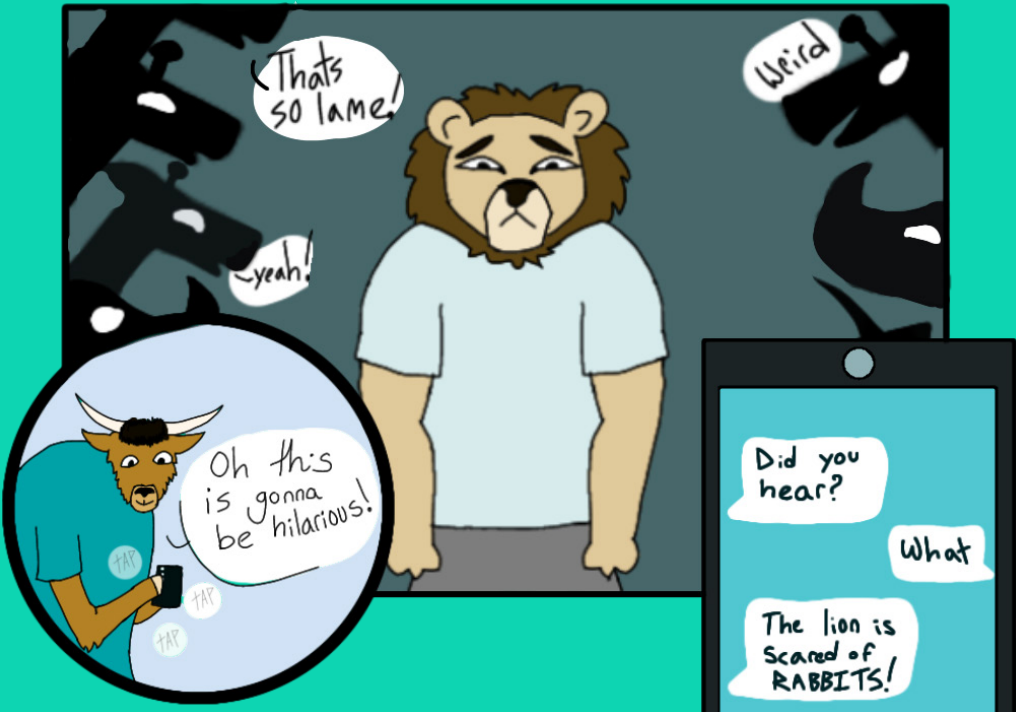
more likely to commit suicide according to bullyingstatistics.org). Saying something snide to a friend can start a whirlwind of a rumor that's suddenly out of control. I know I've spread a rumor or some harsh gossip with a friend. It's easy to slip into. Gossip and rumor spreading have definitely gotten easier to do now with technology. Seriously, though. Who creates a localized anonymous chat app and doesn't expect people to abuse it? People are mean enough on the internet when they have their names

attached! I can't imagine how cruel they can be if they don't have to say who they are. Gossip is everywhere and in everything. It's incredibly easy to accidentally participate in. However, it's also incredibly easy to avoid. Simply don't participate. Easy. It's not hard to delete the app, say "I don't want to hear this about them" or something like that. Find a positive topic to discuss instead of the likely false shortcomings of others behind their backs. Gossip is a mindset. Put an effort in. Break out of it.

On average, false rumors and gossip spread faster than the true ones.

True rumors spread on social media sites are often resolved in just two hours and stop attracting attention.

False rumors however can remain cycling for on average 12 to 14 hours.



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