

# Formspring

## Advice for schools



### What is Formspring?

Formspring (<http://www.formspring.me/>) is a social networking site which lets users set up a profile and enables them to post questions to other users. It can be integrated with other social networking sites such as Facebook and information sharing sites like Twitter, so these questions can appear on profiles set up on these sites. Like Facebook and Twitter, users are encouraged to gather 'friends' to follow them. One of the main differences from other social networking sites is that Formspring has given users the ability to send questions anonymously. This feature has been exploited by certain users to harass and cyberbully others and has led Formspring to change its privacy settings.

### How old do you have to be to use Formspring?

Like many social networking sites, Formspring is administered by a company in the United States and, under its terms and conditions, users under the age of thirteen should not use the site. If anyone is aware that someone under this age is using the site, they can be reported at [privacy@formspring.me](mailto:privacy@formspring.me)

### Can I stop receiving anonymous questions?

When Formspring was first developed, one of the original ideas was to let people communicate anonymously, as they felt that people might share more information if they did not have to provide personal details to other users. The feature (which still exists) allows users to hide their name when sending questions to other users. However, recently it has been used by certain users to cyberbully and harass, so Formspring have made changes to their settings in order that users can choose not to receive anonymous questions. Full details of how to do this appear in this booklet.

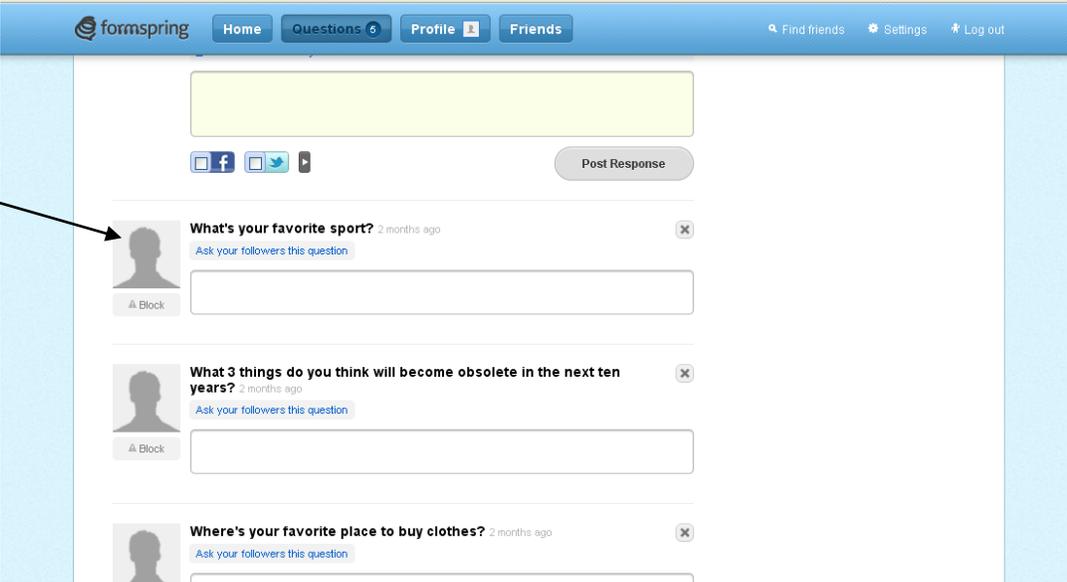
The ability to 'hide my name' is a feature which lets users send questions anonymously.



## How to block questions

If you receive a question that makes you feel uncomfortable, you can block the sender by simply pressing the 'block' button, to the left of the question. The sender will not be notified of this, so hopefully there will not be any recriminations towards the recipient of the question.

If you receive an offensive question or comment, you can click here to block the sender.

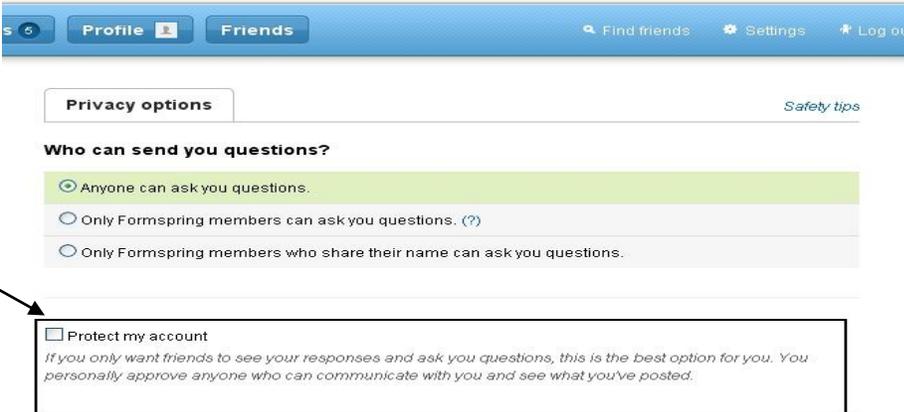


The screenshot shows the Formspring website interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for Home, Questions (6), Profile (1), and Friends. On the right, there are links for Find friends, Settings, and Log out. The main content area displays a list of questions. The first question is "What's your favorite sport?" from 2 months ago. To the left of the question is a profile picture placeholder and a "Block" button. A callout box with an arrow points to this "Block" button. Below the first question are two more questions: "What 3 things do you think will become obsolete in the next ten years?" and "Where's your favorite place to buy clothes?". Each question also has a "Block" button next to it.

## Can I only receive questions from people I know?

Accounts can be set to 'Protected' in the privacy settings which means that everything on your account page becomes private. In order for other people to see this, they firstly must request your permission and you have the control to give them access

Click on 'Protect my account' to make your profile page private.



The screenshot shows the Formspring privacy settings page. At the top, there are navigation tabs for Profile (1) and Friends. On the right, there are links for Find friends, Settings, and Log out. The main content area is titled "Privacy options" and includes a "Safety tips" link. Under the heading "Who can send you questions?", there are three radio button options: "Anyone can ask you questions." (selected), "Only Formspring members can ask you questions. (?)", and "Only Formspring members who share their name can ask you questions.". Below these options is a checkbox labeled "Protect my account". A callout box with an arrow points to this checkbox. Below the checkbox, there is a paragraph of text: "If you only want friends to see your responses and ask you questions, this is the best option for you. You personally approve anyone who can communicate with you and see what you've posted." Below this section is another heading "Who you've blocked" with a sub-heading "You aren't blocking anyone right now. You can block users from either their profile or your Formspring inbox."

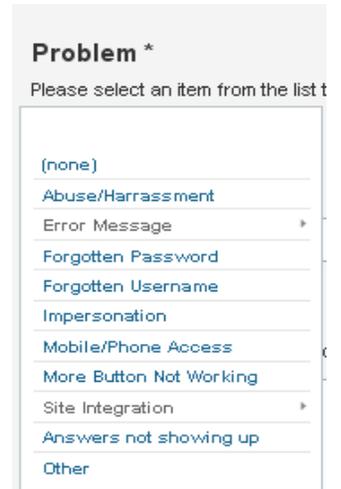
## Reporting abusive messages or questions

If you are being harassed by a member of Formspring or are receiving questions that make you feel upset or uncomfortable, you can report abuse by filling in an online form at:

<http://formspringme.zendesk.com/requests/anonymous/new>

When you are directed to this page, Formspring will ask you for the following information:

- Email address
- Username
- Username you are reporting
- The problem you are reporting. You can choose from the following:
- Subject
- Description
- Status verification



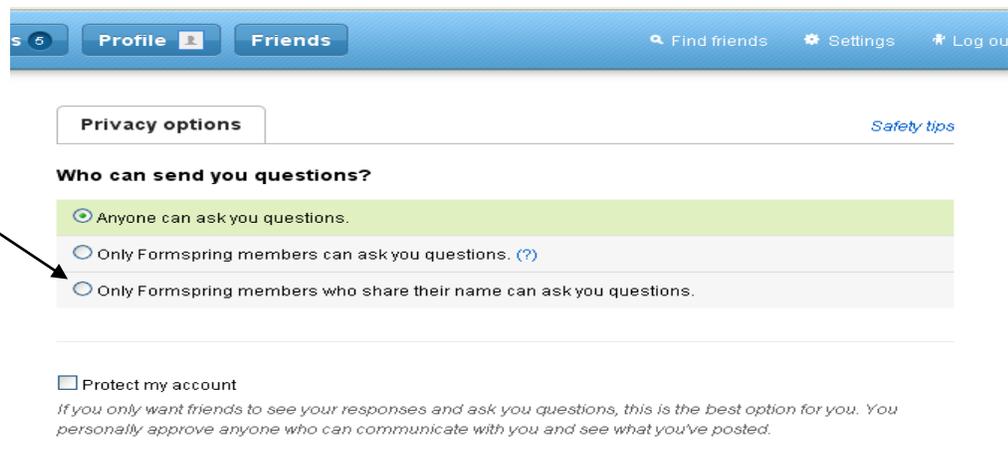
**Problem \***  
Please select an item from the list

- (none)
- Abuse/Harrassment
- Error Message
- Forgotten Password
- Forgotten Username
- Impersonation
- Mobile/Phone Access
- More Button Not Working
- Site Integration
- Answers not showing up
- Other

This report feature also lets users upload any examples of abuse or harassment. It is always sensible, to take a screen shot (use the Print Screen key and paste into a word processing document) to provide as evidence.

## What happens if I receive anonymous questions?

You can decide NOT to receive anonymous questions from users of Formspring. In your privacy settings, you can choose who you want to receive questions from:



Profile Friends Find friends Settings Log out

**Privacy options** [Safety tips](#)

**Who can send you questions?**

- Anyone can ask you questions.
- Only Formspring members can ask you questions. (?)
- Only Formspring members who share their name can ask you questions.

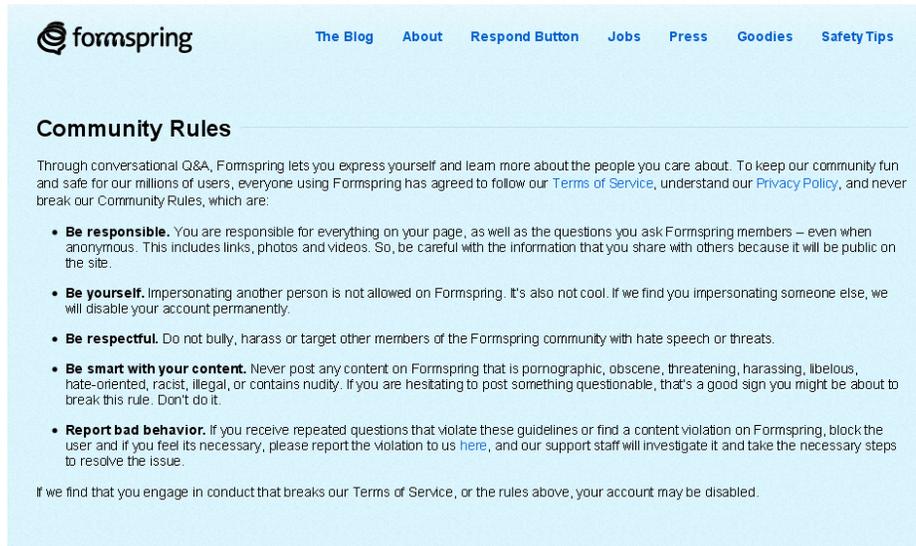
Protect my account

*If you only want friends to see your responses and ask you questions, this is the best option for you. You personally approve anyone who can communicate with you and see what you've posted.*

Tick this box to receive questions from members who share their name.

## Does Formspring have any rules?

Formspring has a set of 'Community Rules' which sets out how users should behave whilst they are using the site. It clearly states that you should not bully, harass others or upload illegal material.

A screenshot of the Formspring website's 'Community Rules' page. The page has a light blue background. At the top left is the Formspring logo. To the right of the logo is a navigation menu with links: 'The Blog', 'About', 'Respond Button', 'Jobs', 'Press', 'Goodies', and 'Safety Tips'. Below the navigation is the title 'Community Rules'. The main text explains that through conversational Q&A, Formspring lets users express themselves and learn more about people they care about. It states that to keep the community fun and safe, everyone using Formspring has agreed to follow the Terms of Service, Privacy Policy, and never break the Community Rules. There are five bullet points detailing the rules: 1. Be responsible: Users are responsible for everything on their page, including links, photos, and videos. 2. Be yourself: Impersonating others is not allowed. 3. Be respectful: No bullying or hate speech. 4. Be smart with your content: No pornographic, obscene, threatening, harassing, libelous, hate-oriented, racist, illegal, or nude content. 5. Report bad behavior: Report violations to the support staff. A final note states that accounts may be disabled for breaking these rules.

<http://about.formspring.me/community>

## Does Formspring have any safety and support guidance?

Formspring does offer a safety page (<http://about.formspring.me/safety>) which gives general advice about being safe whilst using the site. Obviously, because the site is based in the United States, much of the information are based on US resources

Formspring also offers a support page (<http://formspringme.zendesk.com/home>) that gives details more detailed information on some of the advice given in this booklet and also gives support on dealing with accounts that are hacked. It also gives details of changes to the site and revisions to privacy policies etc. Users can also keep up to date of developments with Formspring via it's Twitter account ([@Formspring](https://twitter.com/Formspring)).

## YHGfL Advice

- Use the privacy settings to 'protect my account', so you can decide who is able to send you questions.
- Click on the 'block' button if you receive any unwanted questions.
- Report any cyberbullying or harassment using the online form.