



How to Save and Print a Screenshot

Perpetrators can misuse messaging platforms to harass, intimidate, and threaten people. When technology-facilitated violence occurs, maintaining a record of events is important for criminal and civil legal proceedings. “Messaging platforms” includes a variety of communication technologies. We use the term to include both text messages (SMS and MMS) and instant messaging applications (such as WhatsApp and Signal). We also include applications that a user downloads onto their device (such as Instagram DMs or Facebook Messenger).

Messaging Evidence Preserved by Screenshots

Messaging evidence can provide proof of abuse and provide evidence of harassment, threats, and domestic violence. While messaging evidence can be extremely useful, it is important to properly capture it to maintain its usefulness in court. It is possible for it to get accidentally deleted or damaged if not captured right away. One way to capture and preserve evidence of harassment, intimidation and threats is through a **screenshot**. The second way is to provide a video screen recording. *See the BCSTH [handout on video screen recording](#) for instructions.*

What is a Screenshot

*A **screenshot** is a photo capture of what you currently see on the screen of your device. This can be done on most smartphones, tablets, computers and laptops. You can take screenshots of anything that can be seen on your screen. Some apps, like Snapchat, will send a message to the person’s account if you take a screenshot of their content - so you will want to look into the app that you are taking a screenshot of. It’s also important to remember that some apps delete messages after they’ve been read, like Snapchat.*

A screenshot will only capture what you see on your screen, so you will have to take multiple screenshots to capture all of the messaging evidence you want to preserve if it is on more than one screen.

This information sheet will provide information about how to take a screenshot on your device and what to include for evidence preservation. We will use text messaging as an example throughout this information sheet, however most of the tips apply to capturing evidence via screenshots on social media platforms and websites.



Safety Check

Before you screenshot text messaging evidence, always think through any potential risks to your safety, as your mobile devices may be monitored.

If you think your computer or laptop is being monitored – either by [spyware](#) or a parental monitoring software – the person monitoring your device might know that you are taking screenshots on the computer.

On a smartphone, if someone has access to the photos and videos you take (for example, if you share devices or the perpetrator knows your cloud ID and password) they might be able to see that you are capturing screenshots. Monitoring of smartphones via [mobile spyware](#) is also possible. If the perpetrator is monitoring your device, this could alert them to you collecting evidence. This has the potential to escalate the abuse and the perpetrator may find ways to delete the files of your evidence.

If you think that preserving evidence via screenshots will be a safety concern, consider taking the screenshot on a computer that isn't being monitored, such as a computer at the public library or a friend's computer. If you are worried about your phone being monitored, rather than using your phone to take the screenshot, you can use a separate camera to take pictures of the screen.

Consider [password safety](#) and the importance of changing passwords on all relevant platforms and devices. If you have any concerns that your device(s) may be monitored or infected with spyware, make a safety plan on how to change passwords without alerting the perpetrator. If it is safe, looking into your account settings to see what devices are connected to it and disconnecting other devices (such as the perpetrator's devices) may be essential to maintain your privacy.

Messaging apps can be accessed remotely by a perpetrator through an insecure password or automatic syncing, so important evidence could be modified or deleted if not properly protected. You may need to consider alternative ways to preserve evidence, some of which can be found in this toolkit.

How to Take a Screenshot

Taking a screenshot can be slightly different for each device and different models of the same device. If you are not familiar with how to take a screenshot from your device, you can also do an online search for "*How to take a screenshot on a [your specific phone or tablet]*" for instructions. There are many videos online that can show you how to do this.

The chart below provides general information about how to take a screenshot on a computer or smartphone.



Device	Take a Screen Shot	Find Your Screen Shot
Windows Laptop or Computer	<p>Find the key on the keyboard that says: PrtScn, Prt Scr, or Print Screen.</p> <p>Note: not all new keyboards have these keys. You may have to do a quick search of your mode to learn how to do this.</p> <p>Or Press the Windows key + Shift + S</p> <p>Or Use the “Sniping Tool” in your programs</p>	<p>Normally you will find your screenshots saved in this folder Pictures → Screenshot</p> <p>Immediately after taking the screenshot, open a document that lets you paste an image (such as Word or Google Docs), and “paste” the screenshot.</p>
Mac Laptop or Computer	<p>At the same time, press these keys: Shift + Command + 3. This will save the screenshot onto your computer desktop.</p>	<p>Screenshot will be saved onto the desktop as a picture.</p>
iPhone or iPad	<p>At the same time, press the On/Off button + the Home button.</p> <p>For iPhone X or higher, press the On/Off button + the Up Volume button.</p>	<p>Screenshot will be saved into your Photos app as a picture.</p>
Android Phone or Tablet	<p>Android devices differ. You should try the following options: 1) Down Volume button + Home button, 2) On/Off button + Home button. If neither of those work, try an online search for “How to take a screenshot on a [your specific phone or tablet]”.</p>	<p>Screenshot will be saved into your Gallery as a picture.</p>



Printing the Screenshot

Printing your screenshot directly after you have captured it is recommended. You can use these printouts in court. It can be easier for courts to view printed screenshots than digital files. Additionally, the [authenticity](#) of your evidence is less likely to be questioned if you preserve it immediately. Opposing counsel could claim there was manipulation of evidence during the capturing process if there was a delay in printing the screenshots and/or a significant amount of time passed between when you saw the evidence, captured it and printed it.

From a smartphone, you may be able to print your screenshot directly from your device to a wireless printer. Depending on where your screenshot is stored on your computer or laptop, you may be able to print the file directly.

If you cannot directly print the original screenshot, you should always safely store the digital original. Other ways to preserve screenshots include saving the screenshots in a file folder in proper order, or pasting your screenshot (or picture) into a document using a program that lets you paste an image (e.g., Word, Pages, or Google Docs). Pasting them in a word document can help you keep them all in chronological order. Once in the new document version, print the document that includes the screenshots. You may also want to email or text the document to a device that you will continue to have secure access to, in order to have an extra copy.

Taking a Photo

If your phone or computer doesn't allow you to take a screenshot, or you think your device might be monitored, take a photo of the computer, phone, or tablet screen with another camera. Doing this can also be a way to avoid the problem with Snapchat and similar apps that notify the sender when you take a screenshot. Be sure to capture the message and the entire screen. You should make sure you are taking overlapping photos of the texts as well (for example, have a portion of the bottom of the last photo in the top of the next so the court can see what order the texts are made in). Sometimes, the screen can be quite small, so you may want to make sure you hold the camera close. Look at the photo to make sure that the words are easy to read and any image is clear.

Printing the Photo

If you took a photo, you can print it as you would normally print other photos. If you have a digital photo, you can copy or "insert" the photos into a document and print the document. Just make sure that any image is clear and words are easy to read.



Recording a Video

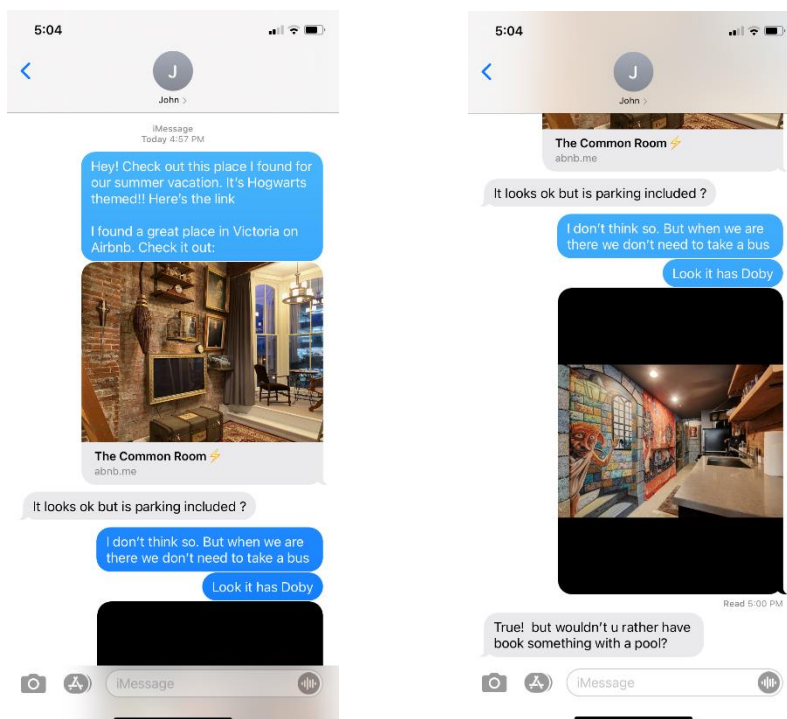
You can also take a video of the message. This might be helpful if you have a lot of information you want to capture and taking photos or screenshots is too slow. This can also be another way to avoid the problem with Snapchat and similar apps that notify the sender when you take a screenshot. With the **“video screen recording”** function activated on your smartphone, hold your camera steady while you scroll through the content you want to document. See our [handout on Video Screen Recording](#) for more information.

What to Include When Capturing Messaging Evidence

Capture the Entire Conversation

Many self-representing litigants will capture a screenshot of an offending message, such as a threatening text, rather than the entire text conversation. To provide the court with the context of the conversation, you should include the *full* conversation in your digital evidence.

As mentioned previously, screenshots only capture what is currently on your screen. As some courts will not accept partial messaging conversations, it is always best to capture the entire conversation even if it does not have any [relevance](#) to your case. To do this, you will generally need to take multiple screenshots to capture an entire text message conversation.





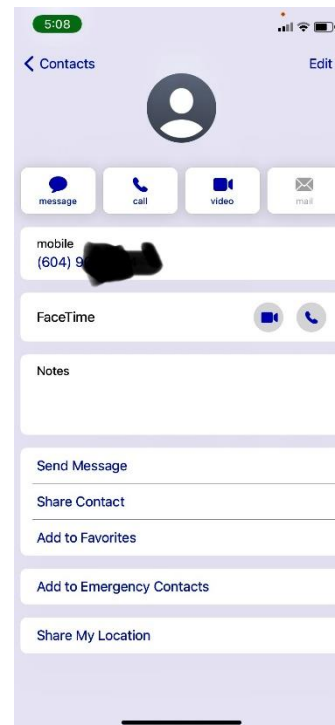
Get Supporting Evidence

Screenshots of a message or conversation may be adequate to prove your case. However, this type of evidence may not always be sufficient. You might need more information to prove your case. You should think about what other supporting evidence is available to you that might help bolster your case. This could be in the form of phone bills that show the date and time that messages or phone calls were sent or received. These messages can be compared with the screenshot or data from your Facebook Account using their [Download Your Data Feature](#).

Include the Sender's Contact Information

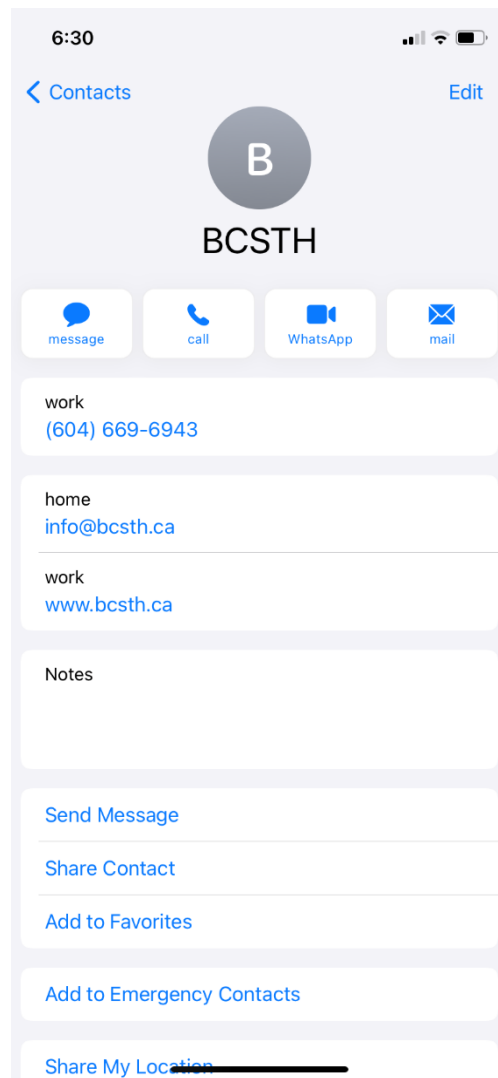
Smartphone:

On a smartphone, you may have the abusive person's name stored in your contacts and therefore, the sender of messages is identified by name rather than a phone number. Because you can assign any name to a person in your contact list and connect it to any number you have in your phone, this can be an issue in some court cases. They might not believe the message is actually from the perpetrator unless there is more proof that the sender was actually them. It may be beneficial to delete the person's name from the contact list before taking screenshots so that the phone number shows up, instead of the name.





You can also take a photo of their contact information to show their number is associated with the name in your phone. Do this by taking a screenshot of the contact entry along with the messages to demonstrate that the contact entry name is connected to that number.

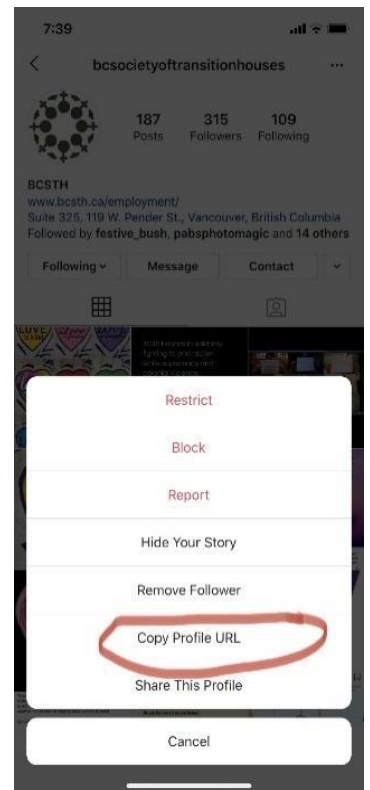
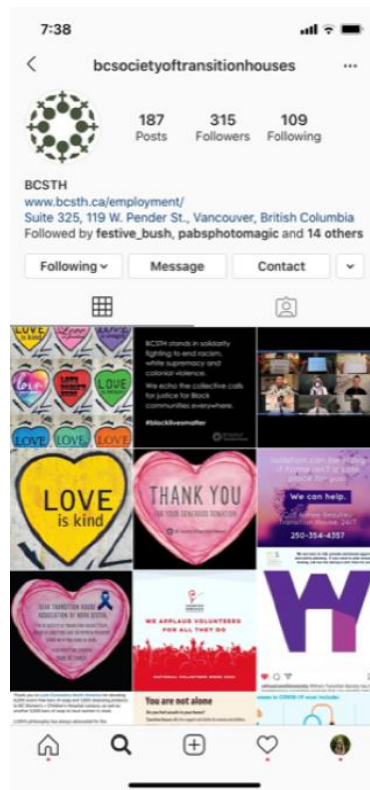




Social Media:

On a social media platform like Instagram, Facebook, SnapChat or Twitter, capture the:

- *Image or message* that contains the harmful information and the surrounding conversation,
- *photo(s) of the account* of the person who wrote, sent or posted the harmful photo, image or comment,
- *comment(s)* that are harassing or threatening,
- the *profile* of the person who sent wrote, sent or posted the harassing photo, image or comment, and
- the *person’s profile URL*.





An Important Note about Snapchat

In recent years, companies have created technologies that automatically delete information, such as text, pictures, and videos, after the information is viewed. Snapchat is the most popular app that uses this technology. This technology can help individuals increase privacy by limiting the time that another person can access a sender's information. While Snapchat and other similar technology may have some privacy benefits, the technology can also make it very difficult to gather digital evidence.

The whole purpose of sending a "Snap" is for Snapchat to automatically delete the information soon after it is viewed. This function is set up so that even if a professional forensic examiner were to search for a deleted Snap, it is almost impossible to find. Therefore, if you are being harassed through Snapchat (or another similar technology), you must plan how you will attempt to gather evidence that will be automatically deleted by the app, which includes your own Snaps and Snaps sent by an abusive person.

Here are some suggestions for evidence gathering on "disappearing" messages:

- **YOUR OWN SNAPS AND CHATS.** You can choose to save your own posts to Memories or your own Camera Roll, but you can't save other people's posts this way. Saving your own Snaps will keep another person from misstating what you have sent, so this can be a good idea if you think they will use your Snaps against you. Of course, this could be a dangerous option if the other person has access to your device and can see that you are collecting evidence.
- **OTHER PEOPLE'S SNAPS AND CHATS.** After you open a Snap or Chat, you can take a screenshot, but the sender will be notified you took a screenshot. You also can choose to save a Chat, but again, the sender is notified. This may not be safe. You should consider your own situation and whether alerting the other person that you have saved the information is dangerous.
- Screen recording apps are built into many smartphones, and you can download other recording apps -- some free and some for a small price. Please be aware that certain apps may alert the sender of the recording just like a screenshot. This is true for the iPhone built-in app, but we have not tested others, so be cautious. Please make sure it is safe before deciding to record. You might want to test this with a friend's account or information before trying it on the perpetrator's. On the other hand, if you are concerned about someone else recording your Snaps, Snapchat may not recognize all apps and so may not notify you if someone else records your Snaps.
- One way to avoid the notification problem of taking screenshots or using a recording app is to use a second device or camera to take pictures or record. Also, this requires having a second device or camera readily available to record as you review the Snaps sent to you. You have to plan ahead otherwise the Snaps will disappear.



- Do not forget to tell the whole story—if you need to show both the sender’s Snaps and your own for context, be sure to organize the screenshots or recordings before presenting them in court. If you do a recording, follow the steps above in the section about video recordings to be sure the court can view your evidence.

Time and Date Matter

Many messaging platforms hide the exact time that messages are sent or received, but most devices allow you to include a timestamp which is helpful. On an iPhone and many Androids, swiping from the right side of the phone towards the left side while holding your finger on the screen will show the timestamp on a message. Because technology changes, do an online search for “*How to show timestamp on messages on [device name]*” if you’re unsure.





Sometimes the date and time is on the phone or computer, and you can include that when you are taking a screenshot or video screen recording.



Collecting evidence with time and date stamps will be useful to demonstrate your case. It can show that somebody sent 15 messages in a minute or two, which is substantially different than 15 messages in a week. It also shows when the offending behavior happened. They are useful because they can be cross referenced with phone records to help prove elements of the case.

Authentication

Since you will be presenting printouts, photos, or screen recordings of digital files and not the original digital file, the authenticity of your printouts, photos, or screen recordings may be contested. If this is the case, you will have to authenticate your printouts. BCSTH has more information about authentication in the [“Authentication of Digital Evidence for Protection Order Matters in BC Family Court or BC Civil Courts”](#) information sheet.



Connect to an Anti-Violence Worker or Legal Advocate for Support

If you are unsure how to preserve evidence of technology facilitated violence, contact an anti-violence program in your area for support and to develop a safety plan that includes technology safety considerations. Legal advocates available in BC communities may be able to assist.

BC anti-violence programs and legal advocates:

- [VictimLink BC](#)
- [Legal Aid BC](#)
- [Rise Women's Legal Centre](#)
- [Shelter Safe Map](#)
- BCSTH [technology safety planning](#) and [A Guide for Canadian Women Experiencing Technology-Facilitated Violence: Strategies for Enhancing Safety](#)

Technology Safety Project

This document is a part of a series that details how to preserve evidence related to the misuse of technology in experiences of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The series is part of the [Preserving Digital Evidence of Technology-Facilitated Violence Toolkit](#). This document, or any portion thereof, may be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever as long as acknowledgment to the BC Society of Transition Houses is included in the product.

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