



SOCIAL MEDIA: TIPS FOR PARENTS

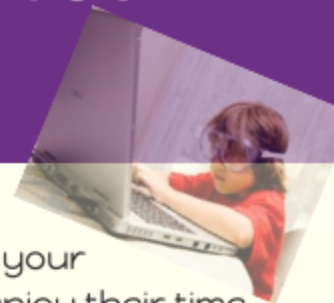


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What should I teach my child about safe on-line behavior?



As soon as your kids start going online, it's important to explain your expectations for their behavior. With some guidance from you, they can enjoy their time online and mostly avoid things like cyberbullying and inappropriate content.

Here are some basics to share with your child:

Communicate with Care

Use the right language for your audience. You might write or speak differently to a teacher, compared with a friend.

Keep Private Things Private

Don't share private information, including passwords, your home address, date of birth, your location or revealing photos.

Respect Others and Avoid Drama

Be courteous and practice disagreeing politely. Try not to interact with trolls or share gossip.

Don't Lie, Steal, or Cheat

Remember to give credit where credit is due. And, although it's easy to copy others' work, don't download things without permission, or cheat in online games.

Be an "Upstander"

If someone you know is being bullied, find a way be supportive. If you feel safe confronting the one doing the bullying, you should. If not, a private message to the target of the bullying can be enough to help someone through a tough time.

Report Misbehavior

The internet is a giant community, and you can help it be a nicer place.

Follow your Family's Rules

If your parent or caregiver tells you to avoid certain websites or to stop texting after a certain time, do your best to respect their wishes. The more you act responsibly, the more privileges you'll get.

Think before you Post, Text, or Share

Consider how you and others might feel after you've posted something. It's not always easy to take back what you've said online, and your online behavior can create a lasting footprint.

Check in with your Feelings

Some online experiences can have a negative effect on our mental and emotional well-being. If you ever feel uncomfortable, worried, sad, or anxious, try taking a break and reach out to a friend or adult for help.

FIND OUT WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA FEATURES ARE CAUSE FOR CONCERN -- NO MATTER WHICH APP YOUR KID IS USING.



It can be hard to keep up with the latest apps that kids are using. Just when you've figured out how to talk to your kids about Instagram, they're begging to download Snapchat and TikTok. Even when new apps come along, adding new features such as the ability to disappear or track your location, they're often not that different from other apps. And if you know what to look for, you can help your kid avoid some common social media pitfalls such as drama, cyberbullying, and oversharing.



Does a red flag mean your kid shouldn't use a particular app? Not at all.

Most kids use social media apps safely – and kids don't always use every feature of every app. Also, you can often disable certain features so they're no longer a problem. Finally, talking about using social media safely, responsibly, and respectfully is the best way to help your kid identify and avoid red flags. Here are the most common social media red flags, the apps they're found in, and tips for dealing with them.

1 Ads and In-App Purchases:

Some examples: Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok

Free apps have to make money somehow, so app developers offer marketers lots of opportunities to reach kids on their platforms.



What to do: Social media advertising can be deceptive because it's designed to look like the app's regular content. And although incremental in-app purchases for things like exclusive photo filters are inexpensive, they can add up. To understand how apps make money, you have to spend some time on each one. Familiarize yourself with the types of ads coming at your kids, teach them to recognize different types of digital marketing, and talk about what to do if they're approached online by someone trying to sell something. As for in-app purchases, you can set spending limits or turn off the ability to make in-app purchases on your kid's phone.

2 Age-inappropriate content:

Some examples: Instagram, Hive Social, Snapchat, TikTok, Tumblr

Friends can share explicit stuff via messaging (for example, sexting), but the bigger concern is whether an app features a lot of user-generated content that isn't appropriate to your kid's age. Your teen may not even need to follow users who are posting explicit stuff to come across it.

What to do: Ask your kid whom they follow and ask to see what's being posted. Use the app yourself and get a sense of what comes up in an average feed (or features like Snapchat Discover). Then try searching for content you're concerned about and see how easy it is to find. Check the terms of use to see what the app allows and whether users can flag violators. If your kid uses TikTok, you can enable content restrictions that limit mature videos, but most social media platforms don't offer that feature.

3 Anonymity:

Some examples: Lipsi, LMK: Anonymous Polls, Tellonym

Anonymity doesn't always breed cruelty, but it often does. On anonymous sites, people feel that their comments are consequence-free -- and end up hurting others. Also, though kids may feel safe enough to share sensitive or painful things they might not otherwise, they often don't get the necessary support or help -- and may get attacked.



What to do: Make sure your teen understands the risks involved and that they know how to block and report other users if necessary. If they need connection, but it's hard to talk about a problem, give them opportunities to share with other safe, trusted people.

4 Cyberbullying:

Some examples: Instagram, Snapchat, Roblox, Twitter

Many apps have improved their monitoring and reporting features, cyberbullying is still a reality. It can happen on any social media app, but some have a notorious mean streak. If an app allows anonymous posting and is used in schools, chances are some teens will abuse it.

What to do: Ask around and pay attention to what parents, teachers, and other kids say about it to get a sense if it's stirring up trouble. Make sure your teen understands how to report and block other users and check the school's policy about cyberbullying.



5 Location tracking and sharing:

Some examples: Find My Friends, Instagram, Snapchat, Twenty (formerly Mappen), Twitter



Wherever you go, there you are -- and your social media apps know it. Though you may only indicate a city or neighborhood in a profile, allowing location identification often means that you're tracked within a city block, your posts can include your location, and anyone -- including strangers -- can see exactly where you are.

What to do: *This is a tricky one because many parents like to keep track of their kids using an app like Life360. But you can keep location services on only for the app you use to find out your kid's whereabouts. Otherwise, turn off location settings in your kid's social media, then check to see whether previous posts include location information and delete it. If your kid uses Snapchat, they can go into "Ghost Mode," so people can't see their location.*

6 Public default settings:

Some examples: Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter



Many apps allow a user to have a public or private profile, only shared with friends; however, some apps are public by default, which means that a kid's name, picture, and posts are available to everyone.

What to do: *As soon as you download the app, go into the settings to check the defaults. If a kid is using the same program on a browser, check there, too.*

7 Random video chat:

Some examples: HOLLA, Monkey, Wink



Any app that's inviting kids to "meet new friends" is facilitating chats with strangers in some way. In most cases this type of app likely has a lot of sexual content and adults trying to hook up.

What to do: *Random chatting apps are unsafe. If your teen is truly trying to meet new friends, it might be best to start on an app that's interest-based with text-based group forums so they can find their people.*

8 Real-time video streaming:

Some examples: YouNow, Instagram, Twitch

Live streaming is just that -- live -- so it's very easy to share something you didn't mean to. Kids may use these apps in private (such as in their bedrooms) and inadvertently share personal information without knowing exactly who is watching. Though they may seem temporary, embarrassing or mean moments are easily captured and shared later.

What to do: *Talk to your kids about why they want to share video of themselves and what they should and shouldn't share. Talk about positive, constructive uses of video sharing, such as creating shorts using editing programs or creating an interest-based channel to funnel your teen's creativity.*

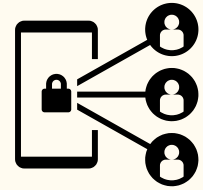




Secret chat rooms:

Some examples: Discord, IMVU

Chat rooms can be invitation-only or drop-in. Sometimes the chats are private for reasons like sexual content or hate speech. But sometimes kids create private groups to avoid the problems associated with public groups. Either way, chat rooms make it more difficult for parents to keep track of what their kids are doing online.



What to do: *If your kid is creating or using a private chat room with friends to safeguard against strangers, that's OK, but they should tell you before they join a private chat so you can check it out first. In general, kids should be very cautious about joining chat rooms and be on the alert for predatory behavior.*



"Temporary" pictures and videos:

Some examples: Confide, Instagram, Facebook Messenger, Telegram Messenger

Nothing shared between devices is truly temporary, even when an app builds its whole marketing around it. Compromising pictures and texts get kids in real trouble because they believe what they're sending is private and will disappear.



What to do: *Let your kids know that nothing they send is truly temporary, and it's easy for others to share what you've sent. Because it's often hard for kids to really consider consequences, and they might think it won't happen to them, it might be worth sharing some facts about kids getting in legal trouble because of "disappearing" pictures.*



Toxic culture:

Some examples: 4Chan, Discord, Twitch

Some sites and apps attract trolls and other confrontational types who want a place to express extreme views in an in-your-face way. Kids can be drawn to this provocative communication style and see it as a place to belong -- especially if they feel persecuted in other parts of their lives, -- but the interactions are often laced with bullying, sexism, hate speech, and other cruelties that can escalate quickly.

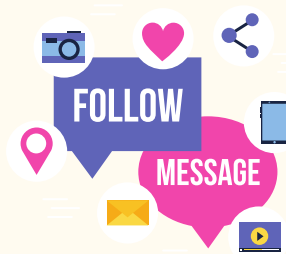


What to do: *Toxic culture can really do a number on kids' self-esteem, and when they get involved in a negative environment, they tend to spread it around. Find out why your kid wants to use certain platforms, and then make sure they know how to report and deflect negativity.*

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR EASING KIDS' SOCIAL MEDIA ANXIETY

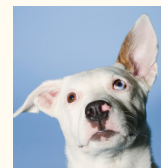


Teens text, tweet, snap, and post like crazy. Social media can affect kids' mental health – especially tween girls. The tricky part for parents is identifying the tipping point between a healthy relationship to social media and its negative effects. You can do this by understanding how your kid uses various platforms, helping them learn to recognize their own limits, and supporting them in finding a healthy balance of online and offline socializing. Simply being aware of what your kids are doing, what kinds of experiences they're having, and how they feel about their interactions can go a long way toward protecting your kid. ***Here's what you can do:***



Listen

It can be easy to dismiss social media stress as superficial, but for many tweens and teens, social media is social life.



Don't judge

Snapchat seems a little dumb, doesn't it? But for tweens and teens, connecting with their peers is a normal part of child development. For you, it meant hours on the phone. For them, it means lots and lots of rainbow vomit. Accept that this is important to them.

Encourage their offline lives

FOMO can chip away at kids' self-esteem, but the best defense is a strong sense of what makes kids unique, worthy, and valuable. Help kids participate in sports, clubs, drama, volunteer work, or even online hobbies to help them weather the ups and downs of social media anxiety.



Set limits

Listening and validating are important, but parents also need to set some basic limits around when and where the phone or computer can be used. Start with turning phones off an hour before bedtime and storing them in your room to help kids resist the temptation to stay up late texting. You can suggest they tell their friends they'll be signing off at a specific time, so they won't be expecting a response.

Shift the focus

If kids are feeling overwhelmed by keeping up with all the online social stuff, encourage them to focus on doing something. Encouraging kids to use the creative side of social media tools can shift their focus to a sense of accomplishment.

Disengage

You can turn off your status so friends don't know that you're online, mute people to disengage for a while, and go into "ghost mode" so your friends can't find you. Some apps even have features that limit your time or remind you to take a break. Using these settings lets you take some control over your use, which can help relieve anxiety.

Ask open-ended questions

- Are there any habits you might want to change? (Such as not checking your phone before bed.)
- What would happen if you turned off your phone? For an hour? A day?
- Have you thought about rewarding yourself for not checking your phone or social media for a certain amount of time? (Make a game of it!)
- What are the pros and cons of using Instagram and other social-networking apps?
- What would happen if you unfollowed or unfriended someone who was making you feel bad on social media?
- Do you notice that you have better or worse reactions to posts or messages depending on how you feel that day?



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