

Social media safety tips for parents

This tip sheet offers an overview of what you need to know about the social media platforms your child or teen is using, and advice to help you keep them safe.

Instagram

What is it? Instagram is all about selfies, filters and followers. Kids and teens take, crop and modify photos and videos to share them with their contacts. They can use hashtags to reach a lot of people very quickly and can view, comment and like posts shared by friends.

What you should know

- The default setting for an Instagram account is public, meaning that anyone can see all posts.
- Ask your child or teen to turn off their location tagging. Remind them to keep their account private so they can control and filter comments.

Snapchat

What is it? Snapchat is a messaging app that allows users to post videos and pictures that “disappear” after a few seconds. You can live video chat, add fun filters and share your story.

What you should know

- If your child or teen has just started using Snapchat, make sure they understand that other users can make copies of snaps before they disappear. Most teens count on their friends not to do that, but it's important that they think carefully about what they choose to share.

- Privacy settings can be set to 'My Friends' only and the location sharing 'Snap Map' can be turned off.

YouTube

What is it? YouTube is great for watching videos, posting videos and following other “YouTubers.” Kids and teens love to set up their own channels and grow their following.

What you should know

- YouTube now disables comments on all videos featuring minors.
- If YouTube is set to AutoPlay, the next video in the “Up Next” feed will automatically begin once a video finishes, which can lead to disturbing or inappropriate content. Make sure the Autoplay feature is turned off.

Kik

What is it? Kik is a messenger app that allows users to connect with brands and chat one-on-one, in groups or with a bot with text, emojis, memes, GIFs, videos, sketches and photos.

What you should know

- Kik can be used anonymously, and is known to be widely used for sexting, which makes your teen vulnerable to sexual victimization.
- Anyone can message a user. Encourage your teen to choose a username that is hard to guess. Include letters, numbers and symbols to help control who can contact them on Kik.

WhatsApp

What is it? WhatsApp is a popular instant messaging app, with over 1 billion users. Kids and teens use it to chat or call other WhatsApp users around the world.

What you should know

- People share fake news, spam messages and spam links. Kids and teens can be fooled into clicking on them, or giving out personal information or a credit card number to get new upgrades.
- Tell your child or teen to ignore or block messages that ask them to tap on an unknown link, a link that 'activates' new features or one that asks for personal information. Guide them to the App Store or Google Play Store to access new features.

TikTok

What is it? Tik Tok is a networking app that lets kids and teens create music videos that last between 15 seconds and one minute. They can also add music or effects.

What you should know

- TikTok allows other users to like, comment and share your child's content publicly. They can also become a follower, which means that they will see all future videos as well.
- TikTok has made some users Internet famous, which means that some users post suggestive, offensive or dangerous content to get noticed.
- Turn on TikTok's Restricted Mode, which helps filter out inappropriate content.

Whisper

What is it? Whisper is an anonymous platform that encourages users to post confessions and secrets without the fear of being judged.

What you should know

- Although Whisper is anonymous to readers, the app tracks the location of users and posts, making it easier for predators to find and connect with users.
- Encourage your child to hide their location. There is no way to disable location within the app, so ask your child to update their settings in their phone or tablet.

Ask.fm

What is it? Ask.fm lets teens send questions to their friends or other users anonymously. Anyone can respond through text or video. Teens use it to get other opinions on topics like religion, politics and pop culture.

What you should know

- Because it's anonymous, many teens use the platform to ask inappropriate questions, and the platform is well known for cyberbullying.
- Ask.fm has ways to block, filter and report cyberbullying. Encourage your child to talk to you if they receive cruel or threatening comments.

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