

# Social Media Wisdom for Parents and Families

Social media platforms, like TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and YouTube, can have many benefits for children and teens, including exploration of interests, community, self-expression and access to updated information. The key to unlocking these social media benefits is learning how to use social media *wisely*.

**Without the use of safe guidelines, social media can cause more harm than good.**

**Risks include:**

- Fear of missing out (FOMO)
- Oversharing
- Cyberbullying
- Exposure to fake content, negative content and advertising
- Decreased personal communications skills
- Overemphasis on physical appearance/ Unrealistic expectations (lifestyle, body images, etc.)
- Marketer data collection
- Online predators
- Dangerous social media challenges
- Mental health disorders:
  - Mood disorders: Anxiety or depression
  - Addiction
  - Suicide (second leading cause of death from ages 10-34)



With these risks in mind, it's important to be aware of what your child does online.

**Some helpful steps to keep your child safe on social media:**

1. Get information from your child: When, where and how do they access online content and what social media platforms do they use?
2. Use privacy settings or parental controls.
3. Educate your child about social media:
  - Consider the consequences for yourself and others when posting or sending messages. Remember to not only treat others how you'd like to be treated, but think about how others may feel differently than you and how they'd want to be treated. Speak up against cyberbullying against others or against yourself by



reporting a post, and don't share a post that could be harmful. Avoid comparing yourself to others on social media.

- Don't overshare personal information and NEVER share passwords (even with your best friend!). All posts are FOREVER, even if you delete or remove the post. Many colleges and employers research social media for new applicants and can look back at their history.
- Don't accept "follow" requests from strangers and don't message with strangers. NEVER meet with someone that you met online without parental approval/supervision.
- Discuss and educate your children about the messages they're seeing on social media: "How do you feel about that?" "What questions do you have about that?"

- Create a [family media plan](#) for your family. Being wise on social media is more important than ever as children are being exposed to current events. Social media can help families stay up to date, but on the downside, children may be exposed to tragedy. When this occurs, encourage kids to talk and process the information with you. Create and model coping strategies with your children by limiting consumption of the news, practicing distraction and encouraging physical activities. Consider ways you and your children can help the situation by volunteering or raising awareness. It's ok to not know everything about the situation or even why the event occurred, but it's important to discuss and normalize your child's emotions.



### Screen time recommendations (based on age):

- **0 to 18 months:** No screen time at all
- **18 months to 5 years:** One hour of monitored screen time per day
- **Age 5 and older, including teens:** Create a "family media plan" that's individualized to your family
- **Parents:** Model good screen habits, try to limit your own screen time to one to two hours per day (other than work)

For more information, visit: <https://www.kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/technology-and-social-media>.



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