

Tips for Safe and Healthy Social Media Use

Social media is a huge part of our society and a significant source of interpersonal connection, entertainment, and information for our kids. Whether they are trying it for the first time or have already used it for a while, consider the following to help your kids use it in safe and healthy ways:

1. Do Your Research: Most kids are already using a handful of apps and your child will likely ask to download one of them too, such as Instagram, Snapchat, or TikTok.

- Download the apps yourself and test them out. You don't need to use them frequently or worry about following others or others following you, but try them to better understand them.

2. Use Privacy and Security Settings: When your child downloads a social media app for the first time, go through the process with them.

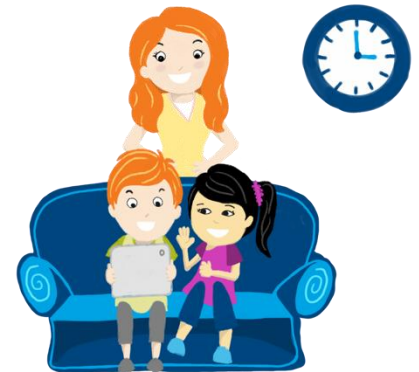
- Use a strong password, which should be changed often. Consider using a password manager to create strong passwords and keep track of them.
- Turn on two-factor authentication, which gives you an added level of security in case someone figures out your password.
- Make the account private and only share with friends.
- Remind your kids that even with privacy settings, nothing they post or do on the apps is truly private.
- Check the settings regularly, as apps are constantly updating them.
- Install security software on the devices they are using to block links created by cybercriminals and posted on social media.

3. Limit Personal Information Sharing: When you first download the app, it may ask you for access to your camera, microphone, contact lists, and location.

- To protect your privacy as much as possible, only agree to those features that are absolutely required.
- When your kids start posting, commenting, searching, and sharing information on the social media app, remind them that the app company tracks all of this information and behavior—nothing is truly private.

4. Use Family Settings: There are tools and features in apps and devices that can help you make sure your kids are sticking to age-appropriate content or aren't using their screens for too long.

- TikTok allows you to do this through their "Family Pairing" feature.
- iPhone enables this through their "Screen Time" feature.
- Other options include Google Family Link, Trend Micro™ Maximum Security, or any other major security software product you may already be using.
- Look into these and consider what might work best for your family.



5. Talk About What They're Seeing Online: Kids are usually very willing to share something they have seen or discovered on social media.

- Make sure they have a time and space to talk about this with you (dinner time, car rides).
- Remind kids to always pause before responding to or sharing anything online that makes them sparks emotions, and to do more research or speak to you about it to make sure it's true.
- Encourage kids to take a break if their social media feeds become overwhelming.
- Unplugging is always a great thing to do for our physical and mental well-being.

6. Remind Them What Matters: Kids often get caught up in posting a lot of photos online and enjoying the response they get from them.

- Explain to kids that social media can be a heavily filtered and distorted representation of people and reality.
- Remind your kids that their value is far more than the number of likes or connections they have online.
- Find ways to enforce this message offline, and make sure they are surrounded by friends and family who do the same.

7. Encourage Kindness: While we worry about the impact of social media on our own kids, we should also remind them of how they treat others online.

- It's important that kids consider others' feelings whenever they share or comment on someone else's video or photo.
- Teach them that nothing they do online is truly anonymous and just because they may not see or know the other person, does not mean their words cannot cause harm.
- Let kindness always be their guide.

8. Be a Role Model: Make sure your own actions as a parent reflect what you expect of your kids.

- Show your kids what healthy use of social media looks like. Share things that you have learned or experienced from social media with your kids.
- Protect your own privacy and that of your family. Many kids are very protective of their own privacy, so make sure you are not oversharing things about them or yourself.