

Keeping Your Child Safe on Social Media

Social media is a fact of life for young people now, and for many it is the main way to conduct their social life outside school. Social media can be a great way to keep in touch, share ideas and have fun. However, it can also pose significant risks to young people's wellbeing. So what steps can you take to ensure your child stays safe on social media?

- **Set Expectations**

It is far easier to discuss and agree boundaries when your child is starting out as a social media user.

- **Set Age Restrictions**

Remember that the minimum age limit for most social media platforms is 13.

- **Educate Yourself**

Stay in touch with the social media sites that are currently popular with young people, even if you don't use them yourself. Stay up to date with how the popular sites change and develop.

- **Monitor Apps**

Be aware that most social media platforms have an 'app' format for use on phones and this often gives information about the user's location and movements.

- **Help Set Up Social Media Accounts**

Helping set up your children's social media accounts is an opportunity to discuss keeping personal information private. Real name, passwords, home address or school (including photos in school uniform) should never be shared on social media. You can also ensure they set the highest possible privacy settings on their accounts.

- **Have Access to Usernames and Passwords**

Explain that this is not so that you can invade their privacy, but so that you have a way of checking if there are any problems.

- **Set Rules**

Set rules about what can be posted and make sure your child understands that a hurtful comment still hurts even if you are not there to see the recipient's reaction. Discuss what type of photos and images should be shared with others.

- **Encourage Thoughtful Posting**

Explain to children that comments and images are easily shared and copied, and can be widely spread in a very short period of time. It is also very difficult, if not impossible, to retract or remove a comment or image that has been shared.



- **Explain How to Block People**

Make sure your child knows how to block people, and what to do if something makes them unhappy or uncomfortable, or if they see an image that is not appropriate. Their first course of action should be to close the screen down and speak to you or another trusted adult, but they can also practise sentences which enable them to leave difficult conversations.

- **Talk about Stranger Danger**

Have an ongoing conversation with your child about the fact that people can pretend to be anyone they want on social media. It is estimated that one in three young people are friends on social media with someone they don't know in person. Social media, particularly chatrooms and forums, are frequently used by adults seeking to 'groom' young people, with a view to future abuse or radicalisation.

- **Get Help**

If at any time you feel your child is in danger, report your concerns to CEOP, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection service (ceop.police.uk). Keep a record of all conversations and evidence of online activity.

- **Keep Talking**

Keep talking about social media and your child's activities in a trusting and non-judgemental way.

