

## LATEST NEWS

### Five social media safety tips for parents



Although social media certainly has many benefits, it is natural to be concerned that your child may run into trouble or have a negative experience online. With most Australian teenagers accessing social networks, it helps to understand the facts about these sites and applications and know how to keep your child safe.

#### ***1. Understand the applications and social media sites your child is using***

You might already have an idea of the social networks and applications your child is using, but if you don't, a quick search online or scroll through the Apple App Store or Android's Google Play will give you an indication of popular social networks. Most people would be familiar with Facebook and Twitter, but there are also apps such as Instagram and Snapchat where users can share photos and engage in quick-fire conversations. If you're not a social media user yourself, you can also do some reading to gauge which social networks are appropriate to your child's age and what type of functionality is available. Also bear in mind that some websites and mobile applications that aren't necessarily social networks will often have social aspects, such as a user chatroom or the ability to create an online profile.

#### ***2. Set rules for your child's social media use***

Banning your child from using social media is rarely effective, as they are likely to have access to a personal computer, tablet, smartphone or gaming console, as well as the devices they use at school or at friends' houses. It can also be very difficult to control their use of these devices or keep up to date with new social media sites or mobile applications. Your best bet is reach an agreement with your child about their social media use — you might pre-approve the sites they can join, encourage open conversation about their use or things they see online, or agree that they hand over their phone overnight.

#### ***3. Teach your child about sharing information responsibly***

It's important that your child understands how to share information responsibly. They should refrain from publishing personal information, such as their date of birth, home address, phone number or the school they attend. Social media sites often prompt users to fill in these personal details, and many (teenagers in particular) don't realise that their profiles may be viewed by others. Most social media sites give users the opportunity to adjust their privacy settings, usually allowing parts of their profile (or even their full profile) to remain hidden from users who are not a connection. And while it's likely that you taught your child about 'stranger danger' when they were younger, it's important to reinforce this message in their teens. Your child should know that although they might 'meet' people online, they should never divulge personal information or arrange a meeting with a new online friend without supervision.

#### ***4. Ensure your child understands the implications of their online behaviours***

Your child may not be aware of the implications of what they do or say online. A general rule of thumb is that if they wouldn't say something in front of you, their teachers or to a friend's face, it's best not to say it online. Your child should also understand that content they post can be saved, shared by friends or viewed by social media users outside of their network. This applies to status updates, comments and photos — even if they are quickly deleted. There are also some social networks that allow users to post anonymous messages or ask questions they would like another user to answer. These sites can be very dangerous territory for teens and are often used as a vehicle for cyberbullying.

#### ***5. Help your child to deal with cyberbullying***

Cyberbullying can include text messages, emails, messages and comments on social networks, as well as purposely excluding others online. If your child is a victim of cyberbullying, they should talk to someone they trust about what they have experienced, whether this is you, an older sibling, their teacher or the school counsellor. It is also important to record evidence of cyberbullying — by printing or saving an email, keeping mobile phone conversations or 'screen capturing' an online post. If cyberbullying occurs on social media, your child will usually be able to report the incident to the social network provider and block the bully from contacting them.

#### **Further information**

You can find further information about social media safety on the following websites. Your child's school may also provide information for parents, and some may run seminars to raise parents' awareness of young people's social media use.

- [Cybersmart](#) — Australian Government website
- [Safe social networking](#) — Stay Smart Online (Australian Government)

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