

Setting Social Media Boundaries for Your Kids

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What is social media?

Social media takes many forms of online communication—Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, online dating apps, and other online communities are endless. Social media means your child can connect and communicate in a variety of different mediums through an app on their phone, a website, or game console.

If you are a parent, caregiver, or responsible for a child, you may be wondering if every child has access to social media, how much access should be given, and at what age. What are reasonable and realistic expectations for children?

Social media is used by over half the world's population, and with more reports and [research](#) showing how it can negatively affect young people's mental health and exposing them to problems, it's not surprising that parents want to do more to manage their children's exposure to it and to keep them safe.

According to [Internet Matters](#) the three most popular ways that children connect online are:

Messaging services. These can be used to send a message, photo, video, or make a voice call to anyone across the world using the internet. The most common apps of this type include Snapchat, Facetime, WhatsApp, and Facebook Messenger.

Social media. This allows children to share with others, interact and communicate, using their own words, pictures and videos and posting them online—the most popular amongst children are Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter.

Gaming platforms. This is connecting via games online such as PlayStation Network and Xbox Live, Fortnite, and Roblox being the most played amongst children.

There are no set answers to some of the questions around setting limits with social media and making determinations could become overwhelming. Take things slow and don't let yourself get pushed emotionally by your child telling you "everyone is doing it." It's important to discern whether your child is mature enough to handle and understand the risk, dangers, and consequences of inappropriate social media use. Talk with other parents to make decisions and be clear on rules and expectations and remember, it is ultimately up to your discretion as a parent or caregiver to have the final say.

Here are some tips that may help:

Aim for clarity. Be clear which social media sites can be used and how you will keep tabs on this. Obtain all passwords to each application or website. Consider implementing

guidelines that your children go online in a communal space in the home, such as the living room or kitchen.

Set rule of usage. You need to have ongoing reviews and knowledge of usage and be aware if this is being misused or going beyond the boundaries of what is agreed upon. Make it clear that if certain home responsibilities, such as grades and chores are not being completed in a timely and thorough manner this privilege will be removed until the child is showing responsibility to handle this privilege.

Discuss Risks. Educate yourself and your child about social media risks and understand what to look out for when using social media apps.

Encourage open conversation with your child around social media. Your child may have more awareness of the risks and dangers of social media than you do. Create an open and honest conversation with your child at a young age regarding experiences on social media. Watch and observe their interactions and become involved in their life online. As you and the child become more familiar with usage and trust develops, it will be easier to enjoy the benefits of social media without running into the dangers.

Enforce the rules. If your child breaks the rules you've agreed on, then ensure you follow through with the consequences you've clearly laid out beforehand (e.g., shutting down an account, taking away their cell phone for a week, etc.). Be fair but strong so that kids know exactly what to expect if they violate your agreement.

Reports show that millions of new users are joining social media every year with people spending about 2½ hours on social media each day—approximately 15 percent of their waking hours! See more of these astonishing global stats from [DataReportal](#).

As a parent or caregiver, you are not going to get it right all the time; however, the more facts and awareness you have, the more you will be able to support and guide your kids and teens.

Once you educate yourself on how best to utilize certain features and what to avoid, the turmoil around giving your child this responsibility will become easier. As with anything, remember moderation and monitoring are key points to remember.

Contact your assistance program today for additional support and resources.