

Parent Tips for Responsible Social Media Use

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1. Remember that a number of social media sites, including Facebook and Instagram, have an age restriction of 13 years. If you allow your children to use these sites before they are 13, then you are essentially allowing them to lie about their age online.
2. Make sure your children's privacy settings are set as high as possible.
3. Although privacy settings are important, social media sites generate a profit by gathering as much information about their users as possible. Online communication is rarely 100% private. Teach your children to limit what they say and do online, and also to limit detailed personal information.
4. Create ground rules for children. Create a contract with your children about social media use. It is up to you and your family about what rules will be included in this contract. Breaking online rules should have similar consequences to breaking rules in the offline world.
5. Get to know your child's habits online. It is important to be aware of the kinds of sites that your child is frequenting and the people with whom he or she is associating. You should have full access to your child's social media profiles. Regularly check in to see what your child has been doing. If you find something inappropriate, immediately delete it, speak with your child about it, and provide a consequence.
6. Urge your children to avoid questionnaires, free giveaways, and contests. Many of these are ruses to gain personal information. Inform kids that even if they are sent one of these things from a friend, it is best to close the window and not participate.
7. Monitor the pictures your child posts on social media sites. If your child wants to share pictures online, be sure exactly what pictures are being posted. Make sure that the content is appropriate, and that there are no identifiable locales in the background, and GPS photo location services are turned off.
8. Teach kids about online reputation. Many kids do not seem to understand the permanence of the online world. Stress to your kids what a digital footprint is and the impact that inappropriate messages or images could have on their future.
9. Get to know technology. It is common for kids to have a mastery of technology that is much more advanced than adults. It is the responsibility of every parent to educate themselves on the technology being used by their children and adolescents.
10. Warn your children of the dangers that can be found online. You may feel like you are scaring your kids when talking to them about the dangers of being online, but it is better for them to be scared than unaware. There is a saying that goes "*Who is a stranger online? Everyone is!*" It is important to remind your children that people they meet online are strangers and that the standard rules always apply.
11. Impress upon your children the importance of interacting with their friends in ways other than social media. Social media should be one of many ways that your child socializes with friends. Have them make phone calls, invite friends over, participate in real-world activities, organize outings, etc.