

Parent's Guide To Social Media Safety For Teens

Teens are often glued to their phones or other devices, scrolling through various social networks and platforms online. Social media is highly popular with teens because it is such a convenient means to stay connected with people and stay up-to-date with trends and news. Due to the amount of time spent by teens online, social media safety has become a great concern for parents.

Social Networking Sites: Know What You're Dealing With

There are several social media platforms like Instagram, Tiktok, Witter, Snapchat, Youtube, and Facebook, that teens use. If you want to ensure your teen's social media safety, you must know what they are doing.

Social Media, like most things, has a good and bad side to it. Convenience and staying connected, as previously mentioned, are the main things that make social media useful and enticing to teens. Social media has made communication easier and smoother. It also helps improve a teen's socialization skills since several platforms allow them to connect with people who have the same interests.

Teens, however, can be rather reckless when using social media. They could be impulsive by posting pictures and other content that's inappropriate, or in sharing personal information like their phone number, personal details, and real-time location. For these reasons and the unfortunate existence of cybercriminals, staying safe on social media could be tricky, particularly for teens. Here are some of the things that make parents concerned for their teens to stay safe on social media.

Inappropriate Content

Social media allows teens access to a ton of content including those that may be deemed inappropriate. In the app **Tiktok** for example, teens are easily exposed to content that

includes violence, strong language, and sexual innuendos in the guise of fun and “trendy” videos or content.

Cyberbullying

The internet is full of cyberbullies and they often show themselves in the comment section of social media platforms. The impulsiveness of teens in posting content on social media opens them up to attacks from cyberbullies who would do their best to mar anyone’s online reputation. These bullies can be people they know or complete strangers.

Online Predators

Online predators, particularly sexual predators and child groomers, use social media to target and connect with their victims. They often pretend to be someone else to lure in their victims.

Concerning Activities

In addition to the aforementioned dangers, social media challenges are also quite popular among teens. This usually involves being nominated by friends and family members or anyone else to recreate a famous challenge. Some of the concerning challenges that have gone viral are the Tide Pod, Salt and Ice, Blue Whale, and Bird Box Challenge.

Social Media Safety Tips To Teach Teens

Don’t Friend or Message Strangers

The rule “Don’t talk to strangers” applies on social media as well. Anyone, especially teens, should not friend or be in contact with strangers on social media platforms. Often, there are catfishers and online predators who pretend to be other people to lure and target teenagers

Make Sure Your Accounts Are Set To Private

To protect your personal information, images, and posts, make sure your social media accounts are set to private. By doing so, only those who are following you or you are friends with can view your profile and posts.

Utilize Security & Privacy Settings

All social media users have access to security and privacy settings on their accounts. Be sure to review the settings offered to you about once a month. You will be able to control who sees your posts and can message you. Also, you can protect your accounts by enabling two-factor authentication to ensure cybercriminals don't hack them.

Avoid Sharing Personal Information On Your Posts and With Others

Your personal information could be used to hack your social media accounts, steal your identity, and stalk you in-person. When creating your profile, posting, and messaging others, limit the personal information you share. For example, if you post that you went out to eat, avoid tagging your location.

Keep Your Social Media Apps Updated

Just like with cell phones, updating your social media apps is necessary to keep your account safe. Often, new social media app updates patch any security problems that arose after the previous update. These updates also can make available new features that could be used for your safety and privacy.

Awareness, education, and open communication lines with your teens are key factors in keeping them safe on social media.

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