

Social Media Safety Tips for Parents



Create Ground Rules

- Rules are critical to ensure that your child's use of social media is appropriate and safe.
- A social media contract, signed by all family members, is a great way to establish clear ground rules.
- Keep the consequences of breaking social media rules consistent with the consequences for breaking any other family rule.

Get To Know Their Habits

- Keep an eye on the sites and social media applications your child uses, including frequency of use.
- Having full or partial access to their accounts, including knowing their passwords, is a great way to monitor as needed.

Monitor the Pictures Posted Online

- Be aware of the photos your child is posting online.
- Monitor photo content to ensure posted pictures are appropriate.
- Posting photos that include identifiable locations may threaten your child's safety. Monitor that your child's posts do not include locale information and discuss the importance of excluding these details from their posts.

Be a Good Example of How to Use Social Media

- Remind yourself to set a good example for your child regarding social media use.
- If you're tweeting, updating Facebook, or scrolling through Instagram at every opportunity, your child will surely follow your social media lead.
- Lead by example and demonstrate proper technology etiquette throughout your own social media accounts.

Limit Cell Phone Use

- Set limits for use, such as only allowing during certain hours of the day or after homework is completed.
- If you have teens of driving age, the most important rule to enforce is that under no circumstances should cell phones ever be used while driving. Phones should be kept off or stored in an area out of reach, such as the glove compartment.

Teach About an Online Reputation

- Be sure your child understands that the online world is permanent.
- Stress what a digital footprint is and the impact inappropriate messages or images could have if a future college administrator or employer were to stumble upon them.

Keep an Eye Open for Red Flags

- Changes in content, posts that are out of character, posts related to distressing messages, posts that describe impulsive or risky behavior, or those that describe feeling alone, isolated, or a burden to others are all red flags and may be signs that something significant is going on.
- If your child's usage and posting on social media dramatically declines, they may be utilizing a secondary account under a fake name. This is frequently called a "Finstagram."
- If you notice any red flags, talk to your child immediately.