Social Media Sites

Parent Information & Resource Guide

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Protecting Kids' Privacy Online
Reviewing the COPPA Rule

COPPA, the Child Online Privacy Protection Act, is a United States law designed to protect children under 13 years old from being on age inappropriate websites or apps.

Under this legislation, the account of any child suspected to be under the age of 13 will be disabled.

All social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) requires users to be 13 years old.

6 Social Media Safety Tips for Kids
from the American Academy of Pediatrics

Social networking certainly has its advantages. It strengthens connections with friends and family, encourages participation in community service, collaboration on school projects, and improves communication with coaches and teammates. It can even help kids who don't quite "fit in" foster their identity and unique social skills.

How does it go wrong? "Impulsive kids may comment on an inappropriate post without thinking, which can snowball and become very hurtful", says Dr. Clarke-Pearson. Here are some ways to help your child use social media appropriately:

Tip #1 – Immerse Yourself

- Know how to create a profile, "friend" your child, and be a part of his online life.
- They may insist that you don't embarrass them by posting comments their friends can see, but that's okay. You still get a window into his world.

Tip #2 – Be a Model

If you're constantly on the cell or computer, your tween will want to be too.

Tip #3 – Power Down

Insist that meals be device-free, and set a reasonable bedtime.

Tip #4 – Chat Him Up

Don't rely solely on a "net nanny" software program to keep your kid from questionable sites. Talk about your and their social-media experiences.

Tip #5 – Go Public

Keep the computer centrally located in the family room or kitchen.

Tip #6 – Be Kind

Discourage meanness, gossiping and posting anything that's untrue or potentially harmful.

Basic Internet App Safety

- Never use first and last names for profiles or for usernames.
- Do not share personal information such as your full name, phone numbers or address.
- Do not use a profile picture that shows where you live.
- Don't post statuses about where you are or where you will be.
- When you make something publicly available on the Internet, it becomes practically impossible to take down all copies of it.

Social Media Sites

- According to a 2013 Pew Internet study, teens are sharing more information than ever. It has been reported that while teenagers are still active in the social media their parents know, they are increasingly seeking privacy and perceived anonymity on other sites.
- Children are using a variety of applications, gravitating toward the highly visual apps that provide instant sharing (and instant gratification) without much effort.
- The following information describes some common social media sites being utilized by children in our community today.

ASK.fm

Ask.fm is a social networking site where users can ask questions and other users can answer. It allows anyone to post anonymous comments and questions to a person's profile and is increasingly being used as a means to bully others. By "not having workable reporting, tracking or parental control processes, which have become the norm on other social media websites", this site is quite controversial. Comments can never be deleted, even for explicit threats. Major source of cyber-bullying.

Pheed

Pheed is a new social media platform that lets you share text, photos, videos and audio, including a live broadcast option. 81% of the user base is between the ages of 14-25. Your teen can conceivably live-stream every waking moment on Pheed.

Twitter

Twitter is an online social networking service that enables users to send and read short 140 character messages called "tweets". Registered users can read and post tweets, but unregistered users can only read them. Twitter is a downloaded free app. Major source of cyber-bullying.

Group Me

Group Me is an app that allows users to create and organize group messages and continuously communicate including the ability to turn messages into memes. The app enables the user to invite contacts from their phone and can then be accessed on any device. You need a cell phone number to open an account. Group Me is a free service.

Meetme.com

On Meetme.com, members post pictures of themselves, and you can chat with other members who live close to you geographically. The search is done through one's location data. Members sometimes ask one another to "rate" them, or members post questions on their wall. In 2014, there was a law suit filed against MeetMe.com "over inadequate privacy protections and unlawful publication of minors' profiles, photos, and location data, which can enable sexual predators and stalkers to target children as young as 13 years of age". Many children have already been victimized by predators that have used MeetMe.com to coerce minors into meeting them.

Wanelo

Wanelo ('wah-nee-loh', from Want, Need, Love) is an online community for shopping.
Wanelo is also a way to search and follow all of your favorite stores. Monitoring your child's Wanelo page can give you an indication if they are searching for items that would not be deemed age appropriate. Users can sign-up on Facebook or create an account with an email.

Tagged

Tagged is a social discovery website that allows users to view profiles of other users, play games and share tags/virtual gifts. The mobile version allows users to send and receive friend requests, play games and send messages. Although originally a teen-only site, Tagged now has more members ages 35-49 than any other age group. Tagged reviews seem to be quite negative with regard to the inappropriate nature of many members.

Tumblr

Tumblr allows users to post multimedia and other content to a short form blog. Users can follow other user's blogs, as well as make their blogs private. Tumblr is considered by some as an online hangout that is hip and creative but too raunchy for young people. Pornographic images and video, depictions of violence and drug use, and offensive language are easy to find.

Yik Yak

Yik Yak is a social media network without user profiles, keeping all users anonymous. It does not sort messages according to friends or followers but by geographic location connecting users within a 1.5-mile radius, using GPS coordinates to allow users to connect. Yik Yak is popular on college campuses and has become a popular venue for bullies to anonymously attack their victims. Yik Yak has taken steps to create geo-fences around most middle and high schools in the country to address the significant negative use of the app.

Facebook

Facebook is an online social networking service that can be accessed from all devices. Users create a personal profile, add other users as friends and exchange messages and pictures. They also can play games, watch videos, decorate their pages, post and tag photos, share favorite product information, "like" favorite celebrities and social causes, and more. There are options to adjust privacy settings, but they're difficult to find and tricky to set. Facebook allows users to share timeline posts publicly rather than only with friends (or friends-of-friends).

Kik

Kik is a free texting app for mobile devices that requires users to sign up and create an account. A user can speak with individuals or groups and send pictures. Kik users create usernames to chat with friends instead of giving out their phone number. Kik messaging is untraceable and anonymous, so sexual harassment and cyber bullying is widespread. Tweens or teenagers can use it for sexting and chatting with adults posing as other kids. Messages for strangers are not automatically deleted.

Instagram

Instagram users take pictures and videos and share them on a variety of social networking platforms, such as Facebook, twitter, Tumblr and Flickr. The maximum duration for Instagram videos is 15 seconds. Profiles are public by default. Your child could come across some images that are not suitable for children. It is recommended that parents ensure that privacy settings are in place in the event that there child has installed and is utilizing the Instagram app.

Snapchat

Snapchat allows users to send messages, primarily photos and videos that are destroyed seconds after they have been received. This service is marketed to teens with "capture the moment" messaging, and plays on its contrast to Facebook, which archives every post and pic for years. Snapchat's fleeting image feature offers users the illusion of anonymity, but screenshots can be taken and stored indefinitely. The biggest risk here is sending inappropriate content, thinking it can't be used again.

Reddit

Reddit is a website or app that allows users to share posts or images. Anyone can read topics and posted information, but you need an account to comment. The more people that like a story, the more popular it becomes and greater chance it has on being displayed on the homepage. Reddit Just For Kids, provides age appropriate information and does not display any adult content.

VINE

VINE is a site that enables users to record short video clips up to around six seconds long while recording through its in-app camera. All profiles on VINE are public. There are no options for setting your VINE account to a private setting, like you can on Instagram. That means that any "vine" you create and share could potentially be seen by anyone else using VINE. Recently VINE launched VINE Kids, an app designed specifically for children.

Oovoo

Oovoo is a video chat and messaging site. It is similar to FaceTime or Skype, but Oovoo allows users to chat with up to 12 people at one time and see four people at once. Oovoo has texting capability. Privacy settings must be installed by the user. If no privacy settings are installed then strangers can contact a child at any time and view their profile. If "anyone" is selected in the privacy settings, than there are no restrictions as to who can contact a child or with whom that child can speak.

4Chan

4Chan is a series of anonymous, "anything goes" forums. Users never need to make an account or pick a username. Participants can say or do virtually anything they want with only the most remote thread of accountability. You cannot message other users or establish any kind of social relationship with them, unless they reveal their identity in some way. 4Chan threads expire after a certain amount of time dependent upon rating (less time for R rated boards, more time for G or PG ones). 4Chan thrives on anonymity with few rules and few consequences. It is responsible for some of the largest hoaxes, cyberbullying incidents and Internet pranks.

Flickr

Flickr is an image hosting and video hosting website, and web services suite that is owned by Yahoo. Flickr is a popular website for users to share and embed personal photographs. Flickr provides both private and public image storage. Photos and videos can be accessed from Flickr without the need to register an account but an account must be made in order to upload content onto the website.

Social Media is Growing . . .

- There are new social media sites being developed daily that are marketed to children. It is important that parents remain diligent in understanding what their children are utilizing and are being exposed to.

- Parents must ensure that their children are utilizing age appropriate social media.

- Be certain that parental controls and privacy settings are in place.

Resources for Parents

Websites that provides apps for parents to monitor child's online activity:

Teensafe.com

TeenSafe is a monitoring service that allows parents of teens to remotely monitor an iPhone or Android smartphone as well as view facebook and Instagram activity. When you sign into TeenSafe, your teen's smartphone, facebook and instagram activity will be accessible on your own personal and secure TeenSafe dashboard. TeenSafe offers complete security. No one can view the data on your dashboard but you.

Uknowkids.com

Uknowkids is a site that allows you to connect to your child's digital world. The technology was designed to protect children from predators, bullies and sexting. It helps to make technology safer for children and less intimidating for parents.

Additional Safety Tips for Parents:

On the app store for apple users parents can adjust privacy setting not to allow children to download apps that are rated 17+. If a child attempts to download an app that is too mature the area will be blocked out grey.