



Art courtesy of Freepik

Because new social media outlets crop up and fade to obscurity in the same amount of time it takes for one to change their shoes, it is impractical to create a guide that focuses on any one particular social media sites/apps. As such this is a general guide to help parents manage this form of sharing.

1. Discuss with your children which social media application they are interested in using. You might want to consider requiring children to give you the appropriate time necessary for approving their use of a particular application. This often works better than outright refusal.
2. Learn as much as you can regarding the particular Social Media Application of interest. Not all outlets are equal. Some require specific forms of data to be shared. Some require terms and conditions that could potentially seem predatory. Others have less restrictions on who has access to the data. Learn as much as you can about the benefits and pitfalls of a particular app, in order to create a more cohesive plan about rules for its use.
3. Create that plan. Based off of your findings, set reasonable limits to use about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable to share. This would also be a good time to discuss what devices are acceptable to use the social media app from. Are they limited to desktops? Are they limited to times they can access social media from mobile devices? Is social media browsing not allowed during family bonding times such as dinner? Setting ground rules from the start will better ensure that the child is operating in safe parameters. Have discussions about reputation, bullying, dangers, and privacy.
4. Lead by example. If you are already using the social media site in question, you may want to consider what your child takes from your own personal use of it.
5. One ground rule you may want to consider is the ability to monitor their activity if need be. While privacy is important, the need to keep children safe is paramount. Photos shared that provide identifiable locations in the background for instance, could alert potential predators of things like your child's schedule. Additionally verify and regularly reverify your child's privacy setting to make sure they are in line with your original discussion.
6. Make sure your kids understand that anything they share is something they would be comfortable sharing in person, and that once you share something, you are no longer in control of who that person shares with. Encourage them to ask questions such as "Would I want my future boss to see this?"
7. Some Social Media applications have age requirements. Facebook and most other social media outlets apply restrictions that do not permit children under the age of 13 to use it. Take these restrictions seriously.
8. **While most of these guidelines regard keeping your own data safe, it is also vitally important to have frank discussions with your children about your expectations of them keeping others data safe. It is important to discuss the potential harmful effects of cyberbullying, obscene, or indecent behavior, not only as the recipient of such information, but as the contributor.**

