



## Using Social Media Safely

Are your kids spending time on Facebook, Twitter or YouTube? These are just a few of the social networking sites where many teens and preteens spend time posting and viewing text, photos and videos, sharing links and playing games. Children who spend time on social networks are at risk of being victims of online stalkers or predators, cyberbullying or exposure to inappropriate content.

Talk to your children about online risks. Insist that they never give out personal information or plan a face-to-face meeting with anyone they meet online. Placing the computer in a common area of your home makes it easier to monitor computer use and enforce rules for when, how long and in what way the computer can be used.

### Safety Tips for Using Social Media

- Review your child's online profiles regularly. Delete any personal or identifying information.
- Click on the profiles of your children's friends and the links that they are following.
- Teach your children the Four Ps: don't let children post anything publicly that parents, principals, predators or the police shouldn't see.
- Remind them that what you post on the Internet stays there forever.
- Make sure that your children use the most restrictive privacy settings available on the social networking sites where they have a personal profile.

### If There Is a Problem

Encourage your kids to tell an adult if they feel threatened by someone or feel uncomfortable because of something online. Report concerns immediately to the police and the social networking site.

### Tips for Managing Social Media

The Internet is an open book, and many of the sites we think are private and safe from outside eyes really aren't. People often forget this when they post personal information on social media, leaving themselves open to attack. Here are some tips for keeping your and your children's cyber life safe:

**View the Internet as a novel, not a diary:** Make sure you are comfortable with anyone seeing the information you put online, even if you believe the content to be behind security features. Expect that people you have never met will find your page. If you want the information to be private or restricted to a small, select group of people, the Internet is probably not the best forum.

**Be careful what you advertise:** With an increasing amount of personal information available online, it is very easy to track down addresses, phone numbers and birthdates. This can lead to identity theft, because the more information an attacker can gather about you, the easier it is to pretend to be you.

**Realize that you cannot take it back:** Once something is published online, it is available to other people and to search engines. The content can be changed or removed, but it is possible that someone has already seen the original version and copied and cached it. Think about the implications before publishing information.

**Let your common sense guide you:** Before publishing something on the Internet, determine what value it provides, and consider the implications of having the information available for anyone in the world to view.

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