

Social networking - the basics

What are the social media basics for teens?

Teens are living their lives online. They're checking their friends' status updates (and posting their own), watching their favourite shows, uploading photos and videos, playing games, chatting, video-chatting, exploring interests and accessing information and files they're interested in.

By high school, parents hope kids understand the basics of thinking before they post, being kind and using privacy settings.

High school kids also need to think about a few extra issues...

- Think about online reputations. Remind teens that anyone can see what they post online - even if they think no one will. Potential employers and college /uni staff often browse social-networking sites. Ask your teens to think about who might see their pages and how others might see their posts or photos.
- Anything they create or communicate can be cut, edited, altered and sent around. Once they put something online, it's out of their control and can be taken out of context and used to hurt them or someone else. This includes writing - as well as photos - of sex, drugs and alcohol. Tell them that online stuff can last forever. If they wouldn't put something on the wall of the school hallway, they shouldn't post it online.
- Avoid drama. Don't forward harmful messages or embarrassing photos, and don't pretend to be other people by using their accounts or devices or create fake pages.
- Don't post your location. Although it might be tempting to use these features to connect with friends or brag about where they've been, it's just not safe for teens.
- Watch the clock. Social networking sites can be real-time sucks. Hours and hours can go by, which isn't great for getting homework done, practicing sports or music or reading.