

Facebook for Parents

How to Help Your Teen Use Facebook Safely

You can help your teen use Facebook safely by explaining the importance of setting strict privacy controls, using smart judgment about what they choose to post, behaving appropriately, and understanding that anything they put online can potentially be misused. Here are more tips on navigating this tricky territory:

Tips for talking to teens about Facebook

Talk to your teens about controlling their information. Encourage them to be selective about what they share by customizing the recipients of their posts. Activities on Facebook, including the applications teens use and games they play, can be viewed by others.

Use strict privacy settings. Review all of the options on your privacy settings page. Facebook's default settings tend to keep information public until a user makes it private (although Facebook is a little stricter with minors' accounts). "Friends Only" is a good choice for most items, but you can be even more selective.

Pre-approve tags. Choose the settings that allow you to see everything you've been tagged in (including photos) before the tag links to your page.

Use notification settings. You can tell Facebook that you want to be notified of any activity performed on your name, including photo tags.

Don't post your location. Facebook lets users post their location on every post. Teens shouldn't do this for safety and privacy reasons. Teens can also "tag" their friends' location but you can prevent anyone from tagging your location in the How Tags Work section.

Set rules about what's appropriate to post. No sexy photos, no drinking photos, no photos of them doing something that could hurt them in the future. Teens also need to be thoughtful about their status updates, wall posts, and comments on friends' posts. Remind them that once they post something, it's out of their hands.

If in doubt, take it out. Use the "Remove Post" button to take down risky posts.

Encourage teens to self-reflect before they self-reveal. Teens are very much in the moment and are likely to post something they didn't really mean. Work with them on curbing that impulse. Teach them to ask themselves why they're posting something, who will be able to read it, and whether it could be misunderstood or used against them later.

Watch out for ads. There are tons of ads on Facebook, and most major companies have profile pages. Marketers actively use Facebook to target advertising to your teen.

Create your own page. The best way to learn the ins and outs of Facebook is to create your own page. A great

way to start talking to your teens about their Facebook experience is to ask them to help you create your own page.

"Friend" younger teens. If your kids are in middle school, it may be a sound policy to know what they're posting, since teens that age don't necessarily understand that they're creating a digital footprint. Keep in mind that kids can block you from seeing things, so check in with them, too.

Talk to your high school-aged teens about whether they're comfortable letting you "friend" them. Many will be. But if you *are* your teen's friend, don't fill her page with comments, and don't "friend" her friends. Many parents say Facebook is the only way they know what's going on in their teens' life, so tread cautiously.

Choose your battles. You'll see the good, the bad, and the truly unfathomable. If you don't want your teens to unfriend you, don't ask them about every transgression. Keep it general.

Be a model friend. Remember that your teens can see what you post, too. Model good behavior for your teens, and keep your own digital footprint clean.

Review Facebook's Safety Center. Several FAQs, from General Safety to Safety for Teens, provide detailed information on how to use Facebook safely.

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