



A Teen's Guide to Social Media Safety

Parents can worry about a lot. Like everything else in this world, social media is something that the adults in your life will get nervous about. While there's good reason for that, it's not easy for you to understand why Facebook or Twitter is such a big deal.

There are many different reasons why social media can be a dangerous playground. While the horror stories all focus on kids being lured or abducted, there are far more threats that are less severe. No matter your age or sex, it is important to follow some important rules for social media safety.

Before you roll your eyes, please know these guidelines exist to protect you! It's not about telling you what you can and can't do... it's about offering guidelines to protect you from being ripped off, bullied, disrespected, scammed, or worse while you're just trying to have a good time online.

Check Your Privacy Settings

In most cases, the default privacy settings will give your posts the most public exposure which can be very dangerous.

Important Privacy Setting Resource Links:

[Privacy Settings on Facebook](#) / [Modify Privacy Settings on Twitter](#) / [Control Visibility on Instagram](#) / [Make Your Tumblr Private](#) / Visit [AdjustYourPrivacy.com](#) for a centralized location where you can update all your accounts.

Why It's Important

If you've never checked or updated your privacy settings, then people you don't even know can see your posts. Even if you think you are being careful about what you post, it's common for teens to post sensitive information without even realizing it. It could be something as simple as an identifying background in one of your pictures... but online predators find easy prey in public profiles.

In a nutshell, keep your social profile strictly private... the best settings are where only friends can see what you post because you never really know who your friends are friends with online, so the "Friends of Friends" setting can leave you exposed and vulnerable.

Be Cautious of Friend Requests

Sure, it's great to connect with new people through social people... but isn't there something suspicious when a complete stranger sends you a friend request?

Play it safe and only accept friend requests from friends in the real world.

Apart from the obvious (more severe) threats... friend requests from strangers more commonly turn out to be spam bots (meaning you'll be spamming your friends). Fake profiles are also created for cyber bullying. So when a new friend request comes in, and you think you know the person, be sure to check their profile first and see if anything looks fishy.

Think Before You Post!

Limit personal contact information in your profile and posts. Never give away your phone number or address. Keep private information private. If you want to share this information with a friend, do it directly by phone or text.



Why It's Important

Teenagers tend to have a reckless, impulsive approach to social media. (No offense.)

That's why it's important to think first before you post what you are thinking or feeling. Even though you can delete something (a post, picture, comment, etc.) you can never permanently erase something that has been published on the internet. That's also a good reason

why you should face your problems instead of Facebooking them. 😊

More Tips for Online Safety:

- Avoid using location services like Foursquare and disable location services on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. when posting photos. It's cool, sure... but it's not necessary and the risk is greater than the reward.
- Avoid posting that you are going on vacation, or posting pictures while on vacation... until you are back home. Be also aware of the ramifications of using your cell phone at school and discuss responsible behavior within school guidelines.
- If you do meet somebody new online, never agree to meet them off line. If somebody you met online sends or requests provocative pictures, tell an adult. You have to approach online friends (who you don't know in the real world) as a potential predator... because even if it feels like you know them; you really don't know who they are.