



PARENTS' NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2025

WALKING ALONGSIDE YOUR CHILD ONLINE: BUILDING TRUST AND SAFETY

As a parent, it's essential to stay actively involved in your child's digital life. The online world offers significant opportunities for learning, creativity, and social connection, but it also brings an array of risks. The key to helping children navigate digital spaces safely is maintaining thoughtful oversight whilst building, not compromising, trust.

When introducing a new device, whether it's an iPad, laptop, smartphone, or gaming console, make sure that having oversight is a clear condition from the start. Explain gently but firmly that your goal is not to snoop but rather to guide and protect them. Clarifying this upfront helps your child understand your intentions and accept your involvement as a natural part of their digital experience. Make sure that your child understands that they are not to lock you out of their devices with unknown passwords or other security settings.

Parental monitoring tools can be helpful, providing some safeguards against inappropriate content and help to manage access to apps and screen time. However, rather than relying solely on technology to keep your child safe online, use these tools as opportunities to talk openly with your child, as well as actually looking at their device with them. Periodically reviewing together their online activity, including sent and received messages, browser history and apps installed can create teachable moments and foster honest dialogue.

Remember it's the conversation that matters, so be curious not critical as a first response to what you see.

You might even be open to also looking at your own devices with your child to demonstrate openness and to be a role model.

Encourage your child to use devices in common family areas, such as the living room or kitchen, rather than behind closed bedroom doors. This practice allows natural oversight, enabling you to observe, engage, and intervene when necessary. It also makes digital activity a shared family experience, normalising open conversations about online life, rather than something to be secretive and guarded about.

If you encounter something concerning, perhaps an inappropriate website, unkind messages, unauthorized apps, or even interactions with strangers, respond thoughtfully rather than reactively. Approach the issue with your child calmly and privately. Explain clearly why you're concerned and listen attentively to what they have to say. Use this moment to educate, reassure, and establish clearer boundaries going forward.

Remember, children really need (and want) their parents walking alongside them online, providing mentorship and guidance.

EDITION OVERVIEW

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Your presence can help them to develop critical skills to navigate the internet safely and responsibly as they grow. Emphasise openness, honesty, and your willingness to support their learning, understanding and growing independence.

Ultimately, the best protection against digital risks is a strong, trusting relationship between parent and child. By actively engaging in your child's online journey, you have the opportunity to empower them to become capable, independent, safe and healthy digital citizens.

Mark Yeowell

SOCIAL MEDIA & PRIMARY AGED CHILDREN



Social media is unquestionably a significant feature of today's online world. But its wide ranging and uncontrolled risks have led to growing concerns about its impact on children and young people's wellbeing and mental health. Whilst platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, TikTok, and many online games have age ratings of 13+, many primary school-aged children are actively using them. As a parent, it's important to understand the risks and how to manage social media in relation to your child, particularly with new laws coming into effect in Australia by the end of 2025.

While social media may seem fun, it carries an array of risks for younger users:

- **Exposure to Inappropriate Content:** Children are highly likely to come across harmful or age-inappropriate material.
- **Cyberbullying:** Social media can expose children to bullying or harassment, which can deeply affect their wellbeing.
- **Addiction:** Social media is designed to be addictive, making it hard to self-regulate usage and increasing difficulties in balancing digital and non-digital activities.
- **Mental Health Issues:** Amongst other concerns, constant comparison to others on social media can lead to low self-esteem or body image problems.
- **Sleep Disruption:** Excessive time on social media, especially before bed, can interfere with sleep, affecting their health, mood and general performance.

From December, a new law in Australia will ban children under 16 from using social media. While age verification is still being evaluated, this law highlights growing concerns about the impact of social media on young minds. It's a timely reminder for parents to consider how they manage their child's use of social media now.

So, should primary-aged children be using social media? From my perspective, the answer is unequivocally no. Primary school-aged children (and arguably younger teenagers) are not yet equipped to handle the pressures and risks of social media. Delaying access for your child is a sensible precautionary approach.

If your child is already using social media, here's some possible ways forward:

- **Start the Conversation:** Ask why they want to use social media and discuss the risks, including the upcoming ban. Talk about the potential dangers, such as exposure to inappropriate content and its addictive nature.
- **Set Boundaries:** Consider limiting social media use or removing it entirely. Explain your decision and why you are delaying or restricting their access to certain platforms.
- **Gradual Removal:** If it's hard to take social media away suddenly, gradually reduce it while encouraging other activities (ideally offline).
- **Encourage Other Interests:** Suggest activities like sports, reading, or arts to help your child engage in healthy, non-digital activities.
- **Role Model:** Be aware and mindful of your own social media use and how your children see you using it.

Social media might have come to be seem like a normal part of growing up, but the risks of early exposure are too high. With the new social media ban coming in December, now is the perfect time to talk to your child about digital safety and to hold off (or pull back) on social media. Set clear boundaries, encourage offline activities, and help them navigate other aspects of the digital world in a way that protects their mental and emotional wellbeing.

HELP I'M A DIGITAL PARENT!

FANTASTIC RESOURCES

Raising Children Network

- Backed by Australian experts in child health, education, and parenting
- Offers evidence-based guidance on a whole range of parenting issues including screen time, digital habits, cyber safety, and gaming
- Covers parenting strategies from birth through the teen years
- Includes videos, articles, and interactive tools

www.raisingchildren.net.au

Be Internet Awesome – Google

- Provides fun, engaging digital safety lessons for kids as well as tips for parents
- Teaches key concepts: online kindness, secure passwords, spotting scams, and more
- Includes the Interland game to help children learn internet safety through play
- Great for families looking to co-learn digital citizenship at home

www.beinternetawesome.withgoogle.com



TRICKY ISSUES

The Struggle of Late-Night Screen Use

The temptation to scroll or game at night can override sleep needs. Set a household rule where devices charge outside bedrooms and consider tech-free wind-down routines. Frame it as a way to feel better, not just another rule to follow.

The Challenges of In-Game and Social Media Friendships

Online gaming and social apps blur the lines between friends and strangers. Teach tweens to be cautious by discussing privacy settings and reminding them that not everyone is who they claim to be. Role-play tricky situations to help them practice saying no to risky interactions. Communicating online with people you know in person is the safest strategy.



Normalize Digital Breaks

Help your child to learn that unplugging isn't a punishment, but actually a healthy habit. The goal is to build self-awareness, self-management and ultimately to establish more non-digital than digital activity as the norm.

Encourage screen-free time by creating appealing alternatives, like family game nights, outdoor adventures, or hands-on hobbies.

Teach them that boredom is valuable, it's where creativity, new ideas, and self-reflection happen. When breaks are normal and enjoyable, they're more likely to self-manage their screen time rather than resist limits.

THE DIGITAL TWEENS BLOG

The Digital Tweens Blog is FREE and is published on **Thursdays**.

Each edition focuses on a different topic and is packed with information and practical ideas to support busy parents trying to help their child to thrive in the digital world.

You can find the blog on our website

www.digitaltweens.com.au

OR

Sign up by clicking the link below and we'll send the blog straight to your email.



THANK YOU TO AMIT SINGH KALLEY OF "FOR WORKING PARENTS" IN THE UK, FOR PERMISSION TO SHARE THIS INFOGRAPHIC

POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA APPS AND THEIR DANGERS



TIKTOK

- The 'For You' feed pushes sexual, violent, or harmful content.
- Viral, often risky, challenges spread rapidly among kids.
- Strangers can easily follow, comment, and send private messages.



SNAPCHAT

- Snaps and chats vanish, making sexting and bullying hard to detect.
- Snap Map shows your child's live location, unless switched off.
- "My AI" responds in sometimes inappropriate ways.



INSTAGRAM

- Explore tab can show sexualised images and self harm content.
- Strangers can DM kids, even on private accounts if they're tagged.
- Teens often use hidden or fake "finsta" accounts.



WHATSAPP

- Children can be added to group chats with strangers; no permission needed.
- Graphic videos circulate very easily through message forwarding.
- Encrypted chats mean parents can't view or monitor what's being shared.



DISCORD

- Public servers expose kids to adult content, hate speech, and grooming.
- DMs can be open, meaning anyone can message your child.
- Most communities lack meaningful moderation or safety checks.



YOUTUBE/YOUTUBE KIDS

- Autoplay can lead from cartoons to violent or sexual videos.
- YouTube Shorts show age-inappropriate content.
- Live chats allow strangers to contact your child directly.



FACEBOOK

- Fake accounts often send friend requests to younger users.
- Children can access adult-themed groups or pages with no warnings.
- Games and quizzes collect data and encourage risky oversharing.



ROBLOX

- In-game chat allows strangers to message or groom underage players.
- Some user-made games feature adult content or sexualised roleplay.
- Fake "Robux" giveaways and scam links target younger users.



BE REAL

- Daily photo prompts often reveal school, bedrooms, or exact location.
- Teens feel pressured to post daily or risk being left out.
- No content moderation; risky or unsafe images can be shared instantly.

For
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