

# Teaching Kids to Be Smart About Social Media

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 [kidshealth.org/en/parents/social-media-smarts.html](https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/social-media-smarts.html)

For kids and teens, social media is an essential part of their lives, much the way telephones were important to us at their age.

About 90% of teens have used some form of social media and 75% have a profile on a social networking site, experts say. More than half of all American teens visit social networking sites every day. These numbers are way up from just a few years ago, and there's almost no chance of them ever coming down again.

There are plenty of good things about social media — but also many potential dangers and things that you want your kids and teens to avoid. They don't always make the smartest choices when they post something to a site like Facebook or YouTube, and sometimes this can lead to problems.

So it's important for parents to teach their kids how to use social media wisely.

## The Good

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Social media can help kids:

- stay connected with friends and family
- volunteer or get involved with a campaign, nonprofit, or charity
- enhance their creativity through the sharing of ideas, music, and art
- meet and interact with others who share similar interests

## The Bad

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The flipside is that social media can be a hub for things like [cyberbullying](#) and questionable activities. Without meaning to, kids can easily share more online than they should.

One study showed that 9 out of 10 teens post photos of themselves online or use their real names on their profiles; 8 out of 10 reveal their birthdates and interests; and 7 out of 10 post their school name and the town where they live. Actions like this can make kids easy targets for online predators and others who might want to cause them harm.

These statistics about teens highlight the dangers of social media:

- 17% of teens say they've been contacted online by someone they didn't know in a way that made them feel scared or uncomfortable
- 30% of teens say they've received online advertising that was inappropriate for their age
- 39% of teens admitted to lying about their age to gain access to websites