

Social media – are they ready for it?

There are good and bad sides to social media. Asking these questions can help parents decide whether their teens and younger children are ready for it.

It's important to communicate calmly and honestly and build trust within the family. This helps kids build the skills to be smart, kind and responsible on online and offline.

1. Which social media platforms do my kids want to use?

Parents need to understand how social media platforms work. Read reviews of the safety, content and privacy of different platforms, for example by [Net Aware](#) (NSPCC).

2. Why do my kids want to use these platforms?

Many kids want to use social media to chat with school friends, watch funny videos, or learn to do things like art or cooking. Parents might decide that's understandable.

But other kids want to use social media because they think it will make them famous, or because they don't have many other interests, or because they are lonely and struggling to make friends. Parents might decide there are problems here that need to be addressed first.

3. What's the age limit?

Social media platforms have different age limits – find them at the [eSafety Guide](#). We don't recommend children use social media when they are younger than the limit, as it raises the risk that they will do or see things that are inappropriate for their age.

But remember: just because kids have reached the age limit doesn't necessarily mean they are ready to use a platform safely and responsibly.

4. Am I ready to have the 'awkward talks'?

It's important to talk as a family in a calm, age-appropriate way about the sensitive stuff that can happen on social media, such as 'nudes', porn, grooming, or violent content.

We want our kids to know the facts and feel confident to talk with trusted adults about anything.

We might ask our kids what they know about these topics, explain the risks, and discuss the importance of treating other people with respect and speaking up if something's wrong. For tips on how to have the chat, see the [eSafety Commissioner](#) or Dolly's Dream Parent Hub.

5. How well do my kids cope with challenges?

For example, how good are they at:

- Showing self-control and ignoring distractions?
- Coping when someone behaves unkindly?
- Managing strong feelings like anger and frustration?
- Protecting their privacy and asserting their boundaries?
- Understanding how their words and actions affect others?
- Thinking critically and questioning things they see online?
- Asking for help if something goes wrong?

Many kids take a long time to build these skills. Sometimes it helps for parents to have a chat with a teacher, GP, school wellbeing staff, or [Parentline](#) in your state or territory.

Meanwhile, we encourage families to work together to create a household technology plan, to help kids build good habits from the start. For example, families might agree to:

- Choose the highest privacy settings for social media. For tips, see the [eSafety Guide](#).
- Learn to block, report, mute and unfollow people. For tips, see the [eSafety Guide](#).
- Turn off notifications, at least overnight and during dinner and homework.
- Use devices at reasonable times – e.g. after finishing homework and chores, and not late at night.
- Use devices in shared, open parts of the house where parents can supervise.
- Only be friends online with people you know and trust face to face.

- Before posting anything about another person, check with them first that it's OK.
- Always pause before posting and think about how it might make other people feel.
- Never post or share anything sexual, violent or offensive.
- Don't share personal info with strangers, such as phone numbers, addresses, or where you go to school. Check your photos don't give that stuff away either.
- Tell a trusted adult if something online makes you upset, confused or worried.

We can also help kids build confidence and resilience by:

- Connecting them with places where they can make friends, face challenges and build confidence, such as volunteering, sport, theatre or outdoor adventures.
- Helping them list things they can do to feel better if they're upset, such as going for a run, playing with a pet, dancing, solving puzzles, or writing a diary.
- Reminding them of times in the past when they solved problems successfully.
- Looking through online content together and reminding them that people don't always tell the truth online. For example, many people pretend to be richer, happier, better looking and more popular than they really are.



Get Help!

Remind kids they can speak to a counsellor for free at [Kids Helpline](https://www.kidshelpline.com.au) 1800 55 1800, [Dolly's Dream Support Line](https://www.dollysdream.org.au) 0488 881 033, [Lifeline](https://www.lifeline.org.au) 13 11 14, or [eheadspace](https://www.eheadspace.org.au) 1800 650 890.