



Tumblr is a popular social media platform and microblogging site with over 463 million blogs on its platform. In Europe you must be over 16 to sign up, but the age limit is just 13 elsewhere. However, in both cases, age verification is limited. The platform is designed to share different types of content, such as videos, photos or short articles. People can react to each other's content, share items they like, and even interact through the platform with direct messages.



What parents need to know about TUMBLR



WATCH OUT FOR ADULT CONTENT

You can post almost anything on Tumblr, so it's important you're aware of what your child is exposed to. In fact, it was briefly removed from the Apple store when it was found users were sharing illegal content involving the sexual abuse of children.

There has since been a ban on being able to share 'adult' material, but some material still slips through the net.

A BROAD SEARCH FUNCTION

The broad search tool on Tumblr makes it very easy for anyone to find almost any kind of content. In fact, an NSPCC investigation found there to be content about eating disorders and self-harm that could be damaging to a young person's mental health. There is no easy way to stop this broad search function, so it pays to educate your child on the risk of searching for such topics.

MISLEADING TAGS / ACRONYMS

The 'tagging' function on Tumblr allows users to label relevant content and makes searching more effective. However, such tags often employ words with a dual meaning or strange acronyms that can lead to inappropriate content being associated with something innocent.

BE AWARE OF OVERSHARING

Tumblr is a public platform and anything that's shared on it can be viewed by anyone with a Tumblr account. It's important your child understands people they do not know could comment on what they share. You should remind your child not to share anything they would not be happy for everyone to see.

PROFILES AREN'T CLEAR

Due to the vague nature of the profile function on Tumblr, it's easy to remain quite anonymous. This means it's difficult for your children to be clear about whom they're interacting with. This increases the potential for cyber-bullying or grooming.

IT'S EASY TO POST 'FAKE NEWS'

It's easy for anyone to create and share information on Tumblr, whether it's true or not. Sometimes, this is done as a joke. Other times, it's done to be malicious or support an ideological or political agenda. It's important to understand your child could be exposed to this misinformation and take steps to encourage them to question it.



Top Tips to Protect Your Child



1 FILTER CONTENT

It's not possible to filter out all mentions of a potential harmful phrase, but you can filter out certain posts that are tagged with the phrase. You can do this in your account settings.

2 ACTIVATE SAFE MODE

You can turn on 'Safe Mode', which will hide sensitive content, however it's equally important to monitor your child. If you see their behaviour changing, calmly offer support and ask them if something is bothering them.

3 KEEP YOUR CHILD INFORMED

Encourage your child to seek alternative opinions and news stories and not rely on a single source for information, especially if it appears to be unsupported.

4 REPORT & BLOCK USERS

Show your child how to report and block specific content that is potentially harmful or upsetting. You can find details of how to on the 'Community Guidelines' page. Though blocking can be effective, you're only able to block a single post. To block a user, you must add them to the block list of each post.

5 RESPECT ORIGINAL CONTENT

It's easy to repost any content on Tumblr so it appears as your own. To avoid your child falling foul of any copyright or trademark infringements, make sure they understand the importance of citing the original author of anything they wish to share.

6 PROTECT THEIR PRIVACY

Check your child's Tumblr account settings to make sure they're hidden from all internal and external search engines. Turn off the auto-play function on all media and set it so only approved friends can message your child. Setting strong passwords and two-factor authentication will also make it especially difficult for anyone other than your child to access their Tumblr account.

Meet our expert

Claire Woffenden has been a technology journalist since 1998 with a specialism in consumer technology (apps, websites, home computing and digital devices). As a Mum of two young children - aged 8 and 6 - Claire is passionate about helping to keep children safe online.

SOURCES: <https://www.tumblr.com/policy/en/terms-of-service>, <https://www.teensafe.com/blog/everything-a-parent-needs-to-know-about-tumblr/>, <https://smartsocial.com/what-is-tumblr-parent-teacher-guide/>, https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=127&v=FbUImJMfRN8, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6agr6np4_w, <https://www.fastcompany.com/90304153/seven-weeks-after-nsfw-ban-tumblr-still-bulges-with-porn>, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/08/06/instagram-tumblr-allowing-extremely-dangerous-self-harm-images/>