



DIOCESE OF CHARLOTTE
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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Social Media Best Practices for Parents

- **How can you be a model at home?**
Have a designated place where you leave your cell phone for the evening and spend time with your family. This reinforces what is happening in the schools with their cell phone policies.
- **How do I know if my child is ready to use social media responsibly?**
Be aware of your child's maturity level and their ability to use social media in a responsible manner. Do they follow rules and expectations in other instances? If so, then they might be responsible in this instance.
- **What are some guidelines/expectations/rules I can set with my child around social media use?**
 - Be friends with your child on all their social media accounts.
 - Know their passwords and check their accounts on a regular basis.
 - Have them promise not to create any secret accounts.
 - Put a time limit on their social media use.
 - Have them promise to only add people they know in real life.
 - Vow not to talk negatively about others in chat/messages/or on social pages.
 - Never post anything that you wouldn't want your priest or grandmother to see.
 - Do not use social media to talk to someone who is in the same room as you.
 - Exercise the virtues of prudence and modesty when sharing photos.
 - Be "present in the moment" and not take out their phones to capture their meal at the table, or worse, set up an experience so that the goal is to get more "likes."
 - Remind your children that anything posted remains forever on the internet, and can affect future admissions decisions for colleges, or jobs as employees often run a social media check on potential employees.
 - Tell your children to turn off location sharing so that they can't be tracked as easily.
 - Remind your children to never download an attachment that has not been verified as legitimate. Malware and Viruses often pose as regular attachments from accounts that have been hacked.
 - Social media "facts" should often be verified before sharing, as there are many skewed, biased, or made-up posts that are quickly re-shared.
 - They should never post that they or their family are leaving for vacation or when their home will be empty. Thieves will often look for these kinds of posts in order to figure out what homes to target.
 - Be aware of the many dangerous "challenges" that social media promulgates which encourages unhealthy, or risk-taking dares.

Make a contract with these rules and expectations that both you and your child sign. Be sure to have consequences for violating the rules of the contract.

- **How can I educate myself on what apps my child might be using?**

Be in regular contact with your child about what apps they are using.

Be aware of current apps—especially ones that disguise themselves as something harmless (known as “vault apps”).

Be aware that seemingly innocent sites can also be used like an app, allowing for a chat-room type of experience, which can lead to cyberbullying.

- **How can I educate my child about the dangers of social media?**

See Handout from CSO.

- **How can I be vigilant and proactive?**

Use monitoring software on your child’s phone to alert you to inappropriate use. Some examples are:

- Bark
- FamiSafe
- Net Nanny

- **What if my child is not ready for social media and a smartphone, but I want to be able to contact them when they are away?**

If it is necessary for your child to have a phone, consider giving them a “dumb” phone, for example, a flip phone that does not connect to the internet and can only be used for making phone calls.