common sense media

How do I keep up with the latest social apps and sites teens are using?

Take a little time to do your research. Our reviews and parenting advice can be an excellent starting point. Other parents also can be great resources. Ask around, and keep your ears open during parents' night at school for any cell phone or social media issues the school is dealing with.

Most importantly, talk -- and listen -- to your kids. They might tell you everything you want to know or at least drop the name of an app or a website you can check out on your own. Even if you can't stay on top of every new app, concentrate your efforts on keeping the lines of communication open so kids will come to you if a problem arises. Make sure kids know it's OK to make mistakes and that they don't need to hide these from you -- that you can actually help them through tough spots.

Beyond that, here are a few more ideas:

- Have your kid use your app store account or an account linked to your email, so you'll be notified when an app is downloaded. Consider making a rule, at least until they're older, that they can't download an app or sign up for an online account without asking you first.
- Ask which apps and sites are popular with your teen's friends. Kids may open up more when they're talking about someone else.
- Share what you're using. Show them your Facebook page, favorite videos, or a game you're obsessed with. They may be inspired to reciprocate.