

A Parent's Guide to Instagram

1. Why do kids love Instagram?

Because they love media, sharing it and socializing with it on their phones, and Instagram makes all that doable in a simple, eye-catching way. Teens like taking, cropping, enhancing, sharing and commenting on photos and videos. But the commenting isn't just commenting – in effect, they're socializing in mixed-media conversations that include plenty of likes and links too.

2. Does Instagram have a minimum age?

Yes, it's 13, in compliance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. But Instagram doesn't ask users to specify their age, and there are many younger children who use the service, often with their parents' permission. Whether Instagram is "safe" depends more on how it's used than on the age of the user, but Instagram will delete underage accounts if they're notified and can verify the users are under 13.

3. What are the risks in using Instagram?

Though there's nothing inherently dangerous about Instagram, the main things parents worry about are typical of all social media: mean behavior among peers and inappropriate photos or videos that can hurt a child's reputation or attract the wrong kind of attention. Parents are also concerned that people their kids don't know can reach out to them directly. Kids can learn to manage these risks, which is why we wrote this guide.

4. What's the best way to help kids stay safe on Instagram?

As with all social media, being respectful of ourselves and others makes us safer. Our posts and comments reflect on us and others in our photos and videos. Whether serious or silly, they become part of our public image. Respecting others in how media is shared, tagged and commented on reduces risk. While most kids are smart about this, it doesn't hurt for parents to be sure kids aren't posting provocative images or having inappropriate interactions with people they don't know, which leads to the next question...

5. Should my child's profile be private?

For many kids, part of the fun of Instagram is developing a big following – a good thing for parents and kids to talk about. Having a public account on Instagram means anyone can follow you. A private account means that you have to approve anyone who wants to follow you, so many parents have their kids start using Instagram with a private account. But there's no guarantee your child won't be seen on Instagram or any other photo-sharing service because people post photos of each other. Even not having an Instagram account can't ensure a child won't appear in a photo there. How positive or negative a young person's experience is on Instagram or anywhere online depends as much on the person and his or her friends as on the app.

Further reading and resources: <https://www.connectsafely.org/>
<https://connectsafely.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Quick-Guide-to-Instagram-2021.pdf>



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