

Digital Citizenship Techniques Version 2.0

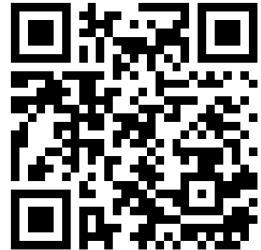
Revised in 2022 and featuring 192 experts and 223 contributions to help parents, educators and experts keep students safe on the internet.

by Josh Ochs & The [SmartSocial.com](https://www.smartsocial.com) Team

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Parents & Educators,

I began my career learning from the smartest brand marketers at Disney studios, as they taught me how they capture the hearts and minds by telling a story with pictures and video.

I then got invited by schools to show students how they can use the internet in a positive way to put their best foot forward using social media. Now, after a few short years of testing my content, I've presented to more than 300,000 students and tens of thousands of parents in 27+ states.

My podcast has attracted hundreds of guest experts in the space, and we have compiled over 200 of their contributions in this book.

You will notice that whenever possible, we use the phrase "students," "Teens," or "Tweens" instead of "kids." We do this because it's a way to show students they are young adults in our eyes, and we want to talk with them about their future, and how their digital device can help them get a great career, when they set goals as a young adult.

Students are getting devices at increasingly younger ages. Rather than telling them what not to do online, we show them examples of what can go right and wrong and let them learn from the mistakes of others.

This book is designed to help bridge the gap between experts, educators, and parents, bringing everyone up to speed on both the dangers, and the solutions we can use to keep students safe.

I hope you learn from and enjoy this book as much as my team has enjoyed researching and connecting with these experts. I can't wait to meet you in your city (or on Zoom) in the near future, at a SmartSocial.com presentation.

Sincerely,

Josh Ochs and the Team at SmartSocial.com

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Josh's Top Dozen Key Takeaways to Keep Students Safe:

1. ALWAYS Be on the same apps as your students.
2. Know the passcode to your kid's phones (and check them at random times). Students respect what you inspect.
3. Your student's phone should be treated like a car (YOU own it, and should access it anytime you want). It is being loaned to them, and privileges can be revoked at any time.
4. Don't let your kids sleep with their phones. Charge them in a central location. Buy an old school alarm clock if you must.
5. Remind your kids to not talk with strangers online. Strangers are anyone who isn't eating dinner around the dinner table and is not a friend sitting next to them at school (or in a Zoom).
6. Stay off anonymous apps (and stick to the SmartSocial.com Green Zone apps). Make a family social media agreement with each student (get a template when you join the SmartSocial.com newsletter).
7. Real life and online are now the same for your student. Consider showing them that their values in both places should be the same.
8. The internet is written in ink, not in pencil. Everything becomes your student's resume.
9. Remind your students to work on "friendships" not "followers"
10. We are not here to police you, we are here to protect you.
11. Consider moving from a "balanced screentime" to "harmony." Balance is when there's good and bad, harmony is when things work together for a common good.
12. Consider saying "I'm learning _____ topic/app" instead of "I'm not tech savvy."

Social Media Safety Resources

The internet can be an educational resource, but some websites and social media networks can be dangerous. It is important to set students up for success before they get their first internet-connected device and to continue discussing safety whenever they have access to the world wide web.

In this section, our experts share tips for using social media responsibly, setting screen time rules, securing password information in a password manager app, and more.

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- Perfect for educators or parents who want to get ahead of their students
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25 Easy Tips for Using Social Media Responsibly

Horror stories about teens and social media often include some serious consequences like missed job opportunities or college rejections. But, if students learn to use social media responsibly and in a safe way, it can have big benefits of connecting with recruiters, or employers, sharing their passions, and learning new skills.

How can you teach your teens to be good digital citizens in ways that resonate? 25 experts offer tips to teach students how to stay safe, positive, and responsible online.

1. You're in control of your feed. Recognize what's unhealthy and hit that unfollow button

Lisa Honold, Director of the Center for Online Safety

Remember, you're in charge of your content. You can use social media to uplift your life, connect with friends, create content, and entertain. Or, you can get used by it when it sucks you in. Then, you feel bad afterward. It's healthy to manage your feed and unfollow/delete accounts that are consistently filled with false news, negative comments, rude people, or bullying. If you notice you feel anxious or irritated after spending time on a certain app or account, that's your body's signal that you should spend less time there. It's not healthy.

After all, the goal of most apps is to hook you and make you want to spend more time there. App designers do that by suggesting the next video or account to follow, through pop-up notifications and sounds, and with bright colors and buttons.

It's not just teens who are struggling. Adults have a hard time too. Ideally, you could have an open conversation with your kids about your whole family using social media more mindfully.

2. Find a purpose to your screen time so it's not only a pastime

Josh Ochs, Founder of SmartSocial.com

Students can brainstorm two to three things they want to be known for when people look them up online. This exercise can help anyone find their screen time purpose so that social media isn't only a pastime. Once you know what you want to be known for, it's easier to decide whether your Instagram post or YouTube comment is going to help you achieve your goals (or hurt your digital footprint).

The majority of social media posts should be about the two to three things you want to be known for. It's okay for tweens and teens to be silly on social media as long as they keep their posts positive and full of gratitude.

3. Highlight your best self and turn all social media platforms into a living/breathing portfolio

Chad Dorman, Founder of Leonard Andrew Consulting

Social media is a living resume that showcases your character. The things that make you authentically YOU. Awards you've won. The things you are passionate about. Students should definitely make sure that these are the content pieces they're presenting on the Internet for all to see.

Many young people are already geared towards documenting just about every moment of their lives on social media. They shouldn't miss out on an opportunity to share their latest A+ paper or their creation from art class. Showcasing you who are, as well as your activities and interests, is something that colleges are looking for. Students should make sure to impress them! Admissions officers want more than just transcripts and an academic ace – they want someone who shows passion, who is authentic, and who will contribute positively to their campus. Post positively publish proudly!

4. With great power, comes great responsibility

Meredith Essalat, Principal, Author of The Overly Honest Teacher

If students are old enough to have their own social media account, then they are old enough to understand the risks and responsibilities that come

with this. I always discuss the perils and risks of social media and other online forums directly with my students.

When they chose to make a TikTok at recess and film it in their school uniforms, we talked about voyeurism and the danger that comes from letting their location be known. When they goaded a group of neighboring students into fighting on campus by posting mean comments on an Instagram post, we talked about the impact of language and the ramifications that result in inciting violence.

I teach my students about the vacancy of online anonymity and being certain that the persona they are putting out on social media jives with who they are and how they want the world to know them.

5. Social media abstinence isn't the way, planning is key

Jennifer Walden, Director of Operations, Wikilawn

As the mom of a tween, I've really had to strategize on the best ways to keep my daughter safe. Just telling her she can't use social media isn't a solution, as much as I wish it was. It's the primary means of communication and social validation for her age group. When all of her friends are using it but she isn't, that becomes an even bigger issue.

I worry not only about predators and the usual dangers, but about her posting things she shouldn't, and the potential for her to be bullied relentlessly. We have discussed several instances of cyberbullying, making a plan for what to do if it ever happens to her. She knows to disengage and come talk to me or her dad. The worst thing she can do is shut herself away and let everything online bullies say just exist in an echo chamber.

6. Never post criminal activities

David Reischer, Attorney & CEO of LegalAdvice.com

The most important tip for tweens and teens when using social media is not to post anything that is evidence of unlawful activity. Young people may not have an appreciation that posting some types of content can be unlawful.

Posts that are defamatory, incite violence, or include hate speech are just some examples of posts that can land a young person in trouble.

Posting criminal activities or conspiring with other social media members to riot, protest, or loot can also be used as evidence against a tween or teen. A young person who is passionate about social justice or another political cause is permitted to post on social media under the First Amendment Right to Free Speech, but there needs to be a consideration when a posting might cross over into a criminal act. Be careful out there on the Internet. Posting unlawful messages or evidence of unlawful conduct can land a tween or teen in hot water.

7. Research apps before you trust them

Ben Taylor, Founder of Home Working Club

My number one tip for parents is to research apps, websites, and devices before you trust them. The ultimate research tool is right there in your hands in the form of a web browser. That means you can check if a news report is factually correct before you share it, find out if a new app is actually out to scam you, and determine whether that fun new photo game is actually harvesting your personal details. It only takes seconds to check these things out, so don't just use social media blindly. It doesn't take much extra time and effort to stay safe online.

8. Be aware of the content you're consuming and what that content seems to want from you

Melanie Squire, Founder of and Therapist with Freedom Counseling

Social media can certainly offer numerous benefits, but as a therapist I have more and more parents expressing concern that digital technology is affecting the emotional well-being and social lives of their children. Most youth and young adults are quick to defend their socially networked lives, claiming that social media helps them feel more connected to their friends and provides critical support during difficult times. These benefits are why it's so important to educate new social media users about healthy habits.

Use social media to supplement real-world interests.

Do you like hiking? Students can follow pages that educate them about the activity, and share information about nearby hikes. Is makeup your thing? It's easy to find how-to videos to emulate and use in everyday life. Social media is about building communities of interest. Being a part of a community that encourages action of its members is better than one offering passive interactions.

Students can ask themselves, "why do I like a page, or social community?" Do the online communities they're part of make them want to learn more or participate offline? Can you have non-digital conversations about these topics? Certainly, some forms of social content are for entertainment or are important to staying informed. Not every interaction needs to be pushing you to take some real-world action. However, it is important to be aware of the content your students are consuming and what that content seems to want from them.

9. Focus on what you really enjoy to avoid overuse

Jakub Kliszcak, Marketing Specialist at CrazyCall

Oftentimes, people have all of the popular apps on their phones: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok, Snapchat, and more. This leads to a constant stream of social media binging. You start with one app to switch to another, to switch to another, and the cycle continues.

Students can ask themselves, "what type of content do I really enjoy? Do I care about what my friends post on Facebook? Or, do I prefer visual content on Instagram?" Maybe they enjoy the more professional content from LinkedIn.

Students can answer those questions and limit their usage to just one or two social media platforms. Surely, they won't stop using social media but it might help limit the time they spend on their phone.

10. Think twice before posting on social media

Chane Steiner, CEO of Crediful

Start with a conversation and remind your students that whatever they put out there will never go away- even if they delete it and even if they unshare it or ask for it to be taken down. The Internet moves so quickly that by the time you realize you don't want it out there, it's already too late. So, think twice before posting something. Are you comfortable living with that choice forever?

Urge your kids to think about what the person seeing it will feel or think. Will their post start a fight? Are they hurting someone? Are they negatively impacting someone's life? Have your students think about what it would feel like if someone did that to them. If it would make them feel bad, it's probably not okay.

Finally, it's important for tweens and teens to understand that they are not as anonymous as they think. The internet leaves a trail everywhere for everyone. If that makes them uncomfortable, they probably shouldn't be doing what they're doing.

11. Social media can showcase a student's aptitude

Natalie Bidnick Andreas, Digital Strategy Consultant

Don't avoid having a social media footprint. Parents may "outlaw" certain platforms due to their potential to cause harm, but my research shows that not existing at all online can actually be more detrimental to a student's future college applications and job prospects. Instead, parents should counsel their children to see social media as a public tool– their "calling card" into the world.

Platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram can showcase a student's aptitude in sports, creative projects, travel, academic pursuits, and overall communication skills. Students can certainly still post pictures of the homecoming dance and the football game, but space should also be dedicated to their passions. It's not about being fake– it's about showcasing a student's favorite aspects of life.

If parents are apprehensive about their student's participation in social media, I recommend working through the "front yard test" as a family. Everything posted on social media should pass the "front yard test"; that is, it should be appropriate enough to put on a large sign in the front yard or other public community space. Parents can ask their students: "How would you feel if all your future teachers and bosses saw this post on our front lawn?" If the student would feel ashamed, it's not fit to post.

The "front yard test" exercise gets students thinking ahead to college and beyond. After all, no matter how "anonymous" they may try to be online, future schools and employers will be able to access their digital footprint. It's up to each student and their family to plan ahead and to post accordingly.

12. Follow your students on social media

Betsy Furler, Author and Speaker

Responsible use of social media is critical for students today. Students need to be aware that what they post on social media may be available online forever. If they don't want their grandparents, teachers, or future employers to see something, it shouldn't be online.

The easiest method of staying safe and responsible online is for parents to follow their own student online. This ensures oversight in case there is an issue, as well as a "check and balance" of content.

13. Go through the Terms of Service with your children

Amy Vernon, Adjunct Professor at New York University

Parents can teach their children digital safety by going through a site's Terms of Service, line-by-line, and explaining it to them. Consider reading it verbatim and then explain what each clause means. At the end, explain that if they accepted the terms, they need to abide by these rules, or their accounts could be deleted.

It makes an impression and encourages students to ask a lot of questions. Students will be much more thoughtful about how they use social media and how they behave online.

14. Logging time spent on social media can be eye-opening

Dr. Tim Elmore, Growing Leaders

Ask to meet with your student and talk about the influence and the hours consumed by social media. Often, logging the hours a teen spends online can be eye-opening for them. Many spend the equivalent of a full-time job staring at a screen.

You can also do the following:

Ask to scroll through their posts with them. This could be awkward, but actually sit with them and look at the posts uploaded both by them and to them. Discuss what you see together. Interpret the tone and content of the posts and what it suggests about their character. This may feel cheesy or

cliché, but ask what someone looking at their posts might conclude if they didn't know them.

Discuss how employers, coaches, instructors, or mentors might view their sites. Next, talk about how students (grads) have lost their chance at a job because an employer viewed their social media posts. Ask them if they have ever noticed an attitude change in themselves after reading or posting on social media. This requires transparency, but discuss how you, or they, can experience a negative attitude or impulsive reactions online.

Suggest your students follow this rule: I will only post what I want my reputation to be ten years from now. Finally, give them the long view: What impact does this post have or what reputation will this post give me a decade from now?

15. Start a discussion early on

Varda Meyers Epstein, Kars4Kids

If you teach your teens the following points early on they are more likely to develop responsible social media habits:

- Never take over another person's thread to drive home a point.
- Don't start an online argument when you disagree with someone; always remain respectful and calm.
- Thank and tag people when you share something they shared first.
- If you don't have something nice to say, it's best not to say it.
- Vet friend requests carefully– if you can't see enough information to make an informed decision, it's best to decline the request and mark it as SPAM.
- Don't share anything you wouldn't want your mom to see and don't overshare.

16. Teach accountability

Tom Kersting, Valley Family Counseling

It starts with parents. Parents must first ask the following question: Is my child ready for a smartphone and social media? Don't worry if the other

students the same age have access to smartphones and social media. Instead, focus on your knowledge and intuition.

Inform your child that there will be consequences right away if there are any social media mishaps. This means taking access away and following through with the rules that were agreed upon. Accountability is the key; it's how students learn.

Students must be educated with regards to digital citizenship and there must be consequences if rules are violated. This sends a strong message that social media must be used responsibly.

17. Encourage students to use technology meaningfully

Troy Dvorak, Psychology Professor

I encourage my college students to text, tweet, and post information they learn during class when we take periodic class breaks. Teachers can create blogs and Facebook pages for their classes and offer credit to students who participate meaningfully. I also encourage students to follow people and organizations relevant to their major.

The use of technology in classrooms is ubiquitous now. So, rather than police it, teachers should have students make great use of it. If you keep them busy using technology for learning, they don't have time to use it for other things during class.

18. Remind teens that nothing is private online

Dave Delaney, Futureforth

First and foremost, never put anything online you don't want your educators, future employers, peers, and parents to see. Deleted items can still live on servers. People can take screenshots of posts. Private accounts can be hacked. Nothing is 100% private online.

Students should actively grow and nurture their networks on social media. Take time to get to know people and find ways to serve them.

19. Guide students on how to use social media effectively

Kristen Moon, Moon Prep

The college admissions process is competitive enough; students need to be cautious to not sabotage themselves. Students need to assume that any picture, post, or tweet that is posted will be seen by the admissions officer at their dream college. Teach students to only put material out there that can benefit them.

Students should create a LinkedIn page that is interactive and shows pictures and videos of their accomplishments, interests, and passions. Include the LinkedIn profile URL with the college application. This is a great way for students to make their resume come to life and show how they are using social media responsively and productively.

20. Students shouldn't count on anonymity

Patrick Fogarty, Valley Stream 30

As simple as it sounds, if students wouldn't say it in person, they shouldn't type it. Students can't count on a veil of anonymity on Twitter or any other social network. If someone wants to find out who you are, they will.

Encourage students (and everyone else) to schedule their tweets using an app like HootSuite or Buffer, so they can type out whatever they want to say, then schedule it to send in an hour or two. That way, students have plenty of time to reconsider their posts before they go public.

21. Advise students to T.H.I.N.K. about what they are going to post

Matthew Nance, Kiwanis International

- Think – is it Truthful
- Help – does it Help?
- Inspire – does it Inspire?
- Necessary – is it Nice or Necessary?
- Kind – is it Kind?

Is their post truthful? Does their post reflect the true nature of the situation? Is their post only telling one side of the story? Does the post misrepresent the situation or leave out details that matter?

Is the post helpful? Does their post help someone else understand something? Is the post helping their audience understand how they feel? Is the post helping someone get information?

Is the post inspiring? Does the post encourage and lift up others? Does the post inspire someone to take action? Does the post inspire the reader to be their best self?

Is the post nice or necessary? Does the post respect others? Is the post an opinion otherwise not being expressed? Does the post put others down? Does the post support others? Does the post serve those who are reading it?

A single social media post may not meet all of these criteria. For example, a student might be posting in support of their favorite team or wishing someone happy birthday. These posts may not qualify as a perfect “T.H.I.N.K.” post, but they do not violate any of the above questions. Therefore, no harm, no foul.

22. Understand the pros and cons of social media

MoniQue Hoffman, QtheBrand

Students have more control over their future than they think when it comes to using social media. It’s important to understand how social media could make or break future educational or professional opportunities.

Every student should complete a series of exercises that allow them to define who they are, who they are not, and what their biggest fear is when it comes to being misunderstood or misinterpreted. Analyzing past posts against their answers should put things into perspective for the student. Over time, the pros and cons of being socially responsible on social media become very clear.

23. Become a source of useful information

Ilena Di Toro, Just Movie Posters

When using social media, be a source that gives useful information to others, not a drain that wastes other's time. Students can either post an infinite number of selfies, gossip messages, or worse, hate messages, which drains the viewer.

Conversely, they can post pictures of achievements (sports or hobbies) or articles from websites, broadcast, or print media, which are useful sources of information for the viewer. Providing helpful information online benefits the reader and it also boosts their reputation as somewhat of an "expert."

24. Manage what is posted online

Dan Konzen, University of Phoenix

Practicing responsible social media is very simple. Students can easily build a strong, professional online brand by managing what is posted about them online:

- Perform a search on yourself to see what your online brand looks like. Start by Googling your name and where you're from.
- Go back and clean up what you can, making sure to remove any inappropriate posts and pictures from you or about you.
- Keep headshots as professional as possible, especially on sites like LinkedIn, which can be easily found by future employers.
- Create an alert to see what is posted about you online and on social media in the future.

Ultimately, students should think about what is posted online as a digital face tattoo. Even if it is removed, it still leaves a scar.

25. Urge students to question their content before they post

Johnna Ithier, SpeakLIFE

Urge students to ask themselves the following questions before they post anything online:

- Is the post TRUE or a rumor?
- Is the post HELPFUL or harmful?
- Is the post INFORMATIONAL or gossip?
- Is the post NEEDED or irrelevant?
- Is the post KIND or harsh?

If the post is not any of these things, or you have to question it, you probably shouldn't post it. Once you hit send or post it, the message is no longer yours and the receiver can do anything they want with the message.

Conclusion

A lot of responsibility comes with using the internet. Parents and educators should take a proactive approach and help kids find positive ways to use social media before they get their first digital device or social media account. Establishing digital boundaries and open communication from the start could help prevent them from posting something that could cost them a dream opportunity in the future.

Before giving your student access to social media, parents can:

- Download each app and review the Terms of Service.
- Start a discussion early and consider using a Social Media Agreement.
- Inform students that there will be consequences right away if there are any social media mishaps.
- Remind teens that nothing is private online.
- Urge students to question each piece of content before they post it.

Once your students are active on social media, parents can:

- Follow them on all of their social networks.
- Encourage students to post content that showcases their aptitude.
- Consider setting time limits.

- Become a trusted resource for students when they have questions or feel uncomfortable about content they see on social media.
- Stay involved and ask students what they are doing and who they are chatting with.

Teen Social Media Statistics (What Parents Need to Know)

A survey from Common Sense Media sheds light on teens' changing social media habits and why some students are more deeply affected by— and connected to— their digital worlds. The survey showcases how social media has evolved since 2012. It will come as no surprise to many parents and educators that social media use among tweens and teens has increased dramatically in the United States.

The latest teen social media statistics:

- 65% of parents surveyed by Pew Researchers said they worry about their kids spending too much time in front of screens
- YouTube was the most used social media app among teens in 2019, followed by Instagram and Snapchat, according to Statista
- TikTok became the fastest-growing new app for American teens in 2019. 60% of TikTok users were ages 16 to 24, according to Business of Apps
- The Common Sense Census studied smartphone use among American teens and found:
 - In 2015, 24% of kids ages 8 to 12 had their own smartphone. In just four years, that number went up to 41%
 - In 2015, 67% of teens ages 13 to 18 had their own smartphone. By 2019, the number climbed to 84%
 - The average 8 to 12-year-old American kid spent four hours and 44 minutes looking at screens each day in 2019
 - American teens, ages 13 to 18, used entertainment screen media for an average of seven hours and 22 minutes each day in 2019

As more teens head online to socialize, researchers are discovering some disturbing new trends. Nearly all teens now have access to a smartphone. With so much information, competition, and peer pressure now at their fingertips, experts worry the technology is taking a toll. We consulted with 5 experts about some of the latest social media statistics and how the latest trends could be impacting your students.

1. Students are receiving their first phone around the time they enter the stage of human development where peer engagement is critical

Kathryn Ely, JD, MA, ALC, MA, Attorney & Masters of Arts in Clinical Mental Health

American youth are receiving their first phone right around the time they enter the stage of human development where peer engagement is critical. Teens use social media to explore social comparison, highlight the aspects of themselves they see as positive, and for self-disclosure.

Teens can use social media to enhance their social development. But teens can also be negatively impacted by their own social media use. Social media use can also lead to cyberbullying, social anxiety, depression, and exposure to content that is not developmentally appropriate.

How can we make sure our children are using social media in a positive way that strengthens their self-esteem and connections with peers, which are so crucial in this stage of development?

Model the behavior we want to see in them:

- Avoid oversharing on social media. Ask our teens before we post about them
- Have designated times every day when we shut down our devices and fully and intentionally engage in face to face contact, so our teens are learning verbal and non-verbal cues that are so important in communication
- Giving teens our full attention when they talk to us and avoid glancing at our devices
- Set clear, firm boundaries right when you give an adolescent a phone: The phone must be charged somewhere other than in the teen's room at night. The phone will be shut off an hour before bed for good sleep hygiene. A parent has passwords and monitors social media use until he or she is comfortable the teen is using it in a healthy manner

- Foster the teen’s self-esteem on and off social media by supporting his/her positive inner qualities, rather than promoting popularity and appearances

Conversation starters for parents:

- The most important thing to know about starting conversations with teens is to be present and look for the opportunities they give us. Lecturing every time you get in the car will not get you anywhere. Listen when your teen talks and asks questions. If you are talking and your teen mentions a friend shared something on social media, ask your teen “What do you think is too much to share?” and insert your opinion in a caring, understanding way
- Have conversations with your children about being intentional with social media, devices having a time and place, and making good choices for their future
- Remind your teen that everyone reviews social media sites, whether it’s a college admissions officer or a person interviewing them for a job

2. One in three children have been cyberbullied

Chelsea Brown, Digital Mom Talk

One in three children admitted to being cyberbullied, according to 2019 research from UNICEF. It’s becoming a growing problem for children. Some parents aren’t even sure what is classified as cyberbullying or when cyberbullying crosses legal lines.

Being an active and positive bystander is proven to be very effective to prevent bullying, but teens do not know how to do so online and are more likely to respond when the bullies are persistent. Many students refuse to call cyberbullies out as the tactics intensify, for fear of being included as well.

Studies are also being done to show that cyberbullying is more damaging than normal bullying. This is due to the tactics of cyberbullying being along the lines of psychological warfare for students. The constant contact, the appearance of multiple targets, and the aspect of most cyberbullying being

based on bullying in real life, has many children facing a semi-silent and unconquerable battle.

3. Only half of parents with students ages 5 to 15 use parental controls

Paul Grattan, Law Enforcement Supervisor

Only half of the parents of students ages 5 to 15 use parental controls, other content filters, or blockers. Of those who do not, the number one reason cited is that they trust their student's online behavior. This is interesting because 9 out of 10 parents who do use them, find they block the right amount of content. This data comes from a 2017 Ofcom (Office of Communications UK) research report.

At the same time, I caution this is only a basic first step. While most parents trust their children online, the nature of predatory behavior by bad actors can influence even the savviest and most trustworthy teen.

That's truly the nature of today's online threat – outside influences and actors. Much of the danger of increased connectivity and technology does not lie directly in the hands of our teens and their overt behavior, but rather in their susceptibility to influences and pressure.

4. Half of people ages 14 to 24 have experienced technologically abusive behavior

Alexandra Boscolo, DayOneNY.org

Today's teens are constantly online, and abusers always find new ways to stalk and harass their targets.

Here are some important statistics from Day One:

- 50% of people ages 14 to 24 have experienced technologically abusive behavior
- 22% of people ages 14 to 24 in dating relationships say they feel like their partner checks up on them too often

- A 2013 study found that the most frequent form of harassment or abuse was tampering with a partner’s social networking account without permission. Nearly 1 in 10 teens in relationships report having this happen to them in the past year
- In the same survey, 7% of teens reported that their partner sent them texts/emails/etc. to engage in unwanted sexual acts. And 7% of teens reported being pressured to send a sexual or naked photo of themselves

5. Many Instagram accounts are fake and could pose a threat to students

Johnny Santiago, Social Catfish

According to a study by Italian security researchers, 8% of Instagram accounts are fake. Instagram is one of the most popular social media apps teens use.

This poses a risk and danger to teenagers from online catfishers. People behind the fake accounts can scam teens out of their money or even blackmail them. A catfisher is a person who creates a fake identity on a social network, usually with the intention of deceiving a specific victim. With this in mind, parents and teens alike should learn the signs that the person they’re talking to online is a catfisher.

What can parents do?

Parents need to teach students how to manage their screen time, what can (and can’t) be posted online, the consequences of making mistakes on social media, and how to value offline activities over negative social media habits.

If your student doesn’t have access to social media or a device yet, help them prepare for their future digital footprint:

- Don’t give your student a tablet or their first smartphone without having a conversation with them about digital safety.
- Talk with your student about what kind of content can be shared on social media and which social media networks they can use.

- Consider creating a family cell phone agreement that outlines all of the rules around safe cell phone use.
- Help your student set up their profiles on the networks you decide are safe for your family.
- Consistently monitor their online activity and have your own profiles on the same social networks they use.
- If you see negative behavior, don't wait for the incident to get worse before talking to your student.

If your student struggles with managing their screen time, help them develop a healthier relationship with their devices:

- Lead by example and be the digital role model they need. If you don't want your student constantly on their phone, then make sure you unplug when you want them to unplug.
- Instead of taking their devices away, set ground rules. Ensure that your student understands the consequences of not following the guidelines. This can empower students to self-regulate their screen time.
- Some parents make screen time an earned activity. Once your child has finished their chores, homework, or a physical activity, then they can earn some screen time.
- Help your student find offline activities they enjoy and would be proud to share with future employers or college admissions officers. Extracurricular activities can be great additions to your student's resume and can also help generate content to share on social media.
- Teach your students to use social media as a tool, instead of just as a pastime.
- Set up visual timers so students know how much screen time they can expect.

- Collect all of your family's cell phones before bed each night and charge them in a specific place to avoid having your student check their phone all night.
- Always be on the apps that your student uses and monitor their activity. Use their behavior to have regular discussions around social media safety.

Conclusion

Students' social media use and screen time have increased dramatically in the last decade. While the negative effects of social media on teens can be serious, it's impossible for parents to keep their teens offline forever. Instead, it's important for parents to help their students prepare for a life in the digital world.

If your student doesn't have access to social media yet, or if they spend too much time looking at screens, there are steps parents can take to help them develop a healthy relationship with screen time.

Following Your Students on Social Media: Tips for Parents

It's a digital dilemma plaguing parents. Should you be following your students on social media? The Pew Research Center surveyed parents and found the majority of parents are already monitoring their student's online activity in some way. So how can parents keep their students safe online and encourage good digital behavior without being too intrusive?

In this chapter, 15 parents and experts offer their best tips on how to keep a watchful eye in today's digital parenting age.

1. Let your students know you are there to protect, but don't be overly invasive as that leads to Finstagramms and more

Mollie Newton, Founder, PetMeTwice.com

It is okay for parents to monitor their students online. This is to ensure that you are keeping them away from online predators, and what they are learning is useful, appropriate, fun, and improves their well-being.

What's not okay is unreasonably manipulating them even if they haven't done any wrong and you just want to protect them from future mistakes.

If we're talking about apps to monitor our student's online activities, I recommend Qustodio as one app I have used for my two kids since it has the basic features parents could easily learn. It conveniently sets rules and limits a user's internet navigation, plus, monitors screen time usage and location tracking which is also crucial.

However, there are a lot more effective tips guaranteed to protect your children without necessarily controlling them. Be open and talk to them about online safety and how the digital world can affect them in all aspects.

Let your students have their own privacy especially if you know they are knowledgeable enough to handle it. Don't be overly invasive about their activities because that's when they might start keeping secrets.

2. Communicate the dangers, highlight the positive, and have regular check-ins

Josh Ochs, Founder of SmartSocial.com

Parents should have an open conversation with their students about the dangers of certain applications and what to look out for on social media. While it is good to be on every app that your student is on (and to follow them on those apps) it's also important to have the login information to each social media account they are using. This also ensures your student can't restrict views/block you (and they will know you are checking in from time to time, helping them to realize your wisdom is also online).

Remind your students to keep it Light, Bright, and Polite™ online when they post on social media. Colleges and future employers are looking at social media day in and day out when considering candidates. If your student does make a mistake, at SmartSocial we teach you and your students how to fix and improve a digital footprint so that one day they may Shine Online.

Ensure you are having regularly scheduled check-ins and conversations with your students about social media posts and anything that they have questions about. It's a good idea to learn everything you can about the platforms they're on so that you're more knowledgeable on the topic and what takes place online.

3. Parents need to set an example of how to be healthy online

Ryan Cook, Digital Marketing Specialist, Epic Marketing

I think parents should definitely follow their students on Instagram, Tik Tok, Snapchat, and other forms of social media.

Parents should give students a good example of how to be an uplifting, healthy voice on social media, and when their students post something, ideally parents and family members should be the first ones there cheering the post on and engaging with it. Most of us are quite self-conscious on social media, and having loved ones around us to celebrate and cheer us on is a huge benefit. In all senses, parents should take an interest in what their students have an interest in, and seek to understand their student's world and be a part of it. This makes for happy, healthy families.

It's also a good way for parents to monitor what their students are feeling and struggling with so that they can be a better help and support.

4. Don't intrude on their space and normalize the conversation around social media posts

Amy Duncan, Founder, KindMommy.com

It's okay for parents to follow your own students on social media as long as you don't give off the vibe that you are intruding on their social space. If you stalk or stop them from doing something on social media, they are either going to block you or do it to rebel. In either case, that will sort of defeat the whole purpose of following them on social media.

I think the key tip for monitoring students online is to normalize the conversation around apps. Make them aware of the risks and also when discussing something that is not related to social media ask them to check it out on the app. For example, using Instagram to learn about how destinations really look is a positive way of using the app. While this is one of the most important steps, it's also important to set rules about social media. These rules do not have to be restricted only to screen time and social media usage but also show them how they can set privacy and content filters.

Ask them to think about how they feel when they are using the app and how they feel after they are done. Engaging them with activities that do not need a smartphone is another excellent way to form habits where you do not need to spend too much time on your smartphone.

5. Have an open conversation, ask to follow, and stay in the background

David De Haan, Owner of StandUpPaddleboardsReview.com

The first and most important thing is to have a talk with the students. Let them know that what they post will probably stay on the internet forever. Teach them to always be kind and not post any hurtful comments or jokes. With this in mind, they'll think twice before posting.

About following them on social media: I think you should ask. If you follow without their permission, they may block you. If they agree to let you follow them, be cool. Don't be all over the comment section or go tagging them in your posts, unless they want that.

Tweens and teens can be sneaky. And if you want to stay on top of things as far as social media use is concerned, you may want to use a social media monitoring app. Most of them, like MamaBear (MamaBearApp.com), let you know what the students are posting. You will be alerted in case of inappropriate or harmful content.

6. Create an account together and share the activity of scrolling through social media feeds

Sarah Walters, Marketing Manager, The Whit Group

I believe that enforcing strict rules early on will help keep your children safe and under close watch. If your child is asking about getting their own accounts, then impose a rule of them giving you access to see their activity. Sign them up on a shared iPad or computer that is a joint account between the two of you.

Try not to make it seem as if you are patrolling their activity but rather like it's something the two of you can do together. Try and watch videos they like and laugh with them at the content. Sit with them on the couch and have fun with them as they scroll through their favorite channels and accounts.

This will make it seem like a shared activity you have together that you both enjoy and will feel less like you are policing what they do (and don't do). It will also help you stay on top of the latest technology and what each platform is all about.

Eventually, when they have their own devices and you aren't monitoring them so strictly, it won't feel so intrusive or strange when you pop in to see what they are doing on these social channels.

7. In a world where predators and cyberbullying happens, following your students may be necessary

Sonya Schwartz, Founder, HerNorm.com

Gone are the days where your students would wreck and knock all the things in your house while playing. They're now mostly inside their rooms spending all their time on social media. As a mother, I am really concerned about my children's welfare, like many parents. There are a lot of good people in this world, but there is also no shortage of evildoers.

In social media, you don't even know if you're talking to a real person behind a picture. I'm okay knowing that my children are talking with classmates and friends. What I'm not okay with is them talking with strangers. Here are two reasons why you should follow your children on social media:

- To prevent predators from interacting with your child: I wouldn't let my children wander off unsupervised and social media is a big open space where not everyone is kind.
- To look out for potential bullying: Make sure that your children are not a subject of bullying or are not a bully themselves.

Ultimately, I believe it's your children's decision if they let you look into their social media accounts since they can always create another one if they want to hide something from you. So don't force your way in, because it may just lead to a start of mutual distrust. Communicate with your children what you want and why you want it. Let them know that you're only after their safety and there are a lot of bad people out there who might try to harm them if they're not careful.

8. Use apps that help monitor activities for you

Adi Donna, Founder of CozyDownHome.com

I am not into checking my teen's social media on and off. I try to build their trust in me by giving them the freedom to be on any social media and use it. On the other side, I have made my accounts on every social platform they are using but with the names that I don't own. Doing so, the teens do not know who we are and only consider us their followers who are admiring their every activity. However, we are actually having an eye on their social activities.

You can use some apps that will help you monitor your teen's activity on the phone. Norton is an app that allows me to set time limits for using the phone and helps me filter the web content coming in. TeenSafe enables me to track my teen's calls, texts, GPS, and social media activities. DinnerTime helps me to limit the use of phone internet. Other than these apps, parents can also use PhoneSheriff, Qustodio, or MobSafetyBrowser.

9. Create a profile that isn't embarrassing for your student to be following or friends with

Vickie Pierre, Family and Wellness Writer, QuickQuote.com

Rather than using your own personal account to follow your child, you can opt to create a special, separate account from which you can monitor your child's behavior. By doing so, your child's friends and acquaintances don't have to know it's actually mom or dad following his or her account.

If you're going to follow your child on social media, don't be overbearing. Never initiate public arguments or disagreements on their posts; instead, address those issues in private. Don't feel the need to comment on everything your child posts. Show restraint when interacting with your child's friends. And while you should monitor your child's account frequently (at least once a day), don't feel the need to monitor his or her account every five minutes.

Perhaps the most important thing a parent following their child on social media should do is be open and honest. Never give the impression that you're trying to be controlling, or trying to be sneaky. Talk to your child about the real dangers associated with social media, and make sure he or she understands the "why" behind your actions. And if at any time you become concerned about their behavior, be upfront and be willing to set boundaries.

10. Depending on age, lay down the law or respect privacy after educating

Andrew Taylor, Director, Net Lawman

For those who have younger children just exploring social media, parents should take the opportunity and lay down the law immediately- parents should have full access. If it is approached in a no-nonsense kind of way

where there is no judgment from the parents whatsoever on what their children produce.

For those a little older and looking for independence, respect for privacy needs to be balanced with education.

I believe it can be daunting for parents to stamp their authority on something that is somewhat out of their grasp. The key I believe is trying to walk a mile in their shoes.

11. Follow them until they are at least 18-years-old

Pamela Turner, Co-Author of Daughters of Promise Devotional

I think parents should follow their students on social media outlets until they are at least 18. I follow my two teens on Instagram and Facebook. My oldest has me blocked on Twitter, which is okay because that's her way of having a little social media privacy if you will. My two younger children do not have Snapchat and TikTok accounts of their own but I do allow them to enjoy my Snapchat filter.

12. You don't need to be your child's social media friend but you do need to follow them

Carly Campbell, Mommy on Purpose

Have an honest conversation with your child about why you're following them. Let them know it's because you don't trust other people- not because you don't trust them. And if they seem hesitant, promise them that you will not engage with their posts. You don't need to be your child's social media friend- you need to be your child's parent. You can assure them that you won't be embarrassing them in any way publicly, ever (and then keep that promise). You will be able to see what they're posting and have private (in-person) conversations about their posts, and the posts that they engage with.

If your child is a teen, and friending mom or dad embarrasses them to no end, you could consider going as far as creating a fake social account to follow them- and telling your child about it so they know who this person is.

If, after promising you won't engage or embarrass your child, they are still against you following them or they block you, it's not unreasonable to think that they are already posting things they know you wouldn't be happy with.

13. In addition to following their students on social media, parents need to be educated on how each platform works and how their children use it

Andrew Selepak, PhD, University of Florida Social Media Professor

For all the positives of social media, there are a lot of negatives as well such as cyberbullying which impacts younger people much more than adults. The

increase in cyberbullying among young people has also led to a rise in childhood depression, eating disorders, and even suicide. Parents need to follow their students on social media to know what they are posting and who they are interacting with. But simply following your students on social media is not enough.

Although following your child on social media means at a minimum that a parent has a social media account to follow their child on Instagram or Facebook, it doesn't mean the parent knows how to use the accounts. Parents need to know social media better than their children so they know how their child uses it and how others can contact them or engage with them. Simply following your child on Instagram doesn't mean you know what they are doing. Instead, all a parent is doing is giving their child a reason to look for other ways to interact with friends in less visible ways, and these less visible ways are often where more cyberbullying is done.

Parents need to have digital literacy to know how the web works and how to protect their child. Parents need to not only follow their children on social media, and know how to use the platforms, they should also make sure they have the passwords to any accounts their children use so they can see the direct messages their children are sending and receiving. While public cyberbullying is a problem, so is private cyberbullying, and only by having their child's password to their account can they be sure they are not cyberbullying someone or being cyberbullied. And even if a parent does have their child's password, their child could still create additional accounts beyond the watchful eye of their parents. This is why it is important for parents to know how the platforms work and be on the lookout for additional hidden accounts and maybe even monitor their child's online activity.

Additionally, parents may even want to invest in software to monitor their child's online activities across platforms, the internet, and even their texts. While parents can't protect their children from everything, there are things they can do to protect them as much as possible. The first step is to recognize that just as you would keep your child from watching R-movies, you also need to keep them away from disturbing content on the web.

14. Have meaningful discussions that set ground rules and expectations before following your students on social media

Dr. Chester Goad, University Administrator, Former K12 Principal and Teacher

Parents should follow young adolescents on social media and use discretion following older students after having a meaningful discussion that sets ground rules and expectations. Younger children may benefit from occasional positive feedback and encouragement from a parent online, but in general outside of holidays and special circumstances, parents should avoid or limit posting on their tween/teen's social media.

No matter the age, pay attention to posts and keep a watchful eye out for worrisome contradictions to real life. Extreme differences between the emotions and expressions included in social media posts and the emotions and expressions witnessed at home are red flags. Look for photoshopped selfies and other evidence of unrealistic portrayals of life. Have a conversation about the differences in social media and the big picture of everyday life, discuss authenticity and body image, and of course seek assistance from professionals if you notice signs of depression.

15. Giving your teens some space on social media is important or else they will start to hide their activity or create secret profiles

Myasia Burns, M.A., Social Media & PR Manager at Red Ventures

Should parents follow their students? Absolutely. Where parents need to draw the line, though, is micromanaging their children's online presence. Joining conversations you are not tagged in, liking every photo they and their friends post, or bringing up their online activity in every conversation is a reminder that you are "always watching" and an intrusion on their online identity. Let them breathe.

Tips for monitoring your child's online identity:

- Recognize that who they are on Instagram may be different from Facebook– make sure that you know about every single social media profile they have (even second/fake Instagram accounts).
- Check-in daily– this doesn't mean only looking at their profile, but understanding what's trending. Is there a dangerous new challenge sweeping the internet? Has it reached your child's middle school yet? These are things you should know about. An out-of-the-box concept from a social media manager: consider using tools like Sprout Social or Hootsuite to keep yourself in the know.
- Flag things of genuine concern– is your child using language online that is harmful to themselves or others? Are they bullying someone? These are things to worry about and should be addressed directly with your child. If they're simply just being a little more provocative than you're used to (but ultimately not a danger to anyone), I'd recommend proceeding with caution, i.e., perhaps not mentioning it instantly. Again, you don't want to hover too much over them. Why not? Your child can and will find ways to revoke your access to their digital persona, which is in direct conflict with what you want. Private (or worse, secret) profiles can be the source of the darkest content on the internet. Encourage a healthy relationship by

allowing them their space to explore who they want to be and redirect them only when absolutely necessary.

The bottom line is to be present but not overbearing as a parent.

Conclusion

Parents should make sure they stay personally connected to their students about their online activity. They shouldn't only rely on just one monitoring software. Instead, they should create a digital safety net. When parents keep the lines of communication open, they are likely to have a more positive influence in helping to shape their child's digital footprint- today and for years to come.

Screen Time Rules With Remote Learning

Many parents are concerned about too much screen time for their students. When students complete all, or some, of their school work on a screen, the amount of screen time can add up in any given day. How can parents find the right balance of screen time between work and play?

In this chapter, 9 experts offer tips to prevent screen time addiction, depression, and other digital dangers of too much screen time.

1. Balance hands-on learning with digital learning

Chris Drew, Ph.D., HelpfulProfessor.com

Once your child has completed online tasks, consider encouraging them to do practical hands-on learning activities that are also educational. For example, if they have completed a math quiz online, follow-up by getting them to demonstrate that same work using tokens or pen and paper to transfer that knowledge from online to offline contexts.

While limits are important, usage is likely to increase right now, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. Yet some experts say that, under these unique circumstances, parents shouldn't be too hard on themselves. There's no official playbook for how to manage a household during a worldwide pandemic. As long as parents are making themselves available to their children, and engaging them in activities and learning opportunities offline throughout the day, then 'the kids will be alright,' said Dr. Michael Rich, director of the Center on Media and Child Health at Boston Children's Hospital. - The Boston Globe

2. Find positive ways to use technology

Holly Zink, Technology and Cybersecurity

Technology isn't always bad, especially when it's used to contact family. Whether it's their favorite cousin or their grandparents, encourage your child to video chat with family. It will not only cheer up your family, but also lift the spirits of those you're calling.

3. Don't overshare on social media

Paul Lipman, CEO of BullGuard

Ensure privacy settings are limited to only trusted friends and family. This will keep you safe from prying eyes and cybercriminals who often search these sites either looking for victims for social engineering scams or information on targets they have already chosen.

Be careful online shopping. Phishing, spam, and websites with malicious links are designed to steal your information. Enjoy a more secure online shopping experience by ensuring the legitimacy of websites and creating hard-to-crack passwords.

Also, monitor online gaming. Many games have an online component featuring in-game add-ons that can be bought for real money. Parents should set up a specific email account for game registration purposes to ensure email accounts that hold addresses, contact information, and social media or online banking information are kept separate.

4. Download and use social media apps together as a family

Josh Ochs, Founder of [SmartSocial.com](https://www.smart-social.com)

Spending extra time in the house together is a great time to learn about all of the apps your students are using and download them yourself.

It's okay to be friends with your students on these apps (and you should). But don't overwhelm them by stalking their profiles or commenting on every post. Instead, ask your students to teach you about the apps and collaborate with them on posts.

Being on the same apps your students are on will help you see if they are posting anything they shouldn't be. Make note of who they are friends with and encourage them to steer clear of strangers online. Have fun with your students, but also strategically work to keep them safe at the same time.

5. Have conversations with your students about digital safety

Patricia Vercillo, Vice President of Smith Training Centre and The Smith Investigation Agency

We're living in a time where practically every child has their own tablet, laptop, or cellphone. Do not set your students up for failure by making them unprepared for what they could end up seeing or how vulnerable they could become later on. The best conversations to have surround what a computer virus is, online privacy, phishing, and social networking etiquette, to name a few.

Young children, and even teenagers, should understand the importance of passwords and why they shouldn't all be the same and what those consequences are if they don't follow through. The most important note for teenagers is if you wouldn't do it face-to-face, then don't do it online. It's as simple as that. Everything you do online is captured forever and will be used against you later on, even if it's something you've forgotten about.

As employers and university admission officers research candidates through their social media accounts, your students should be aware of what they're putting online.

This also opens up the conversation about privacy settings. If you don't want everyone to see where you've been or what you had to drink the other day, then change your privacy settings. This way you're only sharing with those within your inner circle.

6. Be intentional about screen time

Shane Gregory Owens, Ph.D., Psychologist, PC

Any negative reaction to having screens taken away— anger, sadness, tantrums— are a good sign that your tween is spending too much time on

them. In these cases, your tween's screen time should be more limited. Be aware, this might mean that you need to adjust your own screen use, too. That will be healthier for all of you.

Parents should stick to the rules they have set for tweens in terms of which apps are and are not allowed. Behave accordingly. If you weren't going to get your tween a smartphone or use a specific app until next year, then wait until next year.

Parents must take their own frequent breaks from screens. It might work to set family rules and schedules for screen and non-screen activities and stick to them as best as possible. The closer you stick to your rules, the easier it will be for your tweens.

It's also important for tweens to learn that there are different rules for them and for adults. Parents might have to spend time working on screens when tweens can or should not. Parents must recognize this and might have to work extra hard reinforcing their tweens for staying off their own screens in these cases. There might be a Candy Land, Chutes N Ladders, or Monopoly marathon in your future.

Also, be intentional about screen time. Use screens together as a family to stay in touch with friends and family. Screens are a valuable resource these days, and you now have a valuable opportunity to teach your tweens the power and responsibility that come with screen access.

To combat anxiety and depression, it is vital for everyone in the house to get up and move and to spend some face time with each other. Now is a perfect opportunity to start a tradition of first-thing-in-the-morning family exercise and to return to sit-down family dinners.

7. Monitor all use of electronics in the house

Susan Hart, MommyHighFive.com

Be aware of what your child's school is assigning. This will help you determine how much time is actually needed on a device for school work each day. Periodically checking on your child while he or she is doing school work will help keep your child working productively.

Consider having your tweens check-in their devices to you after school work is done and in the evenings. They can only use a device if they have access to it. If you put the device somewhere safe when you don't want it used, your child will have to find something else to do. Also, making sure your child doesn't have access to a device at night will help ensure they get a good night's sleep.

A parent teaches best by example, so putting your device away will help your child know it's important. It will also allow you to spend more time together.

What will your child do when he or she isn't spending so much time on electronics? Here are some offline activity suggestions to do at home:

- **Get outside:** Fresh air and sunlight boost mood. Whether you have a backyard or a park down the street, you can get outside while still practicing social distancing.
- **Be creative:** Get out paper and crayons and color a picture. Build a creation out of LEGO blocks. Make a movie or write a story.
- **Learn a new skill:** Children can learn a variety of different skills that will help them throughout their lives. Anyone can learn how to do laundry, perform household chores, or help with cooking.

8. Create a digital safety and technology plan together as a family

Adam Bell, Marketing Assistant and Student Wellbeing Editor at Tutorful

The Internet is amazing for learning, but there are distractions and dangers out there! Setting up parental controls is essential, and enabling safe search on Google is a great first step. While students are eLearning in unprecedented times, it's important to maintain some sense of a normal school day. That means whatever websites wouldn't be allowed in school, aren't allowed during the school day at home.

Boundaries need to be created. However, don't forget to talk with your child about Internet safety. It is one thing to add parental controls, filters, and settings, but having an open and honest conversation about being safe

online will allow you to learn together and trust in their usage of devices and technology. For example, you can say “no internet past 9 PM.” Setting time limits and sticking to them will help create a routine that your teenager will soon get used to.

It is best to create a plan together. Decide what you both feel is acceptable and what isn't acceptable online. Set expectations. Teach your children about age restrictions and the apps and files they should or shouldn't download. Explain that they need to get permission first.

9. Be proactive against eye strain and bad sleeping habits

Denise Thomas, Get Ahead of the Class

There are physical issues that can come from too much computer screen time. For example, digital eye strain and difficulty sleeping.

Symptoms of digital eye strain can be dry eyes, itchy eyes, blurry vision, and headaches. Your student's screen brightness should be set similar to your surrounding environment. Glare contributes to eyestrain. Using a matte screen can be helpful if you find that glare is an issue and cannot reposition the computer.

But most important for eyestrain is not blinking enough. Focusing on the computer screen intently causes us to not blink as often as usual. We will blink 10 to 12 times per minute instead of 15. This may not sound like a huge difference, but that's all it takes to cause eyestrain. After a while our eyes may feel dry or unfocused. When this reduced blinking goes on all day, the cornea cells dry out and cannot recover until they are replaced by sleeping at night. In the morning you'll feel comfortable again.

There are a couple of things you can do that help reduce eyestrain. One is to follow the 20-20-20 rule. Look away from your screen at something that is 20 feet away for 20 seconds every 20 minutes. You can set a timer to remind children to look away from their computer at a certain object. Using eye drops can also help.

Difficulty sleeping can result from too much blue light from the computer screen in the evening hours. Blue light from the sun keeps us awake during the day but can affect our circadian rhythm at night. Experts recommend halting screen time one to two hours before bedtime. In addition, there are apps for your phone and computer that can be set to automatically reduce the blue light at a certain time of day, say 6 PM, to begin reducing light exposure.

Conclusion

As online, remote, and virtual learning have changed and adapted to changing times, parents might worry about digital safety and how much screen time they should allow their students to have. Parents must remain involved in their student's day and stay mindful about creating a healthy online and offline balance.

The Negative Effects of Video Games

Like most hobbies, playing video games can be safe in moderation. However, younger students who have not yet developed the ability to self-regulate their behavior need guidance and support to develop those skills. With so many video games out there, it's hard for parents to regulate who their students are talking to and what they are seeing online.

A Canadian study from McGill University shows that human-computer interactions, such as playing video games, can have a negative impact on the brain.

Some negative effects of videos games are:

- Noticeable changes to behavior
- Ignoring or not prioritizing responsibilities or interests over game time
- Continuing to play games despite the negative impact it may have
- Difficulty sleeping or changes in sleep patterns
- Declining grades or difficulty in school
- Social isolation
- Poor time management skills

Popular video games with teens and tweens:

- Fortnite: Battle Royale
- Minecraft
- Call of Duty
- Grand Theft Auto
- Among Us

- PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds (similar to Fortnite)
- League Of Legends

Why should parents care?

- Some parents believe that their students are safe online if they don't have social media. However, if they play video games they are still at risk.
- You may think you're aware of your child's game play, but if they're wearing a headset and playing in multiplayer mode, they are a million miles away.
- When your student is playing video games in multiplayer mode they're talking to people you don't know. They're talking to people who do not love them as much as you do.
- Too much game time can have a negative impact on your student's health.

Gaming disorder is considered a mental health condition.

In 2018, the World Health Organization officially began recognizing gaming disorder as a mental health condition.

- The Internal Classification of Diseases is the foundation for identifying health trends and statistics worldwide.
- In the Internal Classification of Diseases, the World Health Organization officially recognized gaming disorder.

What are gaming disorder warning signs?

According to World Health Organization, there are three signs that someone might be struggling with gaming disorder:

- Impaired control over gaming (e.g. onset, frequency, intensity, duration, termination, context).

- Increasing priority given to gaming to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other life interests and daily activities.
- Continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences.

What are some red flags parents need to look out for?

According to Dr. Mike Bishop, tech addiction expert, these red flags indicate that your child is struggling with screen time and gaming:

- Short tempers that are aggravated by screen time. If your students are playing video games, you can sometimes see them getting frustrated at the game. Watch-out for a quick temper and see if the game has control over their mood.
- Students are not able to self-soothe when they're playing video games. This translates into the next point, which is having problems going to sleep or waking up in the morning.
- Having access to a device every night. If we let our teens use devices without limits set, without some rules and structure, they're going to take their devices to bed with them and they're going to be up at night browsing social media or playing games. Research says, allowing your child to have a TV or device in their room unchecked at night results in less sleep and having a harder time waking up in the morning.
- Passing up face-to-face activities for screen time activities. Another major red flag is when you see your child passing up normal opportunities for socialization or outside play.

What can parents do?

- Before giving your student access to a new game, ask them to explain why they want to play it. Then, spend some time playing the game on your own and decide if it is safe for your family to play.

Know that your child has perhaps already played it at their friend's house.

- Schedule game time and set time limits beforehand.
- Teach your children that video games are only to be played in moderation (or, best of all, as a family).
- Challenge your student to find offline activities they enjoy and can add to their resume.
- Have an open dialog about video games with your children. Consider talking about the dangers of playing with strangers, sharing personal information in chats, graphic video game content, and bullying behavior.
- Model positive screen time behaviors around your children.
- Always supervise game time (and play with them, if possible).

We asked 5 experts about the dangers of video gaming and what parents can do to help keep their tweens and teens safe.

1. Use video games that incorporate critical thinking

Melissa Corkum, Parent and Wellness Coach

I'm a parent coach and TV talk show host who recently interviewed my gaming husband about tweens and video games. We focused on how video games can be used positively to increase critical thinking skills and how tweens and teens who seem addicted to video games aren't actually lazy...quite the opposite.

If parents feel the need to curb video game time, they should look for opportunities for their child to have adventure and purpose. A lot of games are about conquering something, so we, as parents, need to find ways to challenge our teens in real life outside of screens. Our students need the hit of dopamine that video gaming can provide.

2. Do not allow your students to gamble or play games with monetization features

Will Bond, Education Writer

When considering the dangers of video games, it's always important to note that it isn't as binary as either being good or bad. Gaming is a very broad topic that can encompass several worrying aspects that may harm a child's development. However, these can also be mitigated, while other areas offer opportunities that can in fact benefit children's growth.

As for the harmful effects of gaming, it should be known that video game addiction is a very real concern parents should have when allowing teens to play games for unrestricted amounts of time. However, with the right oversight, this issue can be reliably averted. Likewise, many modern games contain systems similar to that of gambling. 'Loot boxes' or 'packs' are common terms for in-game items that offer a reward of variable value based purely on luck. Worse still is that these items can often be paid for using real money. Parents should be particularly aware of popular games that include these features and ensure that their child understands the dangers of gambling, how it exists in their games and that real money shouldn't be spent on purchasing luck-based items.

In contrast to these downsides though, video games can also be a source of education, a platform for healthy socializing and simply a very engaging piece of entertainment that can reduce stress. There are many excellent educational games out there that balance the fun interactivity of gaming whilst being safe and educational. Video games aren't necessarily bad, it's about monitoring play and ensuring that only the right games are played.

3. Set hard limits on video game time

Holly Zink, Tech Expert and Writer

While playing video games in moderation is unlikely to have any negative effects on your child, the same cannot be said for those who play excessively. Video game addiction is a real disorder, and affects many teenagers and young children. This disorder can have severe developmental effects, especially on a young child. Bouts of depression, social anxiety, mood swings and loss of interest in other activities are all signs that your child may have a gaming addiction.

If you suspect that your child may be spending too much time playing video games, the best thing you can do is set limits on their playing time. Some video games (especially those targeted at children) come with parental settings that allow you to set a maximum number of hours your child can play the game. Once their allotted time has run out, they will be unable to access the game until the next day. If your child plays a game that doesn't have these parental settings, you can always practice the same method by taking away their electronics after a certain amount of time each day.

4. Show interest in student's video games and ask questions

Erica Wiles, Licensed Professional Counselor and Writer

Some negative effects of videogames on tweens and teens are:

- A disproportionate amount of time spent on game play
- Loss of sleep
- Sedentary lifestyle and possible poor physical health (e.g. obesity)
- Sacrifice of social relationships (e.g. family and friends)
- Irritability, negative mood and poor emotion regulation
- Desensitization to violence

While you can always work to monitor what games you allow in your household and how long you allow your child to play, one of the more unique approaches to managing game play is trying to connect with your

child over the game (this may be easier with younger children but is definitely worth a go with older teens).

Show an interest in what interests your child. Sit with your child while he/she plays the game. Ask for explanations of what is going on within the game. Ask to learn more about the object of the game. You do not have to actively engage the whole time, but be in the room. This may seem boring and your child may seem annoyed or ignore you, but it is not necessarily a waste of time. You are showing your child that you are: a) interested in spending time with them, b) actively trying to learn about activities and subjects that interest them, c) you are present and available for them.

5. Balance video games with outdoor activities and other hobbies

Lou Sabina, Professor at Stetson University

I would argue that the largest negative effect is developing an addiction to gaming that can distract from academics and even from children being able to form social relationships with others. Although we are in an exciting time where there are more opportunities to build relationships through gaming due to increased online connectivity within gaming platforms, there is still something to be said from face-to-face interactions that are lost when children spend too much time playing games.

I also think it's important to note now that many games and online gaming platforms have "events" now where a gamer "must complete a certain objective by Sunday at 11:59 PM Eastern Time (for example) to receive a certain item within the game" and if they don't complete the task, they never have the opportunity to receive that item again. I think this is one of the out-of-the-box things that has changed gaming over the last five years that has led to more and more teens staying up at all hours of the evening just to make sure they get a certain item or reward. This is classic extrinsic motivation. However, it can detract from sleep, social opportunities, and other hobbies.

I don't necessarily agree that gaming should be used by parents as a reward. There have been many articles on gaming that include parents monitoring the time that children spend, and limiting it to "one hour a day" or

something of that nature. The problem with that is, when these children become 18, move to college, they aren't going to have that restriction placed on them, and I would argue that is going to have a more detrimental impact on them with college performance. Parents should take the time to learn about the games that their children are playing, take an active interest in their gaming hobbies, but be present in their lives to show them there is a life outside of video games. It can be a hobby (it's a great hobby), but it shouldn't be the be-all-end-all in a child's life.

Conclusion

Whether you're worried about addiction, online predators, or the violent nature of some of these games, the best way to keep your students safe is to talk to them about the dangers of video games.

To help younger players stay safe, monitor their gaming habits and help them understand ways to avoid dangers while playing. Let your students know they can have fun online without talking to strangers. Help them establish routines and encourage them to do things outside and with friends.

Most video games are fine in moderation, but they should be one of the many activities your students do throughout the day.

Why Every Family Needs a Password Manager

A password manager creates and stores unique passwords across every website or account you have. When you use a password manager, like Dashlane, you create a single “master” password (that you remember) to access the manager and then the manager creates and stores the rest.

Get 3+ Months Free On Dashlane Password Manager When You Visit: SmartSocial.com/dashlane

Why You Should Never Use the Same Password Twice

Let’s say I use the same password for Facebook, Instagram, Dropbox, Gmail and Bank of America.

If Facebook gets hacked, hackers will find the database on the web, and try my email+password combination on 100+ other major sites to see if they can get into those sites.

If I have a unique password for each network, then hackers can only get access to that one network (my Facebook) but not get into Dropbox/Gmail/etc. However, managing 100 unique passwords is difficult.

Most people have a sheet of paper (or a note in their phone) that saves all of their passwords so they can remember them. That gets cumbersome and is not secure.

Why do families need a password manager?

Having a password manager drastically reduces the possibility of your family falling victim to ransomware, identity theft, malware, phishing, and other cyber attacks. Parents only need to remember one “master” password and the rest are stored and secure.

We constantly hear about data breaches in the news. With a password manager you can have peace of mind knowing that you can easily change

your password on the compromised account without hackers getting access to other accounts or personal information.

What is ransomware?

Ransomware is a type of malicious software that holds your personal digital data for ransom. If you are affected by ransomware, you cannot gain access to your personal data without paying a fine.

Most ransomware is disguised as a valid file in an email. The bad guys want you to say “I’m not rich or famous, I don’t have anything anyone would want to steal.” However, you DO have something bad guys want. You have REAL relationships with your contacts and that is what they could use to impersonate you and send ransomware to all of your contacts.

Hackers can also steal your digital photos and take away access to your photos. They can also hide all your contacts and make you pay them to get everything back.

Benefits of having a password manager:

Password manager programs remember (& encrypt) all of your unique passwords for you. Creating strong and unique passwords can be difficult (especially if you have a lot of passwords) but with a password manager, you don’t have to create any more passwords.

Password managers can store passwords for every single person in your family. For example, if everyone in your family has a Gmail account, the password manager is able to store each individual username and password. Most password managers sync across all of your devices, so you don’t have to worry about typing long passwords with the little keyboard on your cell phone. Many password managers will auto-fill online forms with your saved data (even on your cell phone).

What 5 tech experts say about password managers:

1. Teach everyone in your family not to share passwords

Adrian Try, Writer and Editor, SoftwareHow.com

It's too easy for your passwords to get out in the wild. You give your student your Netflix password and they'll pass it on to all of their friends who don't have the subscription. Once your passwords are out of your control, you never know what will happen to them. I know you know you shouldn't have used the same password for Netflix and your bank account, but maybe you did.

A password manager can help. The top apps (including LastPass, Dashlane, and 1Password) allow you to share access to your accounts without your students ever knowing your passwords. They get access to what they need, but they can't pass the details on to others. That's the best of both worlds, and one of the best reasons for families to consider a quality password manager.

2. Hackers often target families

Porter Adams, Disappear Digital

Families who don't defend themselves are easy targets for hackers. Start by learning what the hackers are trying to do. Then take action to stop them.

Here are some common attacks against families and what you can do to stay safe:

Stolen passwords: Data breaches contain millions of hashed passwords. New data breaches are often posted to the dark web for hackers to search. If your password is too short, hackers will be able to crack the hash. To stay safe, use long and unique passwords on every account. You can either use a password manager or write your passwords on paper. If you use paper, make sure to keep a second copy in case you lose the original. To be extra careful, ask a professional to check if your passwords are already on the dark web.

Ransomware, spyware, and other malware attacks: Your home network is another easy target for hackers. Examples of attacks are ransomware,

spyware in security cameras, and keyloggers to steal your passwords. The reason these attacks are so common is because your home router does nothing to stop them. By default, most home routers allow anyone from the internet to connect to the devices in your home. To protect your family, you should install a firewall on your home router. This is a necessary step if you want to keep hackers out of your home network. Additionally, you can connect your router to a VPN to keep your location private.

3. Research the best programs to keep your family safe online

Rachel Wilson, Investigative Coordinator and Client Relations, The Smith Investigation Agency

As a mom of two school-aged children, I am extremely mindful of new and key ways to protect my family in our daily lives. Because families today are keeping more and more of our personal information on the web, protecting our loved ones online is a significant part of overall safety and well-being. This could include personal information such as family photos, important dates, banking information, family doctor and dentist, and school and home addresses.

Programs designed to keep us safe online are worth the time it takes for parents to learn about something new. Password managers are a simple but straightforward way to add that extra level of protection against spyware or hacking and these programs have come a long way in terms of being secure and easy to use.

For example, top-rated password manager programs allow families to share passwords for websites and accounts used by the entire family, while maintaining privacy for those programs that are used individually. We teach our children about bullying and road safety, and have begun to teach our children about online safety and cyberbullying. However, being mindful of and prepared against incoming attacks online is an important part of this equation. We lock the doors to protect our personal items at home; Why wouldn't we ensure we are taking the same precautions on the web?

4. Do not repeat passwords among online accounts

Kenny Trinh, Managing Editor, Netbooknews.com

To protect your data and privacy online from hackers and data thieves, you need to have strong passwords. A strong password has to primarily have to be above 12 characters and include numbers, symbols, capital letters, and lowercase letters.

It is also recommended to have unique passwords for each account and avoid using a master password for all of it. But if you have more than five accounts, tracking all those passwords is not an easy feat, especially for your students. This is where password managers come in handy. They can suggest strong passwords and then easily save those passwords on their database.

What can families do to prevent being targeted by a ransomware attack? The first step is using strong, unique passwords for all of your accounts. Avoid password sharing as much as possible, as well. Beware of phishers. Do not automatically click on unfamiliar emails, especially if they are asking for account information. Do not provide personal information from other unsolicited, unknown sources such as random phone calls, text messages or instant messages.

5. Be aware of different ways your family can prevent ransomware attacks

Gabe Turner, Director of Content, SecurityBaron.com

Families need to use password managers to protect their financial data including credit, debit, or bank account numbers, health information, as well as basic information like addresses. You may not realize how much data your family has to protect, but if hackers get access to your accounts, they may be able to contact or go to your child's school, access their private health information like the medications they're taking, or even file a tax return in your child's name as a form of identity theft.

3 ways families can prevent being targeted online:

- **Backup data:** Use a local hard drive or thumb drive. You can also store your family's data on encrypted cloud storage such as

Dropbox. This is also a good place to store family photos that you want to keep safe.

- Use antivirus software: This one's obvious, but it's the most effective way to prevent a ransomware attack. If you have a strong firewall in place and consistently perform security updates, that is your best defense, so long as the software is from a respected company.
- Keep personal information out of your messages: Although it's much easier to simply write out your credit card number to your partner or text your child's nurse their medication dosage, this information is much better said in person or over the phone. Even an old-fashioned letter is more secure than an email or text! That being said, make sure you're talking to the right person over the phone, as phone scams have become increasingly common.

What can parents do?

Consider setting up a password manager for your family. Teach your children to follow security best practices, such as:

- Never use the same password across multiple accounts.
- Only log into secured websites .
- Avoid using personal info in your passwords, instead create long passwords with unique characters.
- Keep your passwords private and never share them with your BFF.
- If you don't have a password manager, write all of your passwords on a sheet of paper, seal it in an envelope, and give it to your parents for safe keeping.

Conclusion

While many families don't think they have anything worth "hacking" – that couldn't be further from the truth. If your family doesn't already use a password manager, now is a great time to start.

Mental Health Resources

What we see and experience in our everyday lives creates impressions and feelings that create physical and mental reactions in our bodies and minds. Since social media is such an ingrained part of many students' lives, what they see on the screens has a real-life effect in their bodies and minds.

People often don't get the mental health services they need because they don't know where to start. Talk to your primary care doctor or another health professional about mental health problems. Ask them to connect you with the right mental health services.

If you do not have a health professional who is able to assist you, use these resources to find help for yourself, your friends, your family, or your students.

- **Emergency Medical Services—911**
If the situation is potentially life-threatening, get immediate emergency assistance by calling 911
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or Live Online Chat at [SuicidePreventionLifeline.org/Chat](https://www.suicideline.org/Chat)**

If you or someone you know is suicidal or in emotional distress, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Trained crisis workers are available to talk 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Your confidential and toll-free call goes to the nearest crisis center in the Lifeline national network. These centers provide crisis counselling and mental health referrals.

- **SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) Treatment Referral Helpline, 1-800-662-HELP(4357)**
Get general information on mental health and locate treatment services in your area. Speak to a live person, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. EST.

8 Ways To Be A Present Parent & Avoid Digital Distractions

Students get a bad rap for spending too much time on their devices, but with emails to answer, deadlines to meet, and social media feeds to catch up on—many parents are just as guilty. It can sometimes be tough to be a more present parent.

Digital distractions are now a daily struggle for many moms and dads. But continual chirps and dings don't have to constantly distract you from family life.

In this chapter, 8 busy parents offer their best tips for being a more present parent in today's digital world.

1. Greet each other first thing in the morning to start your day as a more present parent

Willie Greer, Father, Founder of The Product Analyst

Most of us grab our phones the moment we open our eyes in the morning. This leaves us no time to be thankful or mindful of the present fact that we've woken up for another day and our family remained safe through the night.

At my home, we're practicing not checking our phones until we've gotten up and greeted each other with a nice "good morning." Sometimes we talk a little bit about random things. This feels really good because we get to acknowledge each other's presence and feel that parent-child connection first thing in the morning.

To help implement this, you could set up a charging station in your home where everyone's devices stay until you're all ready to start your day.

2. Set professional boundaries so remote work won't interfere with family time

Suzanne Brown, Mother, Author, TED Speaker, Founder of Mompowerment

Don't let technology take over. Stick to your boundaries. Define what your workday looks like and stick to that. And remember that you can likely divide up your day a bit differently when you're working from home.

Have a conversation with your colleagues and manager so that they understand your availability. That way they're not trying to communicate with you when it's designated family time. Your calendar can be an excellent way to define these boundaries. Block off family time so people can't schedule meeting time during these family blocks.

As a team, you can agree that no meetings will happen during certain times and define general working schedule parameters to help everyone be more productive.

3. Silence phone notifications while students are present

Emily Adams, Mother, Mindset Coach, Public Speaker

I am one of those people who love to multitask and I realized I was missing bits and pieces of conversations and my boys would call me out on it. They would say things like, "Mom you're not listening" or "did you really hear what I had to say?" This started to bother me and I knew I needed to make a change.

I started by really listening when they talked. Whatever I was doing I would stop doing it and just listen to them. If I was on my phone I would put my phone down with the screen facing down so I couldn't see the notifications. When I started doing this I saw that my boys appreciated it and we connected even more.

The one thing that was helpful was turning my phone to silent at all times. I struggled with this concept for a little bit as I thought about people that might need to reach me. Then, I reminded myself that my boys are my priority and, if they are here with me, everything else can wait.

If I am on my phone watching a video or listening to a podcast, and the boys come up to ask me a question, I put it on pause. I remind myself that one day they won't be here as they grow up and live their own lives.

At the end of the day, remember that your children long to connect with you. They want you to be present at all times and you only have them for a short time before they are off to live life on their own. Being present creates the best memories!

4. Set auto-responders for off-hours work emails

Jamie Spannhake, Mother, Lawyer, Author

One of the many digital items pulling our focus away from our families is email from work. I can get email on my phone well past 5:00 PM.

In order to feel comfortable NOT responding to work email during family time, in the afternoons and evening, set an auto-responder letting people know that you will respond to their email either late that evening or early the next morning.

Also let them know to text you if they have an emergency. Most people won't.

5. Schedule one-on-one time with each of your children

Shelley Meche'tte, Mother, Certified Life Purpose Coach, Women's Change Agent

Any parent who has ever tried to have a deep conversation with a tween/teen understands how difficult it can be to get them to put their device down and open up or just say a complete sentence. It's much easier to stay involved and present with children in a digital age when parents use simple ways to engage.

Creating a scheduled "talk time" can help parents get a peek inside the life of their child(ren). Scheduled "talk times" will help both parent and child prepare for an open, non-judgement environment of dialogue. Topics can even be planned so that there is no need to try to think of something to say.

Make this time special, so that as you continue, "talk time" will become the family norm and a place where everyone will feel comfortable sharing in a safe space. Be sure to outline the rules, so all expectations are known.

6. Re-engage your inner child and be a more playful and present parent

Caitlyn Scaggs, Mother, University Spokesperson

Identify genuinely fun and creative offline activities that do not involve digital technology at all. Go ahead, roll up your sleeves and get dirty too! Rather than seeing play and creativity as the work of children, I suggest that adults re-engage their inner child.

For example, take your students on a nature walk with the intent of selecting nature-made paint brushes. When you return home, use the paint brushes to create masterpieces together. You will be too busy having fun – and making a bit of a mess – to worry about anything digital. The ideas have to be fun and the activities have to be engaging or it will not work.

7. Enjoy offline family activities

Damon Nailer, Father, Author, Career Consultant

Spending less time online can be accomplished by finding more activities off line. Here are a few ideas to spend time together without social media interruptions:

- Take walks– Don't allow your children to utilize their technology, except to listen to music.
- Play boardgames, cards, etc.– Fun games demand everyone's full attention.
- Have a picnic- You can do this indoors or outdoors. Institute a rule that everyone must put away all forms of technology so every member of the family can talk and interact without distractions.
- Watch a movie as a family– Select a movie that everyone finds interesting so it will grab each individual's attention.

8. Help students pursue an offline passion

Robert Johnson, Father, Founder, Sawinery.net

One way I remain present as a parent when digital distractions are abundant is by involving them in my passion. In my case, it's woodworking.

It's a useful hobby to have as they will know how to make something tangible that doesn't involve phones or computers.

I remain involved and present by watching them use age-appropriate tools. Any offline hobby that requires children to use their eyes and their hands would be a great hobby to have together. We make sure everyone pays attention, and there are no distractions from devices, to prevent accidents from happening.

Conclusion

Making it a habit to disconnect from digital distractions throughout the day will help parents make a better connection with their students and be a more present parent.

Routinely brushing children off with "not now" or "I'm too busy" could have lasting negative effects and prevent your teens from coming to you when they really need help.

Let's reduce bullying together...

Educators: Is your school/district looking for a social media/anti bullying tool that gives your students an easy way to report issues and concerns?

This platform allows students to alert their school staff of dangers on campus (and online)

Point your camera at the QR code to learn about this service and schedule a call with Josh: SmartSocial.com/partner/



The Negative Effects of Social Media on Mental Health

The American Psychological Association links social media to a rise in mental health disorders in teens. Parents and educators can't prevent students from being exposed to social media. But, they can focus on helping their tweens and teens develop a healthy relationship with social media.

It is important to create an open and supportive environment to talk about social media with students to avoid the negative effects it can have on their mental health.

Studies link excessive screen time to mental health issues:

"Young people who spend seven hours or more a day on screens are more than twice as likely to be diagnosed with depression or anxiety than those who use screens for an hour a day, finds a new study published in the journal Preventive Medicine Reports." - TIME

"Researchers followed almost 4,000 [students] aged 12 to 16 over four years. Every year, students completed a survey about the amount of time they'd spent in front of digital screens... Over the course of four years, as little as a one-hour annual increase in social media or television viewing was associated with more severe depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem." - ABC News

Remind students they are not alone

Dean McCoubrey, of MySocialLife.com, says it's important to remind students they are not alone, however alone they might feel. Many people feel anxious, scared, nervous, etc. on social media. We know only a fraction of what's happening in other people's homes, their lives, their relationships, their school, and in their feelings and thoughts.

McCoubrey says if students want to start feeling better, they have to allow themselves not to be perfect or "like other people." You will never be exactly like other people.

In this chapter, 9 experts talk about the impacts of social media on mental health and share tips for helping students develop a healthy relationship with screen time.

1. Curate your “friend” list and think before you post on social media

Molly Tucker, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist

Whose posts are regularly populating your child’s feed? Are these people actually their friends or distant acquaintances? Do they tend to post content that inspires and uplifts or that agitates or depresses? Encourage your tween or teen to reduce the number of people and pages they follow to reflect a community that helps them be their best self.

What sort of a presence do they want to be for others? Although social media can be a source of immediate validation of negative emotions, it can also be a vehicle for reflecting positive and uplifting messages to others. Perhaps they would like to reflect on one thing daily that they’re grateful for, post one beautiful picture of nature, or offer one encouraging comment to a friend in need each day. Utilizing these strategies can help anyone be more intentional about their social media presence, rather than falling into an automatic, mindless, or draining routine.

2. Engage in meaningful activities with friends during screen time

Katie Lear, LPC, RPT, RDT, Counselor, Play Therapist, Drama Therapist

While it may not have the same physical health risks as substance use, one of the negative effects of social media on mental health is that social media can be addictive. Social media platforms rely on users spending large amounts of time on their product in order to make it profitable, and so many social media platforms are designed to keep you scrolling for as long as possible. Watching videos or perusing social media can provide a quick hit of dopamine to the brain, which feels good in the moment but can keep teens from engaging in the kinds of activities that will be more rewarding over the long term.

As social media becomes more sophisticated, so does the marketing. Even the approachable-seeming, casually dressed influencers are usually presenting very carefully composed, filtered photos that don't accurately represent real life. This can lead to unhealthy comparisons for teens who may feel self-conscious about their bodies, appearance, finances, or material items. This can lead to lowered self-esteem and negatively impact mental health.

As teenagers grow, their friend group becomes increasingly important to their own sense of identity. It's the source of a lot of healthy emotional support that young people really need to rely on. However, mindless scrolling for hours on end can have a numbing effect, draining time from more productive activities and potentially setting the stage for depression. Encourage your tween or teen to engage more actively and meaningfully with their peers using screens: can they play a game together, work on a craft, or find something to do together while using the screen to communicate? This is likely to feel more like real socializing and have a more positive impact on your child's mood than simply exchanging likes or comments.

3. Ask your family members to help

Stacey C. Brown, MA, LMHC, NCC, RYT200, Counselor, Educator, Yogi

Too much screen time can lead to depression, lethargy, sleeplessness, increased anxiety and increased irritability, especially if you already have those tendencies. Teens with ADHD, pre-existing anxiety and depression for example, may be especially susceptible to the magnified effects of symptoms if there is too much screen time.

If you are engaged in too much screen time, you will likely be neglecting other areas of your life that are important.

Use your technology to help you. Decide what is important to you: exercise, outdoor time, taking the dog for a walk, eating, naps, sleeping, dinner with the family, etc. and schedule it on your devices. Set an alarm or create a schedule to help you maintain a healthy balance.

Ask your family members to help you. Realizing you need help setting healthy boundaries for yourself and asking for help is a very smart decision. Ask your family to invite you for an evening walk or to join them for a board game every day to help shake you out of the electronics zone.

4. Designate screen free times and areas in your home

Dr. Nicole Beurkens, Clinical Psychologist

While things like social media and multiplayer video games allow children to connect and socialize with one another, research has shown that they can also increase isolation and feelings of loneliness. There is a concern that these activities lead to reduced social skills, as children do not experience enough social engagement in real-time with peers.

Tips to develop a healthy relationship with screen time:

- Have certain times and places where devices aren't used. Device-free meals and not having devices in the bedroom at night are two simple starting points.

- Turn off notifications for apps to reduce problems with distraction, especially during school and homework time.
- Be aware of how much time you're spending on devices, and what you're doing on them. Use the Screen Time feature, or an app like Qustodio, to monitor how much time you're spending on different activities. This helps you make more informed decisions about how you want to be spending your time.
- Talk to parents or other trusted adults if you notice that you're having a hard time managing your device use or you're seeing and hearing things online that concern you.

5. Be respectful, resilient, and responsible on social media

Clarence McFerren II, Speaker, Educator, Author

As an educator, I've seen students victimized or shamed due to social media posts. Virtual bullying can eventually lead to in-person bullying. I've had students who have hurt themselves, become suicidal, and institutionalized all because of things that happened on social media.

It's of the utmost importance that students are educated about social media etiquette and mental health awareness – not only as separate entities but collectively. I teach students:

- Be respectful: Treat others the way you want to be treated. Post positively and think about your future employers (would they hire you if they reviewed your activity?).
- Be resilient: Bounce back from difficult situations. Participate in healthy activities, such as dance, to balance the chemicals in the body and release positive endorphins.
- Be responsible: Do what is expected and required. Study, read thought provoking literature/articles, complete chores, limit screen time to nurture real life relationships with friends and family.

6. Restrict your own access to social media

Patricia Celan, Psychiatry resident at Dalhousie University

If you find that you feel worse as a result of social media, make sure that you don't get drawn into the addictive nature of social media. There are steps you can take to limit your usage.

Download an app, or use a built-in tool like Apple's Screen Time, to restrict your access to social media after you spend a certain amount of time on it. You can restrict yourself per hour or per day. Increase those restrictions over time. If that's not effective or you need more, try having scheduled offline hours every day. Your phone/computer/tablet are off limits at certain times. You can also turn off your notifications on social media, or uninstall the social media app from your phone. Only access it when you're at your computer.

Use social media to keep in touch with friends and family. Use it to enhance those connections rather than replace them. Otherwise, you will find yourself in an addictive habit of endless checking and scrolling that makes you unhappy.

7. Focus on achievements and less on aesthetics

Emmy Brunner, Psychotherapist and the founder of The Recover Clinic

Practice gratitude and affirmations together to remind students that they are great. When parents focus on achievements that don't revolve around aesthetics, they can raise body confident children. Whilst everybody loves a compliment, it's important to choose what you say to your child wisely. You never know what could be running through their mind and how your comments might impact them.

Address inequalities perpetuated by the media and popular culture with your children too. Challenge public depictions that exploit or degrade people's bodies and let your student know that you don't think this is okay.

Be the example that you want your child to see and reflect this in your own social media, too. By making your child aware of your own body insecurities, it can naturally perpetuate a copycat behavior model and make any inquisitive child question their own aesthetic value. Our students learn from what we do so much more than what we say.

8. Remember that social media is only part of the story

Sal Raichbach, PsyD of Ambrosia Treatment Center

Teens' minds are still developing, and sometimes, they lack the critical thinking skills to deal with what they see online. Bullying on social networks is rampant, and just as damaging as bullying in-person. Even if a child isn't being bullied directly, they can still feel left out and disliked when they see their friends having fun on their timeline.

It's also vital to explain that what they see online is a highlight reel of other people's lives. No one posts about their daily struggles, so from the outside-in, it looks like everyone is living a perfect life. In reality, everyone has problems, and what you see is how they chose to present themselves. Remind students that they have to take everything they see on social media with a grain of salt. You're not getting the full picture.

9. Find more offline activities that make you feel good

Kealia Reynolds, HouseMethod.com

Some students are absorbing hundreds, sometimes thousands, of 'likes' on a daily basis that can be perceived as a nod in their favor. These 'likes' release dopamine into the body, creating a temporary feel-good effect. As soon as the 'likes' stop, or you don't get enough on a post, they're left feeling unsatisfied and constantly wanting more from your social followers.

When social media users compare themselves to others, who are getting much more attention and love, they start playing the comparison game and get into the mindset that they're not good enough.

Students can develop a healthy relationship with social media by spending less time on screens and more time on other offline activities, like a sport or hobby. Remind your children that most of what is posted is a filtered version, a highlight reel, if you may, of someone's life. Encourage them to follow people on social media who are as real and vulnerable as possible. This might take some vetting, but it will hopefully remind them that who they are is enough.

Conclusion

The negative effects of social media on mental health are cause for concern. Parents and educators can help their students develop a positive relationship with screen time. To better equip students to use social media in a positive way, parents and educators can set a positive example of online behaviors, have open discussions about the unrealistic standards it promotes, and help them honor their accomplishments with gratitude.

If at any time you believe your student's mental health is suffering and they need help, consider reaching out to a counselor or therapist for guidance.

Media Mental Health Initiatives by Popular Apps: Are They Enough?

Several popular social media apps are now promoting mental health initiatives to keep students safe online. Snapchat has a “Here for You” campaign, Instagram launched “Pressure to be Perfect”, Pinterest has a “compassionate search” feature, and TikTok shares mental health advice from its users.

Are these new social media mental health initiatives too little, too late?

How beneficial are these new mental health initiatives for young social media users? In this chapter, 5 therapists and educators weigh in.

1. New mental health initiatives could help students better communicate their feelings

Katie Lear, LCMHC, RPT, RDT

The initiatives being rolled out by social media platforms like Snapchat and TikTok are a great idea, but they’re not a substitute for parental supervision. I’m happy that our culture’s interest in young people’s mental health is finally reflected by these companies.

Having a listening ear available for teens in a crisis situation could potentially make a life-or-death difference, especially when you consider that many young people feel much more comfortable communicating by direct message rather than on the phone or face-to-face. These initiatives reach teens in the way that is most comfortable and natural to them.

Social media platforms can be a source of social support for some students, but they also open the door for possible bullying, exploitation, and victimization. I recommend that parents use some sort of safety software, such as Bark, to monitor their student’s Internet and app usage. Parents should always be able to access a child’s social media accounts, if necessary, to ensure their safety online. Finally, parents should be talking about social media and mental health in general with teens frequently in a

non-judgmental way. Social media is a fact of life for teens, but that doesn't mean it's healthy to give them unrestricted access.

2. They could also help end the stigma

Candida Wiltshire, MSW, LCSW, LISW-CP

I believe that these are helpful initiatives for students and young users due to the stigma of mental health. Many young users still struggle with mental health in silence, remaining quiet in their struggles to manage symptoms of illnesses like depression and anxiety. The more options that are readily accessible to them the better.

These initiatives work in two ways, which are both important.

First, they allow for users to explore and seek help in a non-invasive way, which can increase access to care. Having the option right at your fingertips can assist in decreasing anxiety over meeting with a professional for the first time or worrying about the judgments of others if seen going to the school counselor's office.

Secondly, these initiatives provide representation in a way that fights stigma. Having resources available makes it more acceptable and will increase honest and open dialogue about mental health in general. As awareness and acceptance in mainstream society increases, more people will seek professional help sooner.

3. Better late, than never

Leslie Shull, Assistant College Professor & President of LetsAllFlourish.com

It is not too late to help our students and youth with the mental health crisis that is looming globally. Do I wish they had jumped in sooner? Sure. Do I wish we didn't idolize celebrities that are airbrushed, and make it look simple to make a zillion dollars and be beautiful and happy? Of course.

This information is from the World Health Organization in October 2019:

- Mental health conditions account for 16% of the global burden of disease and injury in people aged 10 to 19 years.
- Half of all mental health conditions start by 14 years of age, but most cases are undetected and untreated.
- Globally, depression is one of the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death in 15 to 19 year-olds.

The consequences of not addressing adolescent mental health conditions extend to adulthood, impairing both physical and mental health and limiting opportunities to lead fulfilling lives as adults.

4. Social media posts are powerful

Kelsey Latimer, Director of Clinical Services, Viamar Health

I absolutely believe these initiatives are incredibly helpful– it’s never too late to chip away at the internalized impossible media messages we have been exposed to in our lifetime. I work with teens and adults who find these messages to be powerful and inspiring to see themselves differently.

We have to remember that people are exposed to thousands of messages per day. Ideas that promote certain images and tell us how to feel. So, every message pushing in the direction of inspiring confidence and self-acceptance matters in shifting those unhealthy messages we receive. We should never underestimate the impact of our messages– both positive and negative– and the more we can provide young people with positive messaging sent in a medium that they are likely to see, the more opportunity we have to support them in a healthy way.

5. Students respond positively to social media mental health initiatives

Janet Ferone, M.Ed. President of Ferone Educational Consulting

As a school administrator, I watched students respond positively to many mindfulness apps. They loved the coloring apps to de-stress and some of the meditation apps, like Calm and Headspace, to destress.

I consulted with social workers who provide direct service to these adolescents. We agreed that these social media mental health initiatives are primarily positive, as it is an affirmation that they are not alone or 'going crazy'. These feelings are real and worth dealing with. The initiatives can be helpful in making therapy, counseling, or other mental health services a priority.

My concern is that it could deter young people from seeking services and place the burden on their shoulders for fixing themselves without outside support. Additionally, it can exacerbate the time that they are focused on their screens and not interacting with humans and/or in-person therapeutic support. One social worker reported that older students overwhelmingly said they would play therapist for their friends before trying to get anyone official to help.

But for students in rural areas or with limited access to mental health professionals, social media is easily accessible. So, it may be a very useful tool for youth who are struggling.

Conclusion

While these mental health initiatives are a great start, they are no substitute for talking with your students. If you notice your student showing signs of depression or anxiety, consider setting up an appointment with a therapist.

FOMO: 10 Tips to Combat the Fear of Missing Out

FOMO is when a student (or adult) experiences anxiety that people they are connected with are having a good time without them. It's often prompted by posts seen on social media.

What is FOMO?

FOMO stands for: Fear of Missing Out. Akin to “digital peer pressure,” FOMO is an emotion that app developers exploit. FOMO is particularly influential for teens who receive the bulk of their validation and self-worth from the approval of others.

Why should parents care about FOMO?

FOMO can cause anxiety and/or depression in teens. Teens are using their smartphones while driving because they don't want to miss anything that could be happening online. Teens feel constant pressure to be online and accessible. FOMO is causing teens to stay up late staring at their phone screens, which results in poor sleep quality

In this chapter, 10 experts offer tips to help your tween or teen deal with FOMO.

1. Schedule technology breaks

Allie Gallinger, Speech-Language Pathologist & Owner, Express Yourself Speech

You cannot be social without social media in this day and age. Every tween feels that they need to be on their devices at all hours of the day to be in constant communication with their friends. Without doing so, they feel like they might miss out or be left out of social interactions. Tweens and teens are also able to see what everyone is doing at all hours of the day, which results in FOMO if they are not involved.

This can be detrimental to mental health. There is so much pressure to not only be on all of the platforms but also be active on them. Additionally, if a child sees their friends together and were not invited, this can be detrimental to their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Parents should schedule technology breaks with their children by ensuring that children get off their devices and go do something else for a set period of time. Parents should also encourage children to be open and honest with them about their social media use. Ensuring that the lines of communication are open can make a huge difference for a child's mental health.

2. Parents should set the example of phone-free activities

Dr. Sabrina Romanoff, Lenox Hill Hospital

There is nothing novel about envying others and regretting choices and behaviors in teens. However, this phenomenon has magnified due to the rise of social media and in turn, the myriad of ways in which the spotlight is directed, through the lens of filters and photoshop, onto that which one does not have.

Mental health effects of FOMO include lower mood, feelings of loneliness, inadequacy, and reduced self-esteem. All of which can become entwined into a cycle of negative affect, isolation, and depression.

The grass is always greener on the other side. This is particularly true when that grass is seen through the distorted lens of social media. Parents can help by embracing JOMO (joy of missing out) with their children by espousing the feelings of autonomy and liberation that comes from being unplugged and fully present. To encourage this, first model, and then encourage phone-free activities like in-person socialization, reading, outdoor activities, physical exercise, and journaling.

3. Teach your students the negative effects of FOMO

Chris Norris, Founder/Managing Editor, SleepStandards.com

FOMO is developed because social media allows people to display what they are up to and that makes some teens feel that they are missing out on activities. FOMO generally affects one's mental health so parents should be aware when their students are displaying signs of depression, mood disorders, and loneliness to address them properly.

As a parent, you have to limit your students' exposure to social media. It would also help to let them know about the negative effects of FOMO. Let them learn how to detect if they're experiencing it and help them to overcome it as well.

4. Social media is an edited showreel, never reality

Jodie Cook, JC Social Media

Social media can create FOMO because it's a live feed of what everyone you know (and don't know) is doing. It creates a false impression that amazing things are happening to people you're connected with, all the time. If you follow 365 people and each of them posts one update per year, you would see a daily occurrence of someone else doing something fun. When left unquestioned, it can leave someone feeling like their life is boring in comparison.

To help, parents can remind their tweens and teens that social media is someone's edited showreel, not their behind-the-scenes. They can also remind them that taking and posting pictures might take away from having actual fun– who wants to be posing all day? Parents can draw a distinction between someone documenting their life and living it– the latter of which is much better for happiness and mental health.

5. Establish rules for where and when devices are not welcome

Jessica Speer, Author

Social media feeds teenagers' need to feel connected and belonging with peers. It's where teens go to see who is doing what, what is in or out, the latest memes, and basically to stay in the know. When teens take time away from social media, they begin to feel out of the loop and disconnected.

Many studies have been done on the impact of social media and teens and the results are mixed. One area that is consistently a cause for concern is displacement, or what other important activities are being replaced by time spent on social media.

According to a recent report by the North Carolina Medical Journal, social media negatively impacts the quality of teen's sleep. This report shares that prior work has reliably demonstrated a link between mobile screen time before bed and a range of poorer sleep outcomes, including shorter sleep duration, poor sleep quality, and daytime sleepiness. Notably, 40% of adolescents report that they use a mobile device within five minutes before going to sleep, and 36% report waking up to check their device at least once during the night. Thus, the impact of social media on sleep quality remains a primary risk for subsequent mental health concerns among youth and is an important area for future study.

Parents can help by establishing rules for screens at home, such as no devices during meals and no devices in bedrooms after a certain time in the evenings so sleep is not disrupted. When parents model the phone behaviors they wish to see, it helps to establish credibility. Ideally, all devices are powered down and put in a central charging location at night.

6. Don't let the comparison theory play out in your child's life

Alessandra Kessler, Certified Holistic Health Coach, Healthy Body Healthy Mind

FOMO traces back to the social comparison theory. This theory states that people evaluate their social worth and value by comparing themselves to others negatively or positively. Similarly, social media contributes to FOMO for tweens and teens as they are exposed to a larger audience there, and the tendency to compare their social value and worth with others becomes much larger.

FOMO is a real thing and can contribute to worsening your child's mental health, which may not be in the best place already. It tends to make a child doubt their self-worth, fall prey to an inferiority complex, social anxiety, reduced self-esteem, and mood swings. Moreover, FOMO can also cause teenagers or young adults to feel lonely.

Parents can help their teens or young adults overcome FOMO with the following few tips:

- Understand your child's situation rather than invalidating their feelings by saying that things will get better in the future or that a certain event isn't important
- Help your teen find offline activities that they can engage in, to keep them busy such as going to the gym, camping, movie night with friends, etc.
- Help your teen or young adult understand the perspective that people and their lives are not how they show it on social media. They might be struggling and living an unhappy life from within but would show otherwise in front of others just for the sake of likes

7. Set the same rules for both adults and children

Tatiana Gavrilina, Content Marketing Writer, DDI Development

If a healthy adult has the ability to think critically and protect themselves from such a phenomenon as FOMO, the situation with teenagers is more complicated. Their unformed state of mind gets used to the fact that the information on the question of interest is not stable – it can be updated every half hour. This is destructive and there are feelings of instability and anxiety.

How to avoid FOMO impacts on teenagers:

- Parents should spend more time with their children: play, communicate, work together at home
- Set the same rules for both adults and children to use the Internet. For example, only 2 hours a day
- Spend more time outdoors: walk with the dog, plant trees, take care of flowers, draw pictures in the park

Social networks are just a tool for receiving and spreading information, which however, gives very quick results and makes people dependent on them.

8. Remind your child that social media is a skewed version of reality

Courtney Conley, Expanding Horizons Counseling and Wellness

Being connected 24/7 creates the illusion that everyone's life is better than ours. What people post is often a skewed version of reality that presents the fun, happy, and momentous side of life. This creates the false perception that everyone is always doing something cool or fun and teens want to be a part of it. Teens can start to feel discontent and experience unhappiness and low self-esteem as they compare their life to what they see portrayed on social media.

Anxiety is another concern for teens who worry about missing something. Parents can help by educating teens about reality versus what people portray on social media. Parents can track phone and app usage and create fun challenges with rewards to decrease usage. Most importantly, parents can tune into their child's moods and look for signs of depression and anxiety and seek help for their teens if needed.

9. Help your child create purpose in life and build their confidence in who they are

Jessica Fortunato, Licensed Psychologist, Choosing Therapy

Social media can induce FOMO as it is seductive in its design and offers its users constant connection, instant feedback, and a platform for self-promotion, all of which occur in a public forum. Not only do users have access to endless feeds of content, but also to an online world that promotes perfection, superficiality, popularity, conformity and external validation. Tweens and teens spend hours each day posting, commenting and meticulously crafting their on-line personas (often dismissing or suppressing their authentic selves) to meet the prescribed standard and to keep the dreaded FOMO at bay.

Unfortunately, by trying to avoid the pain and discomfort of FOMO, these students are at risk for developing compulsive social media habits which can subsequently lead to issues with identity development, confidence and self-esteem, depression and loneliness. It is important that parents understand their child's strengths and vulnerabilities and how they are using social media.

More importantly, parents need to discuss the risks of over-involvement with social media and help their students recognize how social media and FOMO could be influencing the distress they are feeling. It is helpful to validate the experiences and struggles of our youth, while providing education about healthy development and offering plenty of opportunities for building confidence and self-esteem through real life experiences. The best protection from FOMO is helping our children create dynamic and fulfilling lives in the real world in which they have agency and confidence in who they are.

10. Parents should choose the content children consume

Steven Lord, Marketing Manager at Digital Next

No teenager wants to be the 'odd-one-out'. When it comes to mental health and social media, there is a clear disparity between the two. Good mental health and large amounts of social media consumption do not mix.

Therefore, for parents, no matter how much kicking and screaming is involved, you should monitor the content your children are consuming closely. It's okay to consume content on social media, but you should also introduce your children to other media sources. Otherwise, social media will breed an extremely singular minded or easily persuaded adult.

Conclusion

FOMO can affect adults as much as it affects teenagers, but teaching teenagers how to deal with those feelings and talk about it is key. Parents should always start by setting the example when it comes to social media usage and screen time boundaries.

Using these tips, what offline hobbies can you do as a family? What passion project can your teen begin working on and turn into their purpose? Always educate your students on how social media projects a false narrative and to not read into their FOMO too much as social media is always just a highlight reel and not reality.

How to Handle Cyberbullying (Tips for Your Family)

Cyberbullying has become such a major issue that platforms like Instagram are releasing new features to help increase positive interactions and reduce bullying. With recent statistics showing that only 20-30% of students tell an adult when they're being bullied, it is more important than ever for parents to talk with their students and teach them how to handle cyberbullying.

In this chapter, 15 experts share tips for teaching students how to handle cyberbullying.

1. Place filters on apps and websites, and always say something if you see a friend being cyberbullied

Elise Guthmann, Program Director at Evolve Ojai Residential Treatment Centers for Teens

I believe it's the parents' job to stay involved and place filters on the internet to block certain social media networks that have been known to promote cyberbullying.

But if cyberbullying still occurs, here's what parents can do:

- First, block the person and report the harassment online. Most social media sites have a way to report abuse- and bullying definitely counts as abuse .
- Experts also recommend not responding to texts, emails or other messages.
- Instead, take screenshots of them and save them in a file. The more evidence you gather, the better it will be. Authority figures, or the police, will find this proof useful when they figure out how to discipline the abuser.

2. Report, block, tell

Margarita Edwards, Executive Director, Nevada Child Seekers

First, parents need to sit down with their child and establish ground rules to follow when online, and explain to the child in an age-appropriate manner what to expect while online. Usually, rules include; never posting personal information, suggestive images, or cruel comments.

Second, when cyberbullying happens, establish a “life line” with the child by encouraging them to share the incident with parents. Remember to report-block-tell. When a child fails to seek help the abuser gains power over the child’s mental state. Parents are the ones who decide if the threat needs the attention of law enforcement or the school police, etc. Unfortunately, cyberbullying is unavoidable if you are online, but a child being empowered with the support of their parents helps them navigate these online attacks.

Third, parents must activate parental controls on the devices to ensure the child is interacting appropriately and not being a cyberbully themselves.

3. Screenshot everything and then remove the toxic comments/messages

Michael Lowe, CEO of Car Passionate

The first course of action is to gather any evidence in case you need it later down the line. This needs to be done as soon as it happens, as more apps and social media are allowing people to withdraw/delete their comments.

A screenshot is a standard and wholly acceptable way to do it. With your phone or computer it’s simple to press the PrintScreen button or use the snipping tool. Ask your child to delete the bullying comment or message as it can be a harmful reminder.

There are two options from here:

- Speak directly to the parents of the bully to warn them their child has been bullying and show them the evidence
- Ask your child’s school for guidance and make them aware of the cyberbullying threat. They should have more experience with this type of thing and might already have procedures in place

4. Teach your students to be heroes

Jessica Stasi, Owner of Snapology

We suggest parents talk with their children to identify what bullying looks like:

- Making fun of someone
- Saying mean things
- Being violent toward someone
- Not including someone
- Laughing at someone
- Not stepping in to help someone (being a compliant bystander)

As a bystander, you can remove the word “bully” from the dynamic by how you get involved. Most people think they want to be the bystander because that means they aren’t the bully or the victim. But the bystander means you stand back, watch, and do nothing. In 7 out of 10 bully situations, there’s a bystander watching it happen. But when a bystander steps in and confronts the bully, more than half of bully situations stop completely.

We should all aim to be the hero, not the bystander. What we want to do is empower the people who are just walking by or viewing cyberbullying. Teach young people that “evil wins when good people do nothing.” We know it is difficult to change behavior and it can be challenging to stop a bully, but just because it can be a challenge doesn’t mean it’s impossible.

We can all help put an end to this by empowering the bystander and by being a positive influence on the bully. Remember, only one person needs to take the lead and that one person doesn’t have to do anything dramatic- just a small comment or gesture can go a long way to stop the bullying.

5. Build trust with your students and help them make the rules of screen time use

Dr. Vikram Tarugu, CEO of Detox of South Florida

If a student is being cyberbullied, it’s safe to say that the parents wouldn’t know about it. More than half of my patients at our rehab clinic have experienced cyberbullying and their parents didn’t know until it was too

late. As parents, it is our job to teach our students what to do if this ever happens to them.

The best thing to do is work to build trust with our children. Set time restrictions, explain your reasons for them, and explain the rules for online security and internet use. Allow your student to help make the rules and they will be more likely to follow them. By letting them participate, they will know what these rules are for. Building trust will encourage them to be open about cyberbullying if ever they become victims.

6. Save evidence, block the bully, and stay positive

Shari Smith, Founder, Shari-sells.com

Sadly, cyberbullying is very common nowadays because of the use of social media. It is an easy form of bullying because you can do it anonymously and not get caught. Students do this because of peer pressure, because they feel more powerful by hurting others or just because they are bored.

Here are three things to do when you experience cyberbullying:

- Save the evidence. Screenshot or take a picture of the message or conversation so you can have proof that it happened. You can use it when you take legal actions, or if you just talk directly to the people involved.
- Block the person immediately. People doing these kinds of things are not worth your time and effort. Ignoring the conversation is effective revenge against bullies because they will see that they did not succeed with their bad intentions.
- Stay positive. It is the best thing you can give yourself when experiencing bullying. Remember that they can never be the awesome person you are and that they are doing that because they have big problems that they can't solve. Just pray for them, stay strong, and be positive at all times.

7. Set screen time limits on smartphones

Theresa Bertuzzi, Chief Program Development Officer/Co-Owner & Co-Founder of Tiny Hoppers

Students can set time limits for specific applications. This allows them to have access to platforms but in smaller quantities. This is an excellent technique for active consumption rather than passive use, allowing children to understand that there is more to life than just the online landscape and that those who harm and attack others online will never win, and their inappropriate online behavior should never be replicated.

Being a victim of cyberbullying is emotionally and physically overwhelming for anyone to deal with, especially children. Students need to understand that it is okay to speak up and seek available resources.

8. Take a hiatus from social media

Kortney Peagram, Owner/President of Bulldog Solution Inc. & Peagram Consulting

- Delete and don't repeat: Many teens tend to reread the painful post or harassing message over and over. It is as though they are training their brain to believe the nonsense that was written about them. So when you are being targeted by a bully, report the incident with documentation, then delete and don't repeat.
- Take a 24 to 72-hour hiatus from social media: Take some time off and reflect on what happened, but also give yourself some space to rebuild your self-worth. By eliminating that virtual audience, it gives you time to think about what you want and who you want to be on social media. You can always start over or even unplug for longer. You have the power to choose!
- Be socially bold: Say something, if you feel safe and able to speak up. Don't retaliate with anger or painful comments. Find your voice and make sure you tell the bully that you won't tolerate hate. Examples: "I don't think this is funny. I am unfollowing you." Then do it and be done. Or "I would not say something like that to you, so I am deleting your comment, reporting and blocking you. I don't want negative people in my space." Stand up for yourself without fueling more conflict.

9. Learn the social media apps your students are on

Lesley Reynolds, Co-Founder of Harley Street Skin Clinic

As a parent, it's really terrifying to know that there are a lot of dangers lurking online. I have always taken it upon myself to prepare my child for the demons of the internet. What I did to effectively do this is to learn how different social media apps and platforms work by signing up for and learning Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. This way, I can go through my child's profile to monitor and check if there are any cyberbullying activities. Before doing this, I make sure to ask my kids if I can go through their profile. In the event they don't agree, I make them understand why it is important for me to know what's going in their social media accounts.

10. Befriend victims of bullying and teach students to support each other

Mike Bran, Founder & CEO, ThrillAppeal

Parents and teachers should teach students different ways to respond to cyberbullying, whether it is happening with themselves or with their friends.

If cyberbullying occurs, the first thing your students should do is to ignore or report the act or posts. Bullies are attention seekers, if they don't get the attention they might stop doing this. Still, the victim should immediately report the bullying act to any adult and secure himself.

You should encourage all the victims of cyberbullying to stand for themselves and each other so the bully loses the power to tease anyone. There are different sites on social media where you can report cyberbullying. Teach your child how they can save themselves by reporting harassment.

Additionally, you should teach students to be-friend the victims of cyberbullying and help them in every possible way. Self-confidence is vital in order to fight bullying, including cyberbullying.

11. Think of positive activities that fill time that would have been spent online

Dr. Ericka Goodwin, Board-certified Child, Adolescent, and Adult Psychiatrist

The student needs to stop logging into the platform they are being cyberbullied on. If the student needs to look at emails, or other internet areas where they are cyberbullied, to do school tasks or tasks related to extracurricular activities, the student's parent or guardian can get the necessary information from that account without the child logging in.

When a student is cyberbullied on social media but continues to log into that platform, they get retraumatized. In these situations, it is critical to prevent the child from isolating themselves. The family needs to rally by thinking of positive activities that fill the time that would have been spent online. In the end, love and common sense can be some of the most powerful tools.

12. Learn to recognize what cyberbullying looks like

Nikola Djordjevic MD, Family Doctor

Students need to be educated to recognize what cyberbullying looks like. Sometimes they are under the impression that they deserve to be harassed or made fun of because of some of their flaws. Oftentimes they refuse to report any type of bullying because they fear they'll lose friends. However, it is important to educate children to recognize this behavior and respond to it.

What can students do if they are being cyberbullied:

- Talk to their parents or school officials: One of the first steps is for students to report cyberbullying. In order for the problem to be solved, adults have to know about it. Only then will they know how to take certain measures without hurting their student's feelings.
- Block the bully: Luckily, most of the social media networks have a developed system of reporting suspicious behavior. It usually takes just a few steps to report the bully after which their account will be investigated. Afterward, you may easily block them and thereby hide the personal content of your child.

- Reduce time online: Sometimes, simply limiting the time that students spend online can help reduce cyberbullying. First of all, students will be less involved in things happening online, so there won't be as many chances of being bullied easily. Second, students will get to make friends in person so they won't fear losing friends if they cease contact with a bully.

13. Surround yourself with individuals who encourage feelings of self-confidence

Monica Moore, MD, Pediatrician

As a board-certified pediatrician with more than 13 years of experience caring for children from birth to age 21, I have seen first-hand the immediate and long-lasting negative effects that bullying and cyberbullying have on my patients. These include, but are not limited to suicide, self-mutilation, loss of self-esteem, isolation, anxiety, depression, strained relationships, poor academic performance, and school avoidance.

Victims of bullying must first stop themselves from believing any of the cruel comments, threats, or false posts from the bully; they must focus on positive energy and self-love. Daily affirmations can help shift their mindset to one in which they embrace their uniqueness and accept themselves for the amazing person they really are. Victims of bullying should surround themselves with individuals who help encourage feelings of self-confidence. Instead of spending additional time on social media trying to validate themselves (or retaliating on the bully), victims should enroll in a new hobby, start an activity, or join a group that will uplift and encourage them. If a child is experiencing cyberbullying, they should not hide it but instead, they should share the incidents and find support in their parents, teachers, counselors, resource officers, social media administrators, and local police.

They may also seek support from groups such StopBullying.gov and BeyondBullying.com. To avoid further escalating the incident, they should not personally confront the bully, but allow the proper officials to handle the situation.

In sharing their stories, it is important to have an open dialog with parents and older siblings. Victims of bullying may want to share their stories with others who have been bullied to help them overcome their ordeal. One strategy that may be helpful for the victim is to not make themselves too vulnerable on social media. Parents should have parental controls on social media outlets, keep the home computer in an open and visible area of the home, and limit the use of all electronics. It is also important to keep a record of all bullying communication so that it can be reported to the local authorities. To prevent repeated acts of cyberbullying, the victim should stop any communication with the bully, and change their social media handles.

14. Parents should consider working with an attorney to learn about navigating the legal system to handle cyberbullying

David Reischer, Esq., Attorney & CEO of LegalAdvice.com

New York, where I practice as an attorney, has a very strict anti-bullying statute. Bullying in New York is defined as threats, intimidation, or abuse that unreasonably and substantially interferes with the victim's educational performance, opportunities, or mental, physical, or emotional health. Bullying can apply even if it occurs off of school property, so long as it would create a foreseeable risk that the bullying acts might reach school property. Anybody who is being cyberbullied needs to immediately contact an attorney to learn how anti-bullying laws can stop the abuse.

Anti-bullying laws that aim to protect students against abuse, from their peers in school and online, vary from state to state. The use of a mobile phone or web technology that is used to harass or intimidate is called cyberbullying. The Department of Education recommends that the strongest laws include explicit descriptions of prohibited behaviors and spell out clear reporting practices with specific consequences.

There is currently no federal law that specifically addresses bullying but state laws generally focus on explicit listing of the specific behaviors that constitute bullying. These behaviors can include teasing, threats, intimidation, stalking, harassment, physical violence, theft, and public humiliation. State laws sometimes identify certain characteristics or traits of students who are often targeted for bullying. Some states provide guidance to school staff regarding how to address bullying issues. A

qualified attorney should be able to advise a parent about navigating the legal system to stop cyberbullying.

15. If you see something worrying, tell an adult

Carole Lieberman, MD, Media Psychiatrist & Bestselling Author

One of the most effective strategies is to teach students to post a reply like: “This space is for kindness only” and then block the bully. Also, students should know to tell their teachers or parents about it– who the bully is and how they feel about what they wrote. If this continues to make them feel sad, consider seeing a psychotherapist. Some students feel so upset about these mean words that it gets in the way of enjoying life. If the cyberbully takes bullying offline and is mean to you at school, tell your teacher.

If you see someone else being cyberbullied, give them this advice. Then keep an eye on them to make sure they’re okay. If you see something worrying, like seeing them cry or self-harm, then tell an adult – the teacher, a school counselor, your parents, or their parents.

Conclusion

When parents talk with their students frequently and stay involved in their life (both offline and online) their students will be better equipped to handle a cyberbullying situation. Teaching students the right steps to take when they encounter bullying online is the best way to help them through a situation.

Learning what cyberbullying looks like, how to report bullying behavior on their favorite platforms, when to reach out to a trusted adult, and when to take a break from technology can change everything for a student who is being cyberbullied.

What To Do When Mom and Dad Disagree on Screen Time Rules

Whether you're happily married, co-parenting, or a single parent, it's difficult to enforce rules when there are different tech, screen time, and social media rules at mom's house, dad's house, grandma's house, an aunt's house, or even at friends' houses. The inconsistent rules can be confusing to students and frustrating to adults.

So how can spouses, exes, and anyone else who watches your students better compromise and enforce set rules for healthy screen time, social media, and technology?

In this chapter, we asked 6 parents and experts to weigh in with their advice.

1. Determine the rules, everyone agrees to enforce them, and establish consequences early on

Kathryn Ely, Associate Licensed Counselor, Empower Counseling & Coaching

Sit down together and create bright-line rules. Let everyone involved have a voice. Be honest about your reason for the rule you want and gently advocate for it. For example, "I want to limit you to playing video games or having your phone available only after your homework is complete because your education is important to your future." The best way to have choices is to be educated. Switching back and forth from homework to phone is distracting and makes learning more difficult.

Decide together on the rules that will be followed by everyone involved. Decide exactly what the consequences will be for each person if they do not follow the rules. This is crucial. Oftentimes we leave this part out, and it leads to arguments and strife. Don't wait until a rule is broken to determine the consequence, especially when co-parenting and not living together.

2. Create a social media agreement for all to sign

Josh Ochs, Founder, SmartSocial.com

No matter what the rules are when it comes to screen time, both parents need to agree to having a set of rules and sticking to them. It's a good idea to create a family social media agreement together and have copies sent to each home the child visits to ensure that everyone is on the same page when it comes to online behaviors, screen time limits, and consequences. Regularly referring back to the agreement will remind students (and parents) of the commitments they made and the consequences they could face no matter where they are using the device.

3. Only allow device usage if your students are in the same room

Alex Shute, Editor-in-Chief, Faith Giant

I usually use screen time as a way to distract my kids so I can finish my work during business hours. My wife would prefer that I stop my work when my students get home from school and that there be no screen time. As a compromise I usually finish my work early two days a week and then the other three days a week I allow my children to watch some educational videos online. The other boundary that we have for our children at this age is that they can only use devices when we are in the same room with them. So my children watch their shows with headphones on in my office while I finish working.

The rules and boundaries that we have set up are intended to limit screen time during this period to educational television or eliminate screen time as much as possible.

4. Factor in the content of the app, rather than the usage

Ori Hofnung, Founder & CEO, GiantLeap

All parents should encourage their children to connect what they see in the screen world to their experience in the real world (screen to reality bridging). For example, If an app asks children to sort wooden blocks by their color, parents should have an activity with their children to sort out close by their color as they sort out laundry in the real world. If an app presents wooden blocks and bolts children should play with tactile wooden nuts and bolts.

Active engagement is better than passive viewing. An app that requires children to act, remember, decide, and communicate with their parents is better than a TV show that allows them to absorb content passively. In addition, the TV should rarely be on in the background, and TV time should be separated from the rest of the day.

The parent's focus should be on the content of the app rather than the technology itself.

5. Understand each viewpoint and communicate the plan

Jared Heathman, Your Family Psychiatrist

It is not uncommon for parents to disagree on the rules and limitations of screen time. If not discussed in advance, parents are likely to enforce the rules to varying degrees which causes arguments and frustration that rubs off on the children. It is helpful for parents to have an in-depth conversation about why they want to impose limitations. Communication is key to help understand each other.

One parent may believe that exercise and creativity are being stunted by screens, and the other parent envisions screen time leading to interests in programming, coding, and a successful career. While both parents are looking out for the child's best interest, they are doing so in opposite ways. Understanding why each parent has their respective views helps to coordinate a compromise that will improve family dynamics.

6. Open communication to find middle ground is key to setting rules for the students

Jill Sandy, Gardener, & Founder, Constant Delights

I think the best way to find a way to agree to the same set of rules is to openly communicate. Tell one another what your concerns are, and identify why and where the difference of opinion exists. Instead of shutting each other's perspective out, and confusing your child about whose rules they should follow, it is better to communicate. Find a middle ground and then stick by it. This will compensate for both the parent's perspective and also would help both of you compromise on certain things. There won't be solely just one parent doing all the talking and the other just listening.

If parents don't agree on screen time rules, chances are you'll just confuse your child and they won't listen to either of you. Other than this, it will only cause an unwanted clash between you and your partner, which shouldn't be the case. The aim is to parent your child, rather than having to be parented yourself.

Conclusion

Everything starts with open communication. It's easy to be quick to set the rules, but it's important to hear others' opinions and ideas before coming to a conclusion. Be sure to find a resolution that works for everyone, identify clear rules, and set consequences that everyone will enforce.

Your Personal Brand

When was the last time you Googled yourself or your student? Old social media posts can come back to haunt anyone years later when they show up in Google results. The good news is that there are ways to build a positive brand online by removing or moving those old posts down in your Google results.

While it's tempting to share everything and anything online, do not think of your social media platforms as a diary. When a user overshares online, it's easy for frenemies, employers, and strangers to screenshot those posts or take advantage of your vulnerability, or make bad assumptions about you without knowing the full context of the situation.

In this section, we teach how to avoid oversharing online, how to use screen time productively, proper online comment and email etiquette, and how sexting can damage a student's future.

Get your free resources when you join our free newsletter:

Subscribe to our newsletter to get free resources (and stay updated each week on teen/tween safety tips)

- Top 100 app list to stay ahead of your students
- Free social media safety agreement to share with your community
- 8 page guide: "How to navigate social media with your student"
- Webinars for parents & educators
- Join at SmartSocial.com/newsletter



Google Search Results: 7 Expert Tips on How to Clean Up Yours and Shine Online

In the public's eye, your Google results are who you are, outdated information, or not. When was the last time you Googled yourself? Nowadays, it's not just friends and family looking at a student's Google search results, but also employers and college admissions officers.

Do your student's Google search results say what they want them to? In this chapter, 7 experts weigh in on the power of Google search results and how to clean up your results to show what you want people to discover about you online.

1. If you can't fix your Google search results, bury negatives with positives

Josh Ochs, Founder, Founder of SmartSocial.com

Your personal brand is what sets you apart from other job or intern candidates, other college applicants, and more. What you say and post online should reflect who you are and who you want colleges and employers to see. If you find old posts that don't represent who you are, go back through your profiles and do a social media clean up before building your positive online brand.

Nowadays, a Google search will be one of the first things someone does to see if you're even worth interviewing. Showcasing your talents and passions online is what we help students focus on as well as sharing about volunteering or even spending quality time with family offline. Never stop updating your digital portfolio as Google pushes older content down to replace it with new.

2. Your Google search results can result in lost college or job opportunities, lost revenue for a company, and signal poor culture fit

Kate Tudoreanu, Career Success Coach

Before doing college applications or a job search, here are tips that can help students repair search results and keep on top of new ones:

Most people don't check beyond the first three pages of Google search results. Use this to your advantage. To move less desirable results further back, do a search every day and only click on links to sites which you wouldn't mind someone finding. This strategy takes time but will help in the long-term. You can enlist trusted friends or family members to help.

Check your Google results regularly. I check every month or two. To reduce how often you need to Google yourself, set up Google alerts. You will receive an email each time Google finds a newly published page with your name on it.

Your Google search results can result in lost college or job opportunities, lost revenue for a company, and signal poor culture fit.

3. Do not apply until you clean up your digital footprint, no matter the deadline

Rolf Bax, Chief Human Resources Officer at Resume.io

One of the things we tell all applicants is to never send out a resume or college application before they clean up their digital footprint. Many organizations do Google and social media investigations as part of their standard due diligence now.

Below are some additional ways your Google search results can impact your life:

Large companies and colleges have a lot of goodwill and public images online of new hires in the social media era represent all kinds of potential PR disasters. Hiring someone who has posted or said potentially highly embarrassing things online could result in a major hit to that image and

even lost revenue. It makes sense that your social media presence could be disqualifying.

A personal Google search could get an otherwise impressive job or college application turned down for fear of a scandal, or it might simply return information to those reviewing your application that offends one or more people. While it might not be a big deal outside of a career or academic context, it could signal to those evaluating you that you are an unserious person, that you lack tact and good judgment, or that you are a poor fit for an institution or organization's culture.

4. Your Google results are how the public views you as a professional

Kylee Jacobs, Chief Marketing Officer, The Absolute Dater

I check on my digital footprint by searching for myself in Google every once in a while. It enables me to view things related to my name and clear out any outdated information or things that do not represent who I am.

Oftentimes, potential new clients use Google search results to know more about a person, if he or she is trustworthy, their background, and achievements. They may use this as a basis if they will do business with you or not. That is why an individual's online Google search results can represent a company's standards or damage business opportunities for everyone. Your Google results should always be checked because they help you know how the public views you as a professional.

5. Improve your Google search results with online projects

Kaelum Ross, Founder, What in Tech

I have been part of hiring for many projects, companies, and for my own business. Make no mistake, employers can and will Google your name to get a feel for what kind of information is out there. I was also told on one occasion by an employer that they looked me up before offering me one of the most significant jobs in my career.

After hearing about this I was worried about my own online presence. What I did to improve mine was creating some online projects based on some

hobbies. I used my real name (for me this was a blog, a YouTube channel with some piano playing, and a few basic appearances in other blogs) so when you Google me now, results that are a little more interesting than just my Facebook account show up. If your name is uncommon, you don't have to do anything too intense to rank for your own name on Google. If you happen to have a more common name, it may take a little work. It is a great bonus and indicator of status if you specifically rank high on Google.

6. Your Google results can either gain or lose you credibility

Samantha Moss, Editor & Content Ambassador, Romanticfic

Having a good online professional brand is crucial because it increases credibility among readers and followers. One thing I do to monitor my online professional brand is googling myself regularly.

Googling yourself isn't just for fun nowadays. It is necessary to Google yourself regularly because it will help you ensure that there is nothing online that can negatively affect you, your profession, or your company. Googling yourself will help you tailor the online brand that you want to have.

7. Do a social media clean up

Stefan Smulders, Founder of Expandi

As you probably know, your online presence is incredibly important. Now, with so much information available instantly at our fingertips, future employers, clients, and business partners can find out an abundance of information with a few clicks.

If you quickly type your name, what type of things show up? Do old photos of you drinking at parties come up? How about semi-serious tweets that you wrote years ago? Is everything professional?

This, unfortunately, can change people's opinion of you. So it's time to have a quick online cleanup. Delete anything old and outdated that doesn't represent you today.

Conclusion

Google search results can impact your life without even knowing it. After reading this chapter, spend some time cleaning up and improving your Google search results.

Need help? SmartSocial.com's Student Branding Academy helps students build a positive online digital footprint that ranks them at the top of Google so they can share the narrative they want others to discover. It's never too late or too early to start creating a positive footprint for the world to see.

Fixing Social Media Mishaps (Tips For Parents & Students)

We've all heard the horror stories of social media mishaps having serious repercussions. What you do privately on social media can affect your chances of getting in (and staying in) your dream school or dream career.

However, it's important to have a strategy in place for if/when you (or your student) make a mistake on social media. How you react will make all of the difference for your digital footprint, online reputation, and search results.

In this chapter, we asked 11 experts to share their best tips for overcoming social media mishaps.

1. Before posting, pause, think, and reflect

Andrew Selepak, Social Media Professor, University of Florida

Social media is a tool and a tool has a use, but if we don't think about that use, it is a useless tool. In the case of social media, it is a tool that takes up our time, can cause stress, anxiety, and other problems. Young people need to think about why they want to use social media before they start an account or before they start posting and keep this in mind if they hope to use social media correctly. The best practice for social media posting is the same best practice for being a reporter: it is better to be second and right than first and wrong.

Young people need to learn to pause before posting content and think about how others might view their post, about how well their post was written, and the purpose of their post. In a world of instant gratification, we too often want to post to social media as soon as something happens or as soon as it comes to mind, but in doing so we forget to think about the consequences of our posts. Sometimes even a brief moment of reflection can be the difference between a post we regret and a post we delete.

2. The best defense is building a strong offense in the digital world

Josh Ochs, Founder of SmartSocial.com

The best defense is building a strong offense in the digital world.

To avoid making mistakes on social media, ensure that you are creating lots of positive content that can be seen as light, bright, and polite online. You can still have fun, be silly, and show your humor, just make sure it's positive with a touch of gratitude. If you've made a mistake online, remove the post and apologize immediately. Always remember that once something is shared on social media it can always be posted elsewhere.

To create a positive offense, consider creating a personal website. Having a personal website is one of the best ways to overcome social media mishaps if a certain negative post is persisting in your search results.

Your personal website is a great way to Shine Online and show your unique personality. Use your website to highlight school projects, hobbies, passion work, volunteer work, or family vacation photos.

3. Always own up to your mistakes and remember that jobs/college acceptances are on the line when posting

Allen Koh, CEO, Cardinal Education

This is a critical time for parents to monitor their children's use of technology. Parents who hadn't been used to supervising their children must step in and set restrictions on technology. Otherwise, students will get caught in a spiral of technology use and feel more isolated and unfocused. Excessive social media use often leads to anxiety and depression, and studies corroborate this claim.

However, in a situation where a mistake does occur, one of the best things to do is to own up and apologize, and make the required amends by either correcting the post or deleting it.

There is another side to the coin that students need to understand. Often, one of the first places that recruiters visit after perusing a resume/application in consideration for an interview is social media. As an outsider, many things can be gauged from social media profiles for

prospective employees. Companies want to see that you do have a life with family and friends and blend well with society.

4. Don't panic, time will heal all things

Flynn Zaiger, CEO, Online Optimism

Students so often hear that everything on the Internet is forever, which can cause panic when they make a mistake. They're not entirely wrong. Once something is online, it can be brought up forever.

It's worth noting to students that have made mistakes, though, that the Internet can have an awfully short attention span. For their friends and feeds on social media, that's even more true. The algorithms that dictate what users search on social media, from TikTok, to Instagram, to whatever the next big social network is, have mandated that only what is new, is cool. So students should first take a deep breath, and realize that this moment will pass.

Next, they should decide for themselves what an appropriate next step is. Should a post be taken down? Should any sort of apology be made, and if so, will it be done via DM or publicly. They should take into account their feelings, those of whoever else is affected, and the greater public. On the Internet, your actions are always being watched. Once you make a plan, put it in place, and reassess in a week. Time helps heal all things, including social media mistakes.

5. Turn a social media blunder into a positive blog or page

Samantha Warren, Director of Project Management

Parents and teachers often preach that “once you post something on the Internet, it never goes away.” Unfortunately, that lesson is true. Many students learn it the hard way.

But I think it’s important to acknowledge that humans aren’t perfect. People make mistakes. It’s no surprise that high school and college students sometimes post things online that they regret later on.

When students make a mistake online, they should educate other students about the realities of social media instead of letting the errors get the best of them. For example, they could start blogs or social media pages that provide relatable stories and helpful information on how to navigate the digital world responsibly.

Students are more likely to listen to other teenagers or young adults. Parents can’t always get through to their kids. Therefore, it’s important for students to take the initiative themselves to educate their peers about the risks and responsibilities that come with social media use.

6. What can students learn from their mistakes?

Scot Chrisman, Founder and CEO, The Media House

No matter how careful we are, we still make mistakes sometimes and social media is no exception. When you make a mistake on social media, I think the best thing to do is to identify what mistake you made so you won’t make the same mistake again in the future.

We spend most of our time on social media, so it is important to build and maintain a healthy relationship with social media. To do this, here are some tips I’d like to share:

Choose who you’re going to follow. Only follow accounts that can inspire and motivate you. Try to block negativity from your social media accounts as much as possible.

Be careful with what you post. Make sure to only post positive and helpful, not negative and harmful, content. Take a break. If you feel like what you're seeing on social media is becoming too much, take a break.

This may sound cliché but this is important: think before you click. Use social media responsibly.

7. Don't say something online you wouldn't say to someone's face

Debbie Lopez, Director of Content Marketing, Zivadream.com

If a mistake is made on social media, damage control may be the first step. If possible, take steps in removing the offending comment, picture, or post. Depending on the circumstances, it might be appropriate to post a brief apology. A phone call could be in order. Better yet, resolve the issues with face-to-face communication.

Parents can help. First of all, don't embarrass your child/teen. They already feel bad enough about their blunder. Instead, assure them that their mistakes do not define them. Start a conversation about concentrating on the functional aspects of social media, and encourage them to steer clear of the emotional piece. Suggest that before making a social media post, they ask themselves if they would say that to someone directly if they were in the same room together, or if it is something that they might be embarrassed about if someone like their boyfriend's/girlfriend's mother were to see it.

Parents can also lead by example. If Mom or Dad constantly posts selfies, reports, and posts pictures of every little detail of their vacation, or engages in ill-natured debates over social media platforms, chances are that their children will follow suit.

8. Students should take down the post and apologize

Paula Nolan, M.Ed

As a school administrator, almost every day I worked with students who have made a mistake on social media. I saw the fallout in the school setting and how it impacted the student who wrote the post, those who the post was about, and the families on both sides of the conflict.

Usually, these mistakes involve a student being upset with someone and then talking about it online. Most of the time they didn't mean what they said and they feel bad about what they posted. Or, they were upset but didn't realize how far and wide the post would go.

When a student makes a mistake, the initial steps to end their social fallout are relatively easy. First, the student should take down the post. Then, they should send a message to the person whom the post was about and apologize. Third, and sometimes this needed some facilitation, was to actually talk to the person who was offended by the post and work out a solution to the issue.

It is also important for the student to tell their friends to also stop antagonizing the targeted person. If they can't stop it, the school can help by talking with the students who continue to post.

Then, work with the families on encouraging the student to not post or look at social media (both while the mistake was being fixed and for future times when they are upset). It can be difficult for students to take those breaks, so that can be work for parents. However, our students who took the advice above have frequently reported to us that they were happier not engaging in online conflict.

9. Be active and involved while watching for warning signs

Titania Jordan, Bark

Monitoring what your child is getting into online can be scary and feel next to impossible. And when it comes to mistakes on social media, your students might not tell you when something has happened.

That's why parents must be on the lookout for potential warning signs of dangerous situations. Trust your instincts, but know that your instincts depend on you being active and involved. Watch for changes in your child's:

- Behavior
- Habits
- Friends
- Communication (are they more withdrawn?)
- Eating and sleeping patterns
- Clothing (the way they dress)
- Social media posts (the frequency of posting and/or the content)

What should you do if you discover a mistake they have made?

Stay calm. How you react can leave a lasting impression. Have a conversation, not a shouting match.

Be supportive, not scolding. Your child may feel ashamed by their mistake. You want to be able to see through your child's eyes. Being supportive is the only way to do this.

Build trust while setting expectations. More than likely this is a journey, not a one-time experience. Let your child know how you deal with these types of situations.

Keep asking questions. Continuing the conversation over weeks, months, and years is the best thing you can do. Check in occasionally, and don't shy away when the subject arises. This way, an awkward situation turns into an opportunity to strengthen communication.

Put filtering and monitoring systems in place. There's absolutely no way a parent can monitor their children's entire online world. From searches, to the content they are sharing, the sheer volume makes it impossible. There

are amazing tools out there that not only block content, but also let you know what your child is doing online. Put these in place now.

10. Make meaningful apologies coupled with meaningful action

Alexis Moore, Attorney & Author

After making any mistakes online in a social media setting or other online forum, students should delete the said post and acknowledge that they made a mistake. If an apology is needed, make that apology. One thing many of my younger clients do not realize is that taking responsibility means correcting course – employers, co-workers, classmates, family, and friends will accept a heartfelt apology but most importantly if one does not take responsibility for the post, repeats the same conduct over and over, and tries to say sorry as a band-aid this won't work. So, make meaningful apologies coupled with meaningful action.

Social media is not the enemy, however, your relationship with it and utilizing it can be! If you catch yourself spending more time online than with family and friends in person, this is a bad sign. Or, if you find yourself literally unable to avoid checking in on a social site without interrupting an obligation with family, friends, studies, work, or your day-to-day life, then this is a sign that there is trouble. There is no shame in having to find ways to learn how to detox from social media and not to allow it to take over one's daily life.

I strongly suggest for today's youth (and those who are finding it difficult to use social media without it being a burden vs. a benefit) to open up a dialogue with others in person. There are many others experiencing the same problem with social media. Don't be afraid to ask friends, fellow classmates, or family, what they do to overcome mistakes on social media.

11. Avoid social media mishaps by creating accounts with a purpose

Joel Bennett, Tokeet.com

Allow your teens to have social media accounts for their projects only, not personal accounts. For example, if your child has a woodworking hobby, they can make an account to post their builds and network with other

carpenters. Depending on their age, you may need to help them get set up. It's a sort of compromise for parents who don't want their students on social media. It gives them a reason to be more productive and helps them see social media and the internet as a tool rather than a strictly social outlet.

Conclusion

Social media mistakes are bound to happen, but how you react will make all of the difference for your digital footprint, online reputation, and search results. Being prepared is the best method for preventing social media mishaps. Students should set guidelines around social media posting such as:

- Avoid posting online when they are upset
- Consider how their post can be interpreted by employers, teachers, parents, college admissions officers, or their peers
- Keeping posts light, bright and polite
- Creating social media accounts with a purpose to highlight their school projects, hobbies, or volunteer work

If you make a social media mistake, it can be relatively easy to fix. Delete the post immediately, apologize for the mistake, then reach out and apologize to the target of the post (if there is one). If a negative post is coming up in the first two pages of your Google search results, create a personal website that highlights your thought leadership to push the bad results further down.

20 Ways Students Can Avoid Oversharing Online

A common mistake teens make is oversharing online when they first start gaining access to social media. If they don't have a solid understanding of what is appropriate to post and what isn't, then they are at risk of posting something that could have a negative impact on their reputation.

Parents and educators need to ensure that children are properly equipped to make good decisions online. As adults, we hear time and time again how social media posts impact student opportunities. It's imperative that students understand positive digital etiquette and the impact oversharing online can have on their reputation.

So, how can you make sure your students know what to post on social media before they ever get access to it? In this chapter, we ask 20 experts to share their best tips students can use to avoid oversharing online and on social media.

1. Help students find outlets other than social media

Karen Gross, Author and Educational Commentator

To avoid oversharing online, it's important to help students understand:

The differences between sharing in person and online: One has temporality on its side; the other has permanence; it helps to show how this permanence occurs.

The old adage "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" has meaning: If a student reverses roles and thinks about a friend oversharing or a friend taking this student's message and sharing it with others, that evaluation can curb oversharing.

Create other outlets for students to share with each other and the larger community: If learning is in person, allow for anonymous sharing through chalking or post-notes; if learning is online, share a space where people can

post thoughts (decent and not vituperative) anonymously recognizing that this is not the place for nastiness or discrimination.

Recognize why the student is oversharing and how that need can be met in other ways: Get-together with a close friend, Facetime, or use other online conversation tools that are not recorded or rendered permanent.

2. Be wary of third-party apps

Bradley Keys, Marketing Director, PatchMD

There are a few ways students can avoid oversharing, but these are the three most important ones that must be kept in mind:

House tours and bedroom photos are dangerous. Photos and videos taken inside your house must be posted with caution. It can reveal the layout of your home, making it easier for thieves to find their way around and locate your valuables. Photos in your bedroom could be potentially dangerous as well, especially if there are pieces of jewelry and other valuables that can attract lawbreakers.

Keep your profiles private to friends. Students must make sure they have their profiles locked to people that they know because, otherwise, their posts would be visible to potential hackers, stalkers, and thieves.

Be cautious of third-party apps. You would often see intriguing quizzes on Facebook such as “What kind of cake are you?” or “What is the hidden meaning of your name?” This often leads to a pop-up that says an app is asking for access to your profile details and a bunch of other stuff. While this can be harmless, there’s always the risk that they might be from phishing sites that can gather information about you. And if you’re the oversharer type, there’s a security risk with that.

3. The “Granny Test” is always the best

Christy Garnhart, Mommster.com

The best way to teach students how to not overshare on the internet is to ask them to pretend to share it in real life. This tactic should be adjusted based on the developmental age of the child. For example, ask a junior high student, “Would you stand up in the middle of lunch and read your post to the entire cafeteria?” For high school students who are gearing up to apply to college, say “Would you want that picture to be seen by the admissions committee?”

The tried and true “Granny Test” is perfect to use with younger children. Encourage them to pretend that their sweet little granny was looking over their shoulder while they typed. Would she like what they wrote? You could also use their favorite professional athlete, a superhero, or another respected adult.

4. If you don’t want it to be a headline in a newspaper, don’t post

Florence Lehr, ARTriculate

As an independent college advisor, I always raise this question with my students. The advice I always give is that they need to curate their social media because colleges can, and some do, search social media as no college wants problematic students on their campuses. Harvard actually rescinded the acceptances of several students in 2017 over racist memes they found on students’ social media accounts.

My rule of thumb is that if you don’t want it posted on the front page of your local paper, or wouldn’t send it to your grandmother, don’t post it on social media.

5. Hide the phone and question your actions before hitting post

Ben Worthington, Founder and Owner, IELTS Podcast

Hide the Phone! Never ever vent, share, or post when angry or emotional. Hide the phone and let yourself cool down first. Give yourself 10 minutes to cool down. You will probably spot a few typos too.

Educate yourself. Before sharing, understand how the algorithms are working. They are engineered to trigger you, to get an emotional response. If you react by sharing, you are falling into their plan. The services are free because you are the product being sold.

Question your actions. Ask yourself a few questions before sharing: Could any group be hurt by sharing this video? Does anyone benefit from sharing this material?

6. Ask yourself a simple question before posting

Cindy Muchnick, Author/Speaker/Educational Consultant, Co-Author of The Parent Compass: Navigating Your Teen's Wellness and Academic Journey in Today's Competitive World

Ask yourself this question before you post: would you feel comfortable if your post was seen/read by your grandparents, teachers, or coaches? Or your parents? If your answer is, "No," to any of those questions then do not post it. It is oversharing!

Posting text or photos on digital media is like getting a permanent tattoo. The words you write- whether on a quick Snapchat or in an Instagram post or in a "private" text message are anything but quick and private. Screenshots can be taken on anything you post. thereby making everything that you think is private actually public.

7. Do a clean up of your network

LaNysha Adams, Chief Technology Officer, Edlinguist Solutions

To avoid oversharing on social media, the best tactic for students to remember is: you are who you associate with. You may have heard the common notion that you are the average of the five people you spend the most time with. In fact, we are the average of all the people that surround us online and in-real-life (IRL).

The purpose of a social network is to build one's digital footprint right now, but it will live on in perpetuity unless it is deleted. Personal identity info should stay off all platforms and checking-in can be dangerous, since some may try and use it as a tracking device! To help, it's good to conduct an audit of who's who in your network and to answer questions like, "How are they helping to elevate me?" After the audit, being mindful of the kind of content you post and why is key.

8. Create an advisory board

Marc Fienberg, Great Advice Group

Students can create a social media advisory board of one or two of their closest friends. For mundane posts about the delicious acai bowl they had for lunch, they can go ahead and post away. But for posts that have any content that's even remotely salacious or controversial (especially photos), they can ask their advisory board friends to review it beforehand, and promise to abide by their decision if they veto it.

9. Remind your student nothing posted online is private

Jessica Speer, Author

As parents, it's important to regularly remind tweens and teens that nothing posted online is private. Nothing. They may think they are just sharing with friends or a small group, but they might realize that once something is out there, it never goes away. Many parents check their kid's phones, colleges check applicants' social media accounts as well as future employers.

10. Address oversharing like the issue it is

Veronica Miller, Cybersecurity Expert, VPNoverview.com

Since students can be more impulsive than adults, they need to be taught to exercise mindfulness before asking them to shun social media. There's not much in the name of strategy or resources that we can do to break the new means of connectivity that students are now so attached to. Sharing on social media gives them an outlet and a platform to showcase their emotions and activities. Most of the time this is damaging, but for some teens and students, this is the way to go.

Much like controlling bullying and peer pressure at school in real life, oversharing on social media needs to be addressed like an issue. We need to instill habits and values among children of all ages to act responsibly and be mindful of all that they are saying on their "personal and private" social profiles. They must know how to protect personally identifiable information (PII) and make informed decisions about where to share this data and with whom.

Lessons in cybersafety and cyberbullying need to be made part of ongoing curricula, and students must be prepared to deal with it like a compulsory social issue. Every student must be encouraged to have an opinion about social media and related issues, and understand how every action on social media has a profound impact on others in their community.

11. Urge students to only share things relevant to their professional work online

Jennifer Lee Magas, Magas Media Consultants

Social media has become an integral part of our culture. Unfortunately, it's easily accessible at all stages of life, including the young, the uninformed, and the inebriated. Employers will look-up a candidate's social media pages, so it's important to keep it professional.

To avoid oversharing, students should treat social media like a building place for their personal brand. If you wouldn't say it to 60,000 people, don't put it online. If you're upset, avoid posting anything online. Hide photos or comments that reflect poorly on you. Make use of your security settings and only share things relevant to your professional work. Treat social media like a public outing– be succinct, professional, courteous, and kind.

12. Teach students to think before they post

Ruth Carter, Carter Law Firm

People shouldn't post anything online that they wouldn't put on the front page of the newspaper. This is regardless of privacy settings, and platforms like Snapchat where posts disappear. The same thing applies for emails and text messages. Today's indignation, or what you thought was funny, may become tomorrow's regret.

Students should assume everything they post or send will be seen by four people: their best friend, their worst enemy, their boss/favorite teacher, and their mother. If you don't want one of those people to see what you're thinking about posting/sending, don't do it.

13. Have students customize the security settings on their social media accounts

Emmanuel Schalit, Co-Founder of Dashlane

Prevent oversharing on social media by customizing the security settings for all of your social media accounts to limit who can see what you post.

Think before you post. Be careful not to share posts that could reveal personally identifiable information, like your street address, mother's

maiden name, or any information commonly used as an account verification question. If you're headed out of town, share posts about your trip after you return rather than while you are away.

14. Set firm guidelines

Amy Kilvington, Blinds Direct

When young people use social media, there is always a risk of information getting into the wrong hands. The best way to avoid this is by setting firm guidelines. Explain to your students or children that they shouldn't type out anything that they wouldn't say to a stranger in person. For example, would they happily give away their phone number to a random person on the street? No, of course not. The same goes for social media.

You should not share any information that you wouldn't willingly share in real life. This rule is very effective in ensuring students stay safe, as it forces them to reconsider their virtual 'friends' as actual people, and think about the consequences that come with giving away information. Finally, it's extremely important to make sure any geo-tags are switched off via location settings.

15. Explain to students that the internet is permanent

Amanda Jane Saunders-Johnston, CCH Marketing

Teens are notorious for not thinking long-term when it comes to their actions, and that includes social media. Explaining to students that the internet truly is permanent is a great first step. Emphasize that they never know who is reading, even if their account is secure.

Share examples of teens who have made statements they thought were funny or private, but reaped the consequences of national attention and lost college admissions or scholarships. With social media, less really is more (except when it comes to clothing), and it's important they learn that now.

16. Remind students to post cautiously on social media

Sage Singleton, SafeWise.com

It's essential for students to be savvy and cautious when posting to social media. While we all want to post about our new college dorm room, classroom, or campus, it's important to post with caution. Social media gives everyone, including strangers, a clear view into your world and location, leaving you vulnerable and exposed. Don't check-in or post your address or location on social media.

17. Encourage students to perform a yearly spring cleaning of their social media

Sarah Donawerth, Social Media Manager

The role of social media should be a way of connecting friends and sharing your everyday lives with each other. However, students should remember that social media is forever. Facebook now shares memories from your past posts. What will you want to see from your feed in a year? 5 years? 10 years? If you don't want to see your sad face emoji status in 10 years, then you shouldn't be sharing it now. If you really need to share about your breakup or the drama at school, make use of text messages to contact a friend who you can lean on. That way, you're getting advice and comfort

from a real person that you know, rather than waiting for an anonymous internet user to chime in on your personal life.

Consider doing an annual spring cleaning of your social media. If you've found that you tend to overshare and may not want those posts to represent you online, then go back and delete anything that you are not proud of. Social media should be a way to preserve your happiest/funniest/best memories, not your worst. Although it's better not to overshare in the first place, it's never too late to reel it back in.

18. Set a good example as parents and educators

Sue Perry and Velma Ganassini, SOS 4 Kids

Not oversharing begins with a good example set by parents. If parents are constantly posting information and photos of their family and kids, they not only set a terrible example, but they can endanger their entire family. Predators learn a lot about the family's habits and whereabouts and use that information for the purposes of select targets. This includes posting on social media, for sale/buy sites, mom chat groups, etc.

19. Educate students on the impact social media can have

Chloe Mitchell, The Social Select

Social media plays such a large role in the lives of students today, and with the temporary nature of popular outlets like Snapchat and Instagram Stories, students often feel that their posts are safe from those outside of their immediate friend group. On the flip side, colleges, educators, and employers are just as interested and active on such platforms, as social media has become a very popular tool for scouting applicants and ensuring they are a good representation of their school or company.

Students can avoid oversharing online by simply being mindful of what they post. It is important to educate students on the impact and consequences of their shared posts. A good rule of thumb is if you wouldn't want your grandmother to see it, don't post it.

20. Remind students that it only takes one data breach to have personal info open to the public

Cristina Escalante, The SilverLogic

Consciously log out of Facebook after you check it. This prevents you from getting sucked in, should you instinctively open Facebook. Schedule a social media-free day or evening during your week to practice living without constantly status checking and updating. Apps like RescueTime are great for setting time limits on desktop computers, while Kidtrol is effective when setting limits on apps on iOS devices.

Before sharing anything, remind yourself that anyone working at the platform you're posting on can access all of your pictures, read your private messages, and knows your phone number and email address. We're all one data breach away from having our personal data open to the general public.

Conclusion

Your social media content is tied to your digital footprint and oversharing something online can have a major impact on your future opportunities. Understanding the consequences of oversharing on social media is the first step in learning how to prevent a mistake from happening.

How to Use Screen Time Productively

As parents and educators, we know that screen time can be a double-edge sword. When students use online resources to help them with a school project– that’s productive. On the other hand, when students use screen time to bully others– that’s negative. So, how can we teach students to use screen time productively while setting limits on screen time that has no value?

In this chapter, we asked 9 experts to share their best tips on how students can use screen time productively.

1. Learn to code, write a story, learn to type

Alexandra Fung, CEO, Upparent.com

One silver lining to our extended time at home was the opportunity to discover many great online resources that are available to families for education and entertainment. With two parents working from home recently while caring for four kids, baby to teens, our family has certainly relied on screen time more heavily than we usually do. Fortunately, our tween and teen have, for the most part, embraced online activities that have allowed them to dive more deeply into their personal interests, as well as develop new ones– even some that they share!

Google Docs has long been a favorite way for them to spend time creating stories which they share with one another, and even co-author with friends as a great virtual playdate opportunity. The coding platform, [Scratch.mit.edu](https://scratch.mit.edu), has also been a great resource for fun and learning, as they create fun games (that lead to lots of shared laughs!) and learn valuable coding skills in the process. Another favorite resource we recently discovered is [Zooniverse.org](https://zooniverse.org), a platform that facilitates people-powered research so that anybody can contribute to real scientific research in a variety of fields. Finally, typing games have been a good way for both to develop crucial keyboarding skills using gameplay to make it fun, not work.

2. Help your child find the purpose to their screen time so they stop using it as a pastime

Josh Ochs, Founder of SmartSocial.com

Teach your students to use social media to show off their school projects, hobbies, volunteer work, or family photos. When students see that they can use screen time in a positive way, they are less likely to waste time using it aimlessly. Consider working with your student to determine three things they want to be known for when colleges or employers search for them online.

Sit down with your child and have them make a list of any school projects, volunteering activities, or internships they want to showcase online. For parents of children younger than 14, work with them to create a repository of their achievements that they can one day share on social media. Save positive photos, project descriptions, relevant links, and teacher recommendations in a folder. This will become content they share on social media when they're ready.

3. Use social media for good by joining like-minded groups and following positive people online

Shipra Batra, Founder of Shipra's SAT and Creative Writing Classes

Telling your students to not be on their devices is like fighting a losing battle. In fact, I will suggest you do not do that, as it will create more yearning for the digital goodies. The students will be on their devices anyway, so why not turn it around on them? Based on their interests, make them join a social media group where they engage with like-minded people. Instead of forming an online community of gamers, encourage your students to subscribe and like the channels and pages of their role-models. At least they will be fed useful information which will also register on their subconscious. Something worthwhile shows up on their feed regularly, and over a period of time, they would have gained so much information, which can be used any which way they desire.

4. Help your child find a passion to focus on

Mateo Chaney-Martinez, Founder and CEO, Smart Start University

For parents who want to reduce their teen’s screen time, or at least encourage them to use it more productively, I recommend leading them towards passion, not away from screens. By emphasizing the benefit of passion, rather than highlighting the detriment of screen time, parents are more likely to influence their teens towards positive and constructive actions.

In a more tangible sense, parents can engage their teens in a dialogue about what they want in life. Don’t ask them to be reasonable— explore what they would want to do if they knew they couldn’t fail. Whether that be what they end up pursuing or not, such unhindered discussions will reveal passions— and, if you can help your teen recognize and begin moving towards a passion, the reduced screen time happens naturally.

Don’t drive your teens away from screens. Drive them towards passion.

5. Listen to a podcast

Kitty Felde, Executive Producer of Book Club for Kids Podcast

Use your ears! There are dozens and dozens of podcasts crafted for all ages. Science podcasts (Brains On), history podcasts (The Past and the Curious), ethics podcasts (Short & Curly), and literary podcasts like my own, Book Club for Kids.

Podcasts can be listened to on any device. They allow children to create their own pictures in their minds, sparking imagination. In addition, listening is a skill unto itself. Some of us are audio learners naturally, but for others, removing the visual stimuli allows them to exercise their ears.

6. Take online classes, virtual tours, or read a book digitally

Katie Mills, VP of Product, MeetCircle.com

The time and attention students spend online could be spent learning a new skill or pursuing a creative passion. How can we steer our students toward more creative and informative digital endeavors? There are plenty of ways to foster that passion with online classes, podcasts, apps, books, and virtual tours. Inspire your artist to draw digitally, your aspiring chef to learn from a

master, and for all students to spend their extra time online reaching their creative capacity.

7. Teach your children to complete important tasks before spending time on screens

Elyse Hudacsko, Author

During the year, when students are busy with school and extracurricular activities, there is very little time to be zoned out on their phones for more than a few minutes in the car.

But over the summer, there is freedom and lack of structure and students tend to want to fill a lot of it with their cell phones, tablets, and laptops. While some of the uses of technology are great to help students learn and grow, there are plenty of other uses that provide absolutely no value and should be limited.

In an attempt to keep your child's summer free and unstructured, avoid implementing technology "rules" or "tracking." Instead, set technology "guidelines." This allows using screen time productively as opposed to a pass time while letting students be in charge of how they spend their time.

In my house, I have asked that 85% of their day be spent on things that help them grow. Activities like being out in nature, creating, doing something physical, taking care of themselves and others, engaging with friends, learning, and just being. This would be ten hours per day, five which can be spent using technology and five that are spent without.

Some of the ways parents can encourage their tweens to use technology productively are:

- Using a drawing app
- Making a video
- Coding
- Writing
- Taking an online class
- Facetime with a friend
- Talking to a friend on the phone

- Watching a movie or TV show with friends or family
- Exploring on a topic that interests them (videos, articles, groups),
- Playing brain games
- Listening to music

To avoid hearing “I’m bored,” here are some suggestions for how tweens or teens can spend their technology-free time:

- Going for a walk
- Going to the beach
- Doing art on paper
- Journaling
- Singing
- Acting
- Dancing
- Crafts
- Building projects
- Walking or hiking
- Swimming
- Cooking
- Organizing their room
- Getting together with friends
- Writing to their penpal
- Reading a book
- Taking a class
- Playing a game
- Doing a puzzle

The other 15% of their day can be spent on activities that do not provide any growth value like social media, most games and YouTube videos, and watching entertainment shows.

And, I have tried to get them into the habit of asking “What else could I be doing?” before they absentmindedly pick up their phone.

These guidelines have been a win-win for me and my family and if you adapt them to your own beliefs about technology they can be a win-win for your family too.

8. Meet your tweens/teens where they are rather than telling them what to do

Laura Braziel, Licensed Professional Counselor and Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist

Parents should examine their own screen time first: Parents set the example in their home through their actions. If a parent spends significant amounts of time behind a screen, be it for work or entertainment, what is observed by their tween/teen will set a standard for the role of screens in that home. If there is very little family engagement, it doesn't offer much motivation for a tween/teen to put away the screen since the screen fills the gap in time.

Balance face-to-face time with virtual time: I encourage parents to assist their kids in balancing face-to-face social interactions with virtual interactions. The more time tweens/teens are on screens, the less social skills they develop and the lonelier they can become. Screen time could be useful for school work, planning activities, and some entertainment, but there needs to be a healthy balance of in-person experiences too whether it be family meal times, weekend outdoor activities, or friend get-togethers.

Set up parental controls and talk about them: Parental controls are a healthy safety precaution on devices, but if parents don't also talk about the various influences and temptations out there and the reasons for setting up parental controls, tweens/teens may view the controls as simply a "control tactic" and therefore, may rebel. Setting up controls is a great opportunity to talk about the process of building trust and responsibility with screens and outside influences. As trust and responsibility are gained, controls can become more flexible.

Ask questions: I strongly encourage parents to engage in screen time with their students and ask how the apps, games, etc. work and why their teen enjoys them. This is an example of meeting your teen where they are rather than just trying to tell them what to do. This gives you insight into their perspective so you have more influence later.

Keep conversations open-ended and ongoing: Above all, I strongly encourage parents to respect the opinions of their kids and keep conversations open on all topics. Screens have the power to expand experiences and if they are not emotionally ready, those experiences could negatively impact them. When parents initiate and maintain an open dialog, they are in a better position to influence and intervene as necessary.

9. Use screen time to promote creativity rather than consumption

Doug Brennan, Parenting and Safety Expert with KiwiSearches.com

Use screen time to promote creativity rather than consumption. There are some great coding apps that can be used to develop critical thinking skills, foster creativity, help with math skills, build an aptitude for organization, and problem solving abilities. Coding is a highly desirable skill set, and apps like Treehouse, Mimo, Spritebox and Tynker allow you to build websites, apps, build puzzles, automate tasks, and get ready for your dream job.

Setting parental controls to block adult content from your child's smartphone or tablet can be done easily and for free with an add on filter. This can be done directly from Chrome or sites like YouTube which need restrictions with how easily accessible video content is in your child's hands. You can also use parental control software, like Bark, for more hands-on monitoring and to access your child's social media messaging, GPS location, and setting screen time.

Conclusion

Screen time does not need to be a waste of time for students, this is especially true when they know how to use screen time productively. When parents show their students how to have a purpose on social media, create instead of consume, prioritize screen time with offline activities, and maintain an open dialog they will naturally begin to use screen time productively.

Positive Internet Comment Etiquette for Tweens and Teens: 14 Experts Weigh In

With students having access to social media at younger ages, it's important that they understand and practice proper online etiquette. There's no better time to teach students internet comment etiquette than before they get access to social media. It's never too early to start promoting positive online behaviors. Practicing positive social media commenting not only helps students improve their digital footprints for colleges, but it also discourages cyberbullying.

So, we asked 14 experts to share their best tips for encouraging students to develop positive social media commenting habits.

1. Teach and show your students empathy

Balint Horvath, PhD, Founder, Projectfather

One recommendation I have is to encourage children to practice empathy. Due to the impersonal nature of online communication, children often forget they are human beings with feelings on the other end of the communication channel. Teaching children to show empathy can help them develop a positive online commenting etiquette. By putting themselves into the shoes of others, they learn to automatically self-correct themselves.

Parents should sit down with their children to discuss weekly what interactions they had online; but this should be done in a casual way, just like when a parent asks how it was at school at the end of a day.

Naturally many children emulate the empathetic behavior of people who are closest to them – their parents. Therefore parents should show understanding and support towards friends, family, and strangers, in case they want their students to behave well both online and offline.

2. Don't say anything online you wouldn't say in person

Alice Anderson, Founder and Creator, MommytoMom.com

I have stressed the importance of being kind and treating others with respect since my daughter was little. Now that she's older, that conversation includes online behavior. I encourage her not to say anything online she wouldn't say to someone in person.

We talk about the fact that once you've put something out there on the internet, you can't take it back. You can delete it but how do you know that person didn't take a screenshot? I've explained to her how what you say now can come back to bite you in the future.

3. Ask yourself questions before hitting "post"

Alessandra Kessler, Founder & Blogger at Healthy Body Healthy Mind

Parents and teachers should teach children to behave properly when using any online platform. It is necessary to tell them about the importance of positive self-image online. Whenever they are commenting on an online platform, tell them that freedom of speech does not mean going beyond boundaries. Whenever a student posts or comments on something, it reflects their mindset and personality; he/she will definitely consider it and refrain himself/herself from posting anything bad.

One of the best techniques is to feed a few questions in a child's mind because these questions will always emerge whenever he or she comments on anything.

- When you post or comment, would you like your parents or teachers to see or read it?
- Will the comment affect your career or develop a bad image of you?
- Would your comment affect or hurt someone?

4. Work with your children on the first few responses to demonstrate how to comment online

Bryan Truong, GameCows.com

My advice for parents regarding teaching appropriate internet etiquette is to start young. We all know students are getting online earlier and earlier these days. But by integrating lessons on proper internet behavior with other early childhood education, you can create lifelong habits that have a better chance of persisting as your kid grows older.

What I've done with my own daughter is to monitor and guide her through her first social media posts. I know many parents aren't comfortable allowing their sons or daughters access to social media platforms at a young age, but you can do this using your own accounts. For example, I allowed my daughter to post about positive things she cares about, namely bugs of all kinds, on my Facebook page. We then went through replies together, which allowed me to discuss proper ways to respond to others in a virtual setting.

5. Respect others' opinions

Edie Reads, Editor-in-Chief, Corriecooks.com

Say something meaningful or nothing at all. It is not enough to review your child's online activity and review their social media. You have to teach them the number one online interaction principle that is 'Say something meaningful or nothing at all.' Teach them empathy and the need to criticize their comments and reactions to different commentaries before pressing the send button.

Respect others' opinions. You also have to teach them the need to be respectful of others' opinions and viewpoints. Teach them to learn to avoid online dramas and the need to walk away from unhealthy arguments. More importantly, make them understand the cardinal 'Internet never forgets' rule when interacting with anyone online. Make it absolutely clear that they should never violate a friend's confidence by sharing sensitive information or any information that may bring them shame, embarrassment, or ridicule online.

6. Always THINK first

Arash Fayz, Executive Director, LA TUTORS 123

All students need to be taught basic safety and courtesy policies of the Internet, whether or not they were born well after its advent. When it comes to commenting online (whether privately or publicly), students can use the T.H.I.N.K. acronym:

- T = Is it true?
- H = Is it helpful?
- I = Is it inspiring?
- N = Is it necessary?
- K = Is it kind?

Younger students find this simple questionnaire useful when they first begin interacting online, and older students can apply this to long-term goal planning (i.e. do I want my dream school/dream job finding this comment?) Considering both short-term and long-term consequences of online commenting are good practices for students to slow down and think before posting.

7. When interacting online, keep it respectful and courteous

Aaron Simmons, Founder, TestPrepGenie.com

It is always about using the right words that promote courtesy and respect whatever their opinions are. Always educate the child on how to relay their thoughts in a manner that shows respect.

Also, it is very crucial to teach them the right concept of respect when it comes to freedom of speech. It is true that everyone has his/her own freedom when it comes to this point but when they address any issue, teach the value of responding with rational, fact-based comments.

Bottom line: Comments delivered in a respectful, rational, and fact-based manner is the best way to show your etiquette online.

8. Focus on commentary and avoid negatives like ‘but’ and ‘however’

Bara Sapir, Test Prep New York

Commentary provides rich dialogue between online participants. The two techniques below to develop positive online commenting habits will

encourage deeper inquiry and curiosity and help to share different perspectives and the potential flourishing that results.

Present commentary as separate from the person who has presented it. This depersonalizes what the person has said, and allows it to 'present' independently.

Provide a positive commentary sandwich. Start with a positive observation or comment. Then present commentary. Finish with another positive observation. This creates a positive buffer around material that provides different perspectives.

Replace the use of 'but' or 'however' in commentary and instead, use the word, 'and.' 'But' and 'however' negate the material that is presented before it. 'And' is additive and builds on instead of negates what was said prior. It's a softer and more affirming way to provide a different perspective.

9. Have an outside perspective before posting online

Vickie Pierre, USInsuranceAgents.com

As adults, we understand that negative comments can evolve into crisis situations and the need for reputation management. If anyone needs protection from that kind of fallout, it's students. This is where parents must step in.

As students venture into engaging and interacting with others online, parents need to be open and upfront with them. They must not only share the ramifications negative comments can bring, but they must also learn to be a good sounding board for their children.

Encourage students to read their comments to someone else before posting – even if it isn't mom and dad. Have them ask, is this hurtful? Divisive? Mean? Simply giving students the space to think about and reflect on their words can make all of the difference between a crisis situation or positive communication.

10. Say something meaningful or don't say anything at all on social media

Teana McDonald, 3E Connections

As a parent, social media marketer, and speaker, I teach my kids (and the students I speak to) about the impact of what you say in an online forum and how it could possibly follow you for the rest of your life. The general rule is if you can't say it to a parent, a teacher, or your own grandmother, then you shouldn't be saying it online. Be respectful, and if you have the urge to respond, say something meaningful or don't say anything at all.

Everything that you put online lives there and can potentially haunt you in your future. Think about the job you want or the college you want to attend. What does your online behavior say about you? What does it say about your parents? Then, I show examples of bad reputations and good reputations online.

11. Regularly review your child's social media accounts

Dr. Michael Bishop, Summerland Camps

At Summerland Camps, the first summer camp for technology overuse habits, we recommend parents set up regular intervals with their children to review all social media accounts. Typically we recommend setting aside about 30 minutes every weekend to review posts and comments.

When you see a questionable post your child made, discuss with your child where the comment is coming from. Ask your child, "What need did this post or comment fulfill?"

Question your child if you suspect they were trying to embarrass another person online. If the child posted an inappropriate photo or comment, ask, "What message are you trying to communicate? How can we rephrase this to be more appropriate?"

Ultimately, parents need to help the child re-craft any inappropriate posts or comments to send a better public message. By questioning a child's online activities, parents can help children see how they may truly appear to others online.

12. Teach students to be respectful of others and their opinions

Phyllis Miller, How To Succeed books for teens and young adults

The first step I teach in each of my three How to Succeed books for teens and young adults— is to convince students to never post anything online (even if they think the site has very strong security controls) that could come back to haunt them in their college and job applications. This includes photos of them holding drinks or with inappropriate hand gestures.

The second is to teach students to be respectful of others and the opinions of others. Even when students post opposing viewpoints online, these need to be stated in rational language and not attacking the other person.

13. Challenge students to question their intentions on social media

Vasiliki Baskos, Learn Greek Online

Teach students that when commenting online, they are talking in public and the whole world is listening. Their comment is published and the whole world will be able to read it in the years to come.

Challenge students to question their intentions on social media. Ask them if a friend posts a photo of animal cruelty, would they click “Like” on it? If so, do they realize the whole world can see that?

If students make a comment that they dislike a certain company or professional field. Several years later, when they are seeking for a job and undergoing interviews, their potential employers may see that comment.

14. Encourage students to practice “netiquette”

Dr. John DeGarmo, The Foster Care Institute

When many of our children go online today, the lesson of etiquette is often forgotten. For many children, lessons of etiquette were never taught to begin with. “Netiquette” is simply etiquette for the internet; having good manners while being online or using computer technology. A dictionary definition of the word might look like this:

Netiquette /net-i-ket/, Noun: 1. The social code of network communication. 2. The social and moral code of the internet based on the human condition and the Golden Rule of Netiquette. 3. A philosophy of effective internet communication that utilizes common conventions and norms as a guide for rules and standards.

Conclusion

What anyone writes online can be as permanent as pen on paper. Similar to email etiquette, social media etiquette is important and can go a long way in making someone feel comfortable. Be sure to teach this early before your student is ever online. One slip-up can be costly now or in the future.

How Sexting Can Damage A Student's Reputation, Future, or Lead to Lawsuits

The digital age has changed how people share images and messages. Digital images are often emailed, posted to social media, or sent via text. They're never really private. The ability to screenshot, save, and forward photos often creates more problems than solutions.

Sexting is the act of sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, photographs, or images of oneself to others via cell phones, popular apps, websites, and more. The dangers of sexting are vast and can truly damage a teen or tweens' future. It's important to have a talk early and as soon as your child is given a smartphone or tablet.

In this chapter, 3 experts offer tips for talking to students about the pressures to send inappropriate pictures. They also explain the legal and emotional consequences that can come with sexting.

1. Be non-judgemental when talking to your teens and remind them that pictures can become permanent

Jessica Speer, Author

It's important for tweens and teens to understand that EVERY text message, image and video leaves a digital footprint and can be widely shared. In addition, sharing underage sexually explicit messages is illegal in many states.

According to KidsHealth, there are various reasons teens are sexting, such as peer pressure, getting attention, flirting, or as a joke or dare. The fact that tweens and teens' prefrontal cortex is not fully formed, the part of the brain that manages impulse control, also contributes.

A 2017 Study by JAMA Pediatrics, found that 14% of youth reported sending sexts, and 27% reported receiving sexts. Also, 1 in 8 youths report forwarding or having a sext forwarded without their consent. These statistics are likely higher today.

How should parents discuss this with their tweens and teens? The key is making sure conversations happen regularly and nonjudgmentally.

Regular family conversations about online behaviors build a foundation as tweens and teens navigate their lives online. Share real stories about teens that overshared online and how it impacted their life. Share stories of how colleges and employers look at social profiles before accepting or hiring students. Make sure teens understand the legal consequences of sexting.

Regularly remind teens that nothing shared online is ever private. Before posting anything, it's essential for teens to consider how they would feel if a wider audience saw the image or message. (i.e. Grandma, school principal, coaches, other friends, other parents, your whole school, college admissions person) Remind them that once images are out there, they leave a digital footprint. They can't "take it back."

Keep the tone of conversations non-judgemental and informative. This will help to keep the dialogue going instead of sounding like a lecture. Rather than leading the discussion, make sure you listen to your tween/teen. Discuss the pressures that teens often experience to send inappropriate photos.

Bottom line, sexting is becoming increasingly common. Start conversations as soon as your tween or teen has a smartphone and revisit conversations regularly. Developing healthy online habits takes attention, discussion, and lots of practice. The road is full of bumps but luckily gets smoother as parents help teens navigate the potholes.

2. Start the conversation early and establish ground rules for cell phone usage

Elizabeth Jeglic, Professor, John Jay College

The consequences of sexting could be severe. Nearly half of the states in the US consider sexting amongst teenagers to be the crime of possession of child pornography. It can result in prison sentences and mandatory registration on the sex offender registry. Parents need to be proactive and discuss the dangers of sexting with their children and teens.

Before your child has access to a phone, discuss the dangers of sexting with your children/teens. The younger you start the conversation the more likely it will be that your child internalizes your values.

Talk to your teen about feeling pressure to send naked pictures and empathize with them. But remind them that no matter how hard it is to stand up to pressure, it is much harder to deal with the fallout of having a naked picture shared without consent.

Teach your children to immediately delete any nude or partially nude pictures they receive and report it to a parent. Use hypothetical situations or media stories to role-play various sexting scenarios with your teen. Ask them how they would handle them. Use these types of exercises to teach problem-solving and critical thinking skills around these issues.

Establish ground rules for cell phone usage with your teens. Many parents require that teens let them check their phones regularly as part of a condition of use. If teens are violating the rules, then phone privileges should be suspended.

3. Explain the consequences of sexting and how they would feel if it happened to them

Kayla Broek, Sex and Relationship Coach

With smartphone ownership among teens now being so common, sexting has become a popular way for them to explore their sexuality. It is important for parents to clearly explain the dangers involved, as with any other adult activity, rather than just telling them not to do it.

The biggest danger occurs because most teenagers can't resist the urge to share the pictures and messages they receive with their friends. When this happens, the content can quickly make it around the whole school, or even onto the Internet for the world to see.

Ask your teenager how they'd feel if this were to happen to them. Explain the consequences clearly and how easily it could happen. This one awkward conversation could save them from a horrific outcome.

Conclusion

With internet-enabled devices now easily accessible for most tweens and teens, it's important to educate your children on the legal and emotional consequences of sexting before an uncomfortable incident occurs.

Building a Private Portfolio

The years before applying to a dream college or career is the time to start building an online portfolio that highlights a student’s passions. When students use social media positively and with a purpose, they Shine Online and are ahead of other candidates and applicants who may not have the cleanest Google results.

In this section, we teach how a consistently positive social media history can launch a student’s future success and share examples of how other teenagers have used social media to Shine Online and reach their goals.

SmartSocial.com (SBA) Student Branding Academy For Your Students

Educators & Parents: This multi-lesson course gives students a purpose online so they can protect their online image (and avoid the bad parts of the internet)

Students will finish with a website that shows their projects, passion and public service so they can start building a positive online image

SmartSocial.com/sba



The Positive Impact of Using Social Media Together as a Family

Many parents and educators know about the negative effects of social media on teens and tweens. However, there are also many positive impacts social media can have on families. Wondering how families can use technology in a positive way to make a connection between parents and children?

In this chapter, 6 parents and tech experts offer their ideas and tips for incorporating technology into family time.

1. Find alternative uses for technology

Kenny Trinh, Managing Editor of Netbooknews

Use a Video Tutorial for a Family Activity: Nowadays we watch a lot of how-to videos. Why not use a video tutorial on how to bake a cake or a pizza as a family activity? Everyone will have a part to play, even the little ones, and the family dinner would for sure be a lot more fun.

Shoot a Short Film or Skit: Make a short film or skit of your favorite family movie. Younger students could play their favorite characters and the older teens and adults could do all the directing and editing. This would be a nice family project and something you could watch together for years to come.

Video Calls Instead of Instant Messages: Face-to-face interactions are very important, especially for your growing students. It can impact the level of their confidence and the way they interact with other people.

So as much as possible, do a video call instead of just sending an instant message. Seeing you on the screen and hearing your voice still beats reading a chat or instant message to matter how sweet it is.

Use Family Organizer Apps: These apps have a wide range of really useful functions such as managing family tasks lists, sending schedule reminders, and even making games out of chores.

2. Start group messages with family members

Dr. Rahil Chaudhary, Managing Director of Eye7.in

Having a family group chat app can make everyone in the (immediate) family feel involved in the family. All families will have an introvert or someone who is out of the loop (by choice mostly). However, even though they hardly contribute to the chat doesn't mean they are not interested. They can still feel included being a non-contributor – silent partner. This can improve family values immeasurably, as nobody will feel neglected.

3. Watch videos together

Joseph Webster, Soul Series Health

One uplifting way a family can use technology is by practicing something fun and healthy like downloading a meditation app on the computer and learning how to meditate together as a family. Families can also download a whole host of different apps that the family can participate in together. There are apps to learn fun facts about world history and apps that can teach healthy family-friendly exercises. There are also interactive games the family can play as a unit and take turns completing tasks.

4. Positive impact of social media

Andrew Cunningham, Founder of DailyPest

As a father of twin girls, my wife and I have our hands full. That said, our girls love their tablets and other electronics. My wife and I incorporate technology, as much as possible, in our family routines to make life more enjoyable – especially for our two girls.

I'm always busy with my business so I don't get to spend as much time with them during the weekdays. During lunch hour, though, they call me via video call with their mom. This helps us communicate even when we are apart.

During the weekends, we spend game nights on my tablet playing their favorite apps. We make this a family habit rather than all of us individually holding our gadgets with no interaction at all.

My wife uses YouTube to search for DIY videos to do with my twins when they're having their mother-daughter bonding time during school breaks. I also join in when I'm not working.

I believe incorporating technology has helped connect our family. It enhances our experiences and makes the time we have with each other more memorable.

5. Use an app to learn a new language together

Jovan Milenkovic, Co-founder of KommandoTech

There are numerous free apps for learning languages that are quite popular and interactive. A lot of them have daily challenges and require users to be constantly active and, therefore, improve their knowledge. It can be quite interesting for families to gather and start learning a new language as a team. They can push each other to work harder, have fun, and acquire a new, highly useful skill.

6. Host family game nights

Luka Arezina, Co-founder of DataProt

One of my favorite ways in which technology positively impacts families is the use of chat groups on WhatsApp or Facebook. It especially goes well for families scattered around the world. Instead of multiple, one-on-one messages to each family member, a group will mean less work when it comes to keeping everyone informed. It will also create a space for interaction. It's similar to gathering in the same room and having a conversation that is open to everyone – an important and needed family time that ultimately uplifts all involved.

Another cool way of using technology for an uplifting time is playing Just Dance with your family. Just Dance is a video game and app that uses the movement tracker on your phone to send information to the viewing device. While the song on your TV is playing, you imitate the movement of the person on-screen. Players are rated based on how successfully they reproduce the moves. You can connect multiple phones to the same dance party, which guarantees some healthy competition and fun family time.

Conclusion

It can be scary to think of giving students full access to the Internet with so much dangerous content out there. But having honest conversations with your students about the dangers of social media, and using it together as a family, can help you keep your students safe and have some fun in the process.

15 Examples of the Positive Impact of Social Media

The negative effects of social media on teens and tweens can be obvious for parents and educators, but there are seldom discussions about the positive impact of social media. When teaching students how to build healthy screen time habits, it can be helpful to also understand the advantages of social media.

15 experts share their opinions about the positive impact of social media on students. In this chapter, learn how social media provides a platform to empower students, showcase technological savvy, and create an opportunity for an open dialog.

1. Develop critical thinking by using social media for school projects

Mary Ann Lowry, M.Ed, ADHD Coach

I find the students I work with benefit from direct instruction on using social media to learn more about topics. For example, if they are looking for more information on China, they can do a Facebook search to look for people who live in China. There will be Facebook groups, such as “Teens from ____ (a specific city).”

Part of learning and building right brain thinking is brainstorming. If we hit a dead end, we keep going until we find an English speaking group. Students can then ask about geography, hobbies, etc.

Connecting with others through social media is far more entertaining than reading an article. When students do read articles, they make more sense after being introduced to concepts by real life people. This also helps to develop critical thinking and to develop self advocacy (asking for help when needed).

2. Social media can be used to create a positive digital footprint and search results

Josh Ochs, Founder of SmartSocial.com

Since Google results are the new digital resume, it's important for students to dominate their online presence. Building a positive digital footprint using social media is a great way for students to Shine Online, show their unique personality, and have ownership over their search results.

Students can use their social media profiles to highlight their school projects, sports, hobbies, volunteer work, or family vacations.

3. Social media can motivate students to strive for greatness

Tom DeSpiegelaere, Digital Marketing Expert and Founder of TomSpicky.com

Social media can be a catalyst for motivating students to believe they can accomplish great things. Following inspirational pages and personalities, such as Goalcast and Jay Shetty, would help instill positive values and great life lessons. Since media is a powerful tool in shaping one's values and beliefs, engaging with motivational content can teach students how to express gratitude, show kindness, act with respect, and believe in their own potential.

As students encounter pressures and anxieties in their daily lives, just one video or motivational quote can rekindle their self-confidence and maybe even reveal their true desires in life.

4. Social media helps provide a sense of community

Karen Gross, Author and Educator

In the current context with social isolation and closed schools, students benefit from social media because it provides a way to connect and create community, in the absence of in-person contact. Indeed, adolescents need social engagement; they need to individuate and social media is a means of doing that.

We are all aware that social media is not without risks. There can be false information, bullying, and offensive and discriminatory language. But, the point is to enable the tool to be put to its best use now because it is critically needed.

5. Students can meet mentors to help guide their career goals

Ethan Taub, Founder of Goalry.com

Social media allows students to dip their toes into networking– albeit digitally. Commenting on others posts on LinkedIn and responding to Tweets can build rapport and relationships in their area of study.

In-person networking usually isn't done while in school or university. It usually begins within the first years of a career. Social media now allows people to get their first foot on that career ladder whilst in education; one step ahead of their peers.

6. Social media can provide teens with a voice

Nickia Lowery, Counselor

Adolescent years are a time when children are attempting to master their identities and are finding their place in society. Social media has allowed teens to develop a voice of advocacy. The ability to see who is following whom and the reactions from posts reinforces a sense of belonging. This can be a very positive influence when exposed to the right outlets, especially for teens who do not have a large group of friends.

7. Social media can help students learn essential job skills

Jonas Sickler, ReputationManagement.com

It can definitely be easy to paint social media as a villain, but there are just as many positive lessons that teens can learn from it.

Social media definitely helps teens learn to take criticism from strangers without being drawn into a digital dog fight. This can be a real challenge for young minds looking to express themselves, and a valuable lesson to learn before getting a job.

Wouldn't it be nice if what happened on social media stayed on social media? Learning to use social media responsibly will build an essential skill for teens that will stay with them for life. Think twice before you post (or speak), and you'll avoid embarrassing yourself, and possibly hurting others.

8. Social media can lead to more communication

Lyn Hastings, The Powerline Group

I've interviewed multiple moms about this, and despite the negativity that surrounds social media, there were some encouraging stories. One mom said the constant scrolling leads to more communication about current events with her son. Another mom claimed social media allows introverted tweens to safely invite friends to "hang" with less fear of rejection than having to pick up the phone.

The most common positive impact of social media was that it allowed tweens and teens to stay in touch with past and present friends throughout the changes in their lives: school, job, and team changes, hospital stays, studying abroad, etc.

9. Students can use technology to form study groups

Len Saunders, Author

Social media can sometimes be beneficial to teens when it comes to information. For example, when group chats occur and students form study groups online to share information and assist one another. This also comes in handy when students are absent from school because they can get information from friends who were in school that day. If a lot of notes were given that day, a good friend can simply take a picture of the notes and send it over to the friend who was absent.

Most experts will tell you to limit the time spent on technology for a safer environment. As an educator, I have taught parents not to remove technology completely, but to limit it. In some cases, you can make technology an earned activity.

10. Social media provides a platform to showcase technological savvy and creativity

Dimitris Proko, UK Department for Work and Pensions

Teens today live in a revolutionized smartphone era, in which Wi-Fi and social media have become impeccable survival ingredients. Social media is perceived as a formula to “connect” with others, by either sharing their live moments or even making a lifestyle statement. However, with great social interaction comes great responsibility.

Some of the benefits of social media are:

- Having a platform to showcase technological savvy and creativity.
- Increased self-confidence by empowering introverts to express their ideas.
- The ability to create lifelong friends.
- Strengthening social awareness and empathy.

11. Social media offers students a way to stay in touch with friends if they move

Heidi McBain, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

We recently moved back to the US after living overseas for years. Social media has been a wonderful way for our tween to stay in touch with friends who are living all over the world. While we’ve all been meeting new people and establishing friendships in our new hometown, it was so helpful for her to still feel connected to her friends from our old hometown. I actually think this made leaving a little bit easier because she didn’t have to let these friendships go, which might have been the case in years past.

12. Students can leverage social media to promote their civic engagement

Kevin Howley, PhD, DePauw University

Young people should leverage their interest in social media to promote learning, creative expression, and civic engagement. Social media connects young people with a world of ideas and a world of possibilities. Students can make productive use of these tools to conduct research, reach out to experts, and ask questions. These tools also permit young people to express

themselves, share their work, and get feedback and encouragement. Social media promotes active citizenship.

13. Younger students can feel empowered by teaching older relatives how to use technology

Adam C. Earnhardt, Ph.D., Youngstown State University

In meetings with senior citizens, I've heard great stories about their grandchildren and social media. What I've found is that more teens and tweens are connecting with older family members, not just through social media, but by teaching their grandparents how to set up their accounts to stay connected. It's a wonderful combination of high tech and high touch for both age groups. Teens/tweens feel self-worth by teaching new technology to those much older and wiser, while the older group feels better connected not only to their grandchildren but to people they may not have communicated with in decades.

14. Students can utilize social media to spread social awareness and kindness

Jason Perkins, San Diego SEO and Online Marketing Inc.

Other than the negative side effects of social media on teenagers, there are also good things to look forward to that will shape your students into entrepreneurs.

Here are some of the positive effects of social media on tweens:

It allows them to spread social awareness and kindness. One of the reasons why teenagers are on social media is so they can search for new information on people, explore new ideas, express themselves the way they want to, and connect with others all over the world. Social media can be a great platform for them to start campaigning for their rights and the rights of other people.

Teens also have the opportunity to learn things through social media platforms. Additionally, they can get feedback from the work that they produce, like school projects, art projects, etc. It gives them a safe space to

get unsolicited advice from other people, which they can use to eventually better their skills.

Social media helps students enhance their confidence and creativity. By definition, social media refers to the online services that allow users to connect with one another and share content. These platforms encourage students to exercise their creative skills in terms of engaging with their friends and their general audience. Given that they take up the majority of the users on social media platforms, teenagers create the future of social media.

15. Students can learn new things from social media

Michael Banks, Banks Test Prep

Teens can have the same benefits as adults who use social media in a moderate manner to network and learn new things. One recent example is while looking at an SAT reading passage related to the Louvre, a student showed me some pictures on Instagram from when they had visited France with their family. Social media was positively impacting their interest.

Conclusion

Students have been told time and time again that social media can have a negative impact on their lives, but they rarely hear about how social media can help them excel. From creating a more dynamic college resume to building communication skills, social media creates plenty of positive opportunities for students.

Instead of focusing solely on the negative impact social media can have, try to highlight the ways your children can use social media for good. Whether your children showcase their charitable activities, help seniors learn technology, or connect with family, you can help them find new ways to Shine Online. When you follow the steps above and show your children how social media can be used positively, they are less likely to use social media in a negative way.

11 Teens Using Social Media for Good Deeds

There's so much bad publicity these days about teens and social media. Cyberbullying, inappropriate postings on social networking sites, and apps that put teens in bad situations tend to make headlines. But there are also students out there using social media in positive ways-- sometimes wonderful, life-changing ways that show you're never too young to make a difference.

In this chapter, read about 11 teens who are using social media for good deeds and worthy causes.

1. Teen creates a collaborative website to share stories and inspire others

Gray created her first blog, WondermintKids.com, when she was 8-years-old. It was meant for friends and family, but eventually was watched by over 150k followers. Now a teen, she created GirlFolk.com for girls (guys are welcome, too) like her, interested in art, music, fashion, reading, food, and travel from a girl's perspective.

The teens work really hard and inspire girls from around the world to turn in stories on mental health, self-care, travel, cooking and more. The website's main teen writers live on the remote and rural island of Orcas and work with girls from Australia, the USA, and France. The company is now a non-profit and is run by girls, for girls.

2. North Texas teens use social media to support disadvantaged students, tackle literacy gap issues, and more

Pranav Pattatathunaduvil, a 17-year-old student, is the Executive Director at a fully student-run 501(c)3 called the Be the Light Youth Association. Made up of over 30 high school students from North Texas, they often use social media for good causes.

In July 2020, Be the Light used social media as a way to advertise a book drive for disadvantaged students. Be the Light Team members used

platforms, like Instagram, to set up contactless book pickups from members of the community.

They also used social media to reach out to countless people in the area for book donations. As a result, they collected a whopping 2,600 books, over 500% more than their initial goal. They donated the books to the Reading Partners of North Texas and Edufree to help tackle the literacy gap in the region.

Be the Light members have also used social media to advertise their weekly speech and debate classes for 4th to 9th grade students. In 3 years, more than 400 students have registered for their classes which helped them raise more than \$100,000. All of the profits are donated to local charities that support disadvantaged children.

3. Police officer's daughter creates non-profit to help children of fallen law enforcement officers cope

Blue Line Bears is a nonprofit organization with the goal of helping the children of fallen law enforcement officers cope with the devastating loss of a parent. Megan, the daughter of a police officer, was 14 years-old when she created the organization after realizing many parents risk their lives each time they go to work.

Blue Line Bears uses the uniforms of fallen police officers to make teddy bears for their families. Through the use of donations and other contributions, Blue Line Bears covers the entire cost of the gift. Their goal is to help keep the officer's memory alive and to help the child see that there are caring individuals who respect and appreciate men and women in uniform.

4. Teen uses GoFundMe to provide elementary school with notebooks

Jack, a 16-year-old high school student, has helped supply thousands of elementary school students with notebooks through Kids in Need (kinf.org), a national non-profit organization that provides school supplies to under-resourced students around the country.

His fundraising page states:

With a donation of only \$6, you could help provide an entire class of students the opportunity to make the most out of their education. Each box contains enough to supply an average size class of 24 students with notebooks. Shipping is already covered, meaning every single penny donated will be put directly into the funding of additional notebooks. During difficult times like these, the last thing parents need to be worried about (especially those who are having a difficult time making ends meet) is providing their children with school supplies.

5. Blogging in middle school and helping others earned teens local hero status

In middle school, Michael and Marc started using social media to promote their baseball blogs about the Boston Red Sox and NY Mets. In an effort to inspire his peers to never give up and pursue their dreams, Michael also wrote about athletes and how they would overcome their challenges. Marc wrote about living with food allergies and getting used to that when he was younger for others struggling with the same issues.

Because of their blogging experience in middle school, Michael and Marc learned how to gain visibility on social media and then created a program called Teenager Entrepreneur. This program is a personal and business empowerment program (businesswhizkids.com) that teaches students how to gain confidence, conquer fears, and find their passion. They offered this program to underprivileged adolescents, created a non-profit 501c3 to get grants, and have offered scholarships to children for the past 5 years.

The program was held at Fordham University for the first four years and now they travel to schools to empower students.

The New York Knicks granted them the Sweetwater Clifton ‘City Spirit’ Award which pays tribute to local heroes who have made a significant difference in the lives of others.

The award is named in honor of the late Knicks great, Nat “Sweetwater” Clifton, who was the first African-American to play for the Knickerbockers. Recipients of this award epitomize the same trailblazing characteristics of the Knicks Legend.

It all started with using social media in a positive manner and empowering their peers to do the same.

6. Teen, bullied as a child, uses social media as a tool to advocate tolerance, kindness, acceptance, and inclusion

Charles Kolin is the founder of startup UnityChallenge.org and is using social media as a way to attract people to join his cause to stop bullying, discord, and hate.

Charles’ advocacy for tolerance, kindness, and acceptance started when he was a child. He was bullied by his grade school peers due to a neuro disorder that made him different. He was taunted, excluded from groups and shunned by classmates. He was not shown tolerance or inclusion by his young classmates.

Charles has a non-verbal learning disability (NLVD). People who have NVLD, a brain-based condition, are characterized by difficulty recognizing and processing nonverbal cues such as body language, facial expression, and the nuances of conversation; poor visual, spatial, and organizational skills, and reduced motor performance. Often they are marginalized and isolated; consequently, they can experience social barriers throughout their lives.

Charles traveled to Washington with his parents to meet with dozens of Senators and Representatives to share his unity message. He helped push for a national day, called Unity Day, to be recognized on the last Wednesday in October of every year.

“Whether you’ve been bullied like me or you simply have a different point of view on an issue, or you’ve been discriminated against, we need a Unity Day. We need

a day where despite all of our differences we are unified for a purpose that is uniquely human our humanity itself," says Charles.

7. Teen throws memorable birthday celebrations for disadvantaged children

Julia Warren had an epiphany a few years ago. For most students, birthday parties are an annual rite of passage- something usually taken for granted. Yet in Julia's own hometown of Richmond, Va., there were students living in poverty who had never had a single birthday party of their own. And this, she decided, was unacceptable.

Julia founded celebrate! RVA (<https://www.celebraterva.org/>) to give disadvantaged children in Richmond memorable birthday parties—with fun food, activities, decorations and, of course, cake—to make sure every child feels loved and celebrated on their special day.

The non-profit organization's website serves to recruit volunteers as well as donations. The blog shows highlights from recent parties, including special guests like players from the University of Richmond Lacrosse team and even local police who come to celebrate with the birthday boy or girl. Meanwhile, Julia also blogged at GirlinthePartyHat.com, sharing personal stories behind the celebrate! RVA parties. She spread the love online while making wonderful memories for countless Richmond children. It's enough to make her readers want to celebrate, too.

8. Three teens are furthering the acceptance of disabled children by promoting education

Ivan Boyers, Andrew Goodrum, and Ariel Kim were part of a group of high school students who participated in a community service project in Ghana through the organization VISIONS Service Adventures. They volunteered at three different work sites, including helping to fix up a dormitory at a local center for disabled children, called the Physically Challenged Action Foundation (PCAF).

As their time in Ghana came to a close, the three friends vowed that upon returning home, they would work to raise money to help the center fulfill its

dream of building an on-site school- and Ark's Foundation was born. They raised almost \$70,000, according to social media, to assist with the school's construction.

Ivan explained that social media was a major catalyst in their effort.

"Regarding our message, we really desired a brand. Therefore, we started by establishing a logo and a website that includes all the vital information for which donors would be looking. Unfortunately, we were still unknown to most of the world. Social media filled this void. Through Facebook, we post photos updating viewers about progress in Ghana but also simply informing potential donors of opportunities to give. Facebook provided a platform through which we could direct people straight to the donation page of our website. And the share button has been a huge help to our spread."

Andrew adds that he looks forward to the day they can revisit the site and see the school completed.

"It would be the most amazing, awe-inspiring experience," he says, "to see the radiant smiles on the children's faces as they head to school for the first time."

9. Teen motivates people of all ages to identify their passion and take action

If there's such a thing as a social-media prodigy, Hannah Alper is it.

Hannah, who is from Toronto, launched her blog Call Me Hannah when she was just nine years old. Her father, Eric Alper, says Hannah's passion for speaking out about important causes started early on with her love of animals, which quickly spread to concern for threatened habitats and the environment as a whole.

At age 13 Hannah had not only built a huge following for her blog, but has also gained influence through public speaking and so much more. She had 34,000 followers on Twitter, wrote for The Huffington Post, and served as both a Me to We Motivational Speaker and Free the Children Ambassador. Meanwhile, her advocacy expanded to also include anti-bullying efforts and celebrating other young role models, including Malala Yousafzai.

Hannah goes by a lot of descriptions, from eco-warrior to “kindraiser.” In Hannah’s own words from one of her Huffington Post blogs:

“Kindraising is all about changing our communities and the world through kindness. I believe that it takes more than money to create a lot of change that we’re working on and that compassion, empathy and kindness play a huge part in reaching our goal.”

10. Teen helps disadvantaged children play sports

Competitive cheerleader Jah’Kiyla Atwaters of Boynton Beach, Florida was practicing cheerleading routines at a park when she noticed some girls outside the gate watching. When Jah’Kiyla encouraged them to try cheering themselves, one of them responded, “My mom died, and my sister is taking care of us. She doesn’t have any extra money for me to cheer.”

Saddened by the story, Jah’Kiyla told her mom, and together they formed the Jump with Jah’Kiyla (JWJ) Foundation to provide children who normally couldn’t afford it the opportunity to play sports. They created a website to encourage donations and to help students and their families apply for sports vouchers. Jah’Kiyla also launched a social media campaign asking students to create, and photograph themselves with, posters of their favorite sport.

The website BlackCelebrityGiving (blackcelebritygiving.com) highlighted the JWJ Foundation noting: “The urge to help others and her outgoing personality led Jah’Kiyla to where she is today.”

11. Teen is on a mission to end hunger around the world

Through the Joshua’s Heart Foundation (joshuasheart.org/), Joshua Williams of Miami, Florida has recruited more than 25,000 young volunteers and helped raise more than \$1 million to help feed hungry individuals and families around the world. Having developed a passion for helping the hungry when he was just four years old, he uses his website to encourage people of all ages to join in the cause.

To help spread the word and good deeds, Joshua makes use of all the major social-media channels including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram.

His site also features blogs from other young people who help spread the word and share their experiences with the organization.

“Joshua empowers and engages young people ages two and up to find their passion or purpose and use it for the better good,” explained his mom.

Conclusion

As parents and educators, it might be tough to see the positive side of social media sometimes. But for some teens, it's not all about finding the best filter for selfies or the latest viral video challenge. Here at SmartSocial.com, it's our mission to keep students safe on social media so they can Shine Online and these young people are certainly shining examples about the positivity that can be found online.

Launching a Positive Public Footprint

College admissions are getting more difficult year after year and internships and jobs often have many great candidates to pick from. It may be hard for teens to realize that posts they made years ago as a tween can affect them as a young adult, no matter how much they have changed.

An online portfolio that creates a student's digital footprint highlights their passions and who they are as a human is now more important than a resume, ACT/SAT scores, letters of recommendation, or anything else.

In this section, we teach how to create a knockout public portfolio to get your student to the top of the admissions or hiring ladder.

SmartSocial.com (SBA) Student Branding Academy For Your Students

Educators & Parents: This 6-lesson course gives students a purpose online so they can protect their online image (and avoid the bad parts of the internet).

Students will finish with a website that shows their projects, passion and public service so they can start building a positive online image.

[SmartSocial.com/sba](https://www.smart-social.com/sba)



How to Create an Online Portfolio for College Admissions

An online portfolio is a great addition to any student's resume as they prepare for the college admissions process or their first employment opportunity. It creates an opportunity for students to showcase their strengths, passions, and values.

Not all students aspire to life in the Ivy League- and that's okay! Parents should align themselves with their student's aspirations rather than micromanaging them towards goals they're not interested in, according to college admissions experts Jenn Curtis and Cindy Muchnick.

Curtis and Muchnick felt like they were "punched in the gut" when they first heard about the 2019 college admissions cheating scandal.

"We want to encourage parents to accept and love the child they have, not the child they want to inauthentically create," explained Curtis.

They believe that if you teach students to live life with their own intentions, you can help them better achieve success.

"I think it's the pushing kids that comes from parents that really creates this dissonance and this noise that is so hard for students to get passed because they're so fragile and worried about pleasing their parents," Muchnick explained.

Instead, they urge parents to focus on building the "whole child" by teaching resilience, grit, and how to bounce back from mistakes.

They also believe in the importance of praising students along their journey, rather than only for the end result. Helping students document their passions and accomplishments with an online portfolio is a great way to celebrate their achievements – big or small.

We asked 10 professionals to share their best tips for students who want to create a successful online portfolio. Learn which platforms students can utilize for building their online portfolio and techniques for sharing their budding expertise online.

1. Be honest and show off your creativity

Karen Gross, Author and Educator

Most students think they have to be beyond remarkable to get noticed by colleges. They perceive they need to be good at everything. From my perspective, honesty and self-reflection are key attributes I looked for in new students. Creativity and problem solving capacity too. Real life situations and how they got resolved – even hard stories – are valuable to share, whether in writing or in a video or a poem or a series of photos or images.

2. Start building your digital footprint early

Josh Ochs, Author and Founder, SmartSocial.com

Encourage students to start building their digital footprint in middle school, which they can later use to Shine Online. This is a great way to get students excited about their future while archiving their accomplishments. Each year your student can update their online portfolio/website to showcase school projects, extracurricular activities, and other accomplishments. The portfolio can be made into a college-visible website once they are ready to start applying for college, jobs, or internships. If done correctly, a personal website/online portfolio will also boost their Google search results by showing up when someone searches for their name.

3. Prove your potential by showing off your work

Precious Hardy, PhD Student

One of the great things about being able to use visuals is that it allows students to truly showcase their skills. In the words of a mentor, “it is not bragging if you have evidence that you’ve done it.”

Using free or inexpensive online tools can help students craft their stories of leadership, community outreach, research experience, or anything other skills they want to showcase applying.

4. Avoid boring templates, use a field-related theme

Brandon Foster, Teacher & Blogger

Students should not fall into the trap of using templates to build out their resumes. These templates limit their control of being creative and also do not stand out from other resumes.

Students should blend the six ingredients – education, major, experience, service, skills, and relevant projects to come up with a strong resume. Colleges are no more interested in merely knowing the candidates' academic side; they want to know the candidates' personalities and interests. Even if you have family responsibilities, you might list them in a separate Achievement section by proudly representing yourself as a responsible family member.

Additionally, students should choose the theme according to their field. For example, if applying for a field related to designing, then dull white or black resumes will not grab attention in a second. Contrarily, the one with bold colors will give it a field-relevant touch.

5. Showcase that you are tech-savvy

Jacques Buffet, Career Expert at Zety

Creating a resume website shows that you are tech-savvy and follow new trends. Also, such a website gives you more space to display your portfolio. So whether you have samples of your writing, artwork, videos or photos, you can display them easily in a designed portfolio section on your website. Simple as that.

There's also plenty of space to include references and testimonials from your professors or internship mentors—something a standard resume cannot hold. And finally, a resume website is easy to manage and add to it with time.

6. Keep it brief and update it regularly

Anshul Kapoor, COO of MBA Rendezvous

Students can follow the 3 Bs while creating their portfolio to include their personal, academic, and extra-curricular details:

- Build – Focus on creating a profile that highlights your pluses
- Brief – Keep it concise and engaging
- Broadcast – Remain active and keep updating your profile periodically

7. Make it visually appealing

Kimberley Ring, Adjunct Professor & President at Ring Communications

Any student looking to stand out amongst other applicants for admissions, jobs, or internships should focus on drawing a viewer eyes in. Find ways to visually call out the information that “wows.” You can do that with color contrast, bold type, and strategic layout and organization. Tools such as WordPress or Wix, Canva, and even LinkedIn are built to help do that.

8. Upload your resume to Behance

Chelsey Moter, SEOWorks

One of the easiest and fastest ways to create an online portfolio is through Behance. You just need to create an account and you’re able to upload work almost instantly. It’s also a great place to upload your resume, profile picture and add a short bio so employers can quickly get an idea of who their potential candidate will be. Behance allows you to have everything all in one spot which is the most convenient way to show professors and employers your professional information.

9. Ensure that your work is easily accessible

Alex Brown, TechRocket.com

There are a lot of different ways to get your work out there and there’s going to be even more, depending on your medium. One of the easiest ways to build an online portfolio is to create your own website with something like Squarespace. It’s fast, clean and gives you a professional look for a relatively low price.

If you’re into game design or app design, it’s always impressive when you can get your work on the front page of an industry professionals site. For example, if you design with Unity, they have a step by step process for

getting your game featured on their main page with tons of educational content to help you get there.

No matter how you show your work, whether it's through your website, Vimeo, or Pinterest, what's important is that it's easily accessible so you're not trying to explain hundreds of hours of work with only a few sentences. Seeing is believing.

10. Create a LinkedIn account

Erin Goodnow, Going Ivy

A resume with a college application shows the admissions department that you are prepared for success, not only in school, but beyond. Include your class rank and GPA and highlight your awards. (Yes, Perfect Attendance or Miss Congeniality counts.) Write short descriptions for all your school-sponsored, community and even summer activities.

If you spent every summer at yoga camp or visiting grandparents in Greece or the Arkansas Ozarks, put it in! It all helps show the college who you are. Create a LinkedIn account and upload your resume there for a professional look and easy link.

Conclusion

The college application process is an exciting, yet sometimes stressful, time. Not all schools require an online portfolio, but it will certainly never hurt a student's chances of admissions. Taking time to create an online portfolio will show admissions officers that students are willing to work hard and will help establish a more human connection with an admission's committee.

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Students will finish with a website that shows their projects, passion and public service so they can start building a positive online image

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Let's protect students together...

Educators: Request a partnership proposal for your school/community.

Get a free consultation call with our team to discuss your social media concerns.

Learn about our services and resources to serve parents in your community.

Schedule a call with Josh: SmartSocial.com/partner/



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Subscribe to our newsletter to get free resources (and stay updated each week on teen/tween safety tips)

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- 8 page guide: “How to navigate social media with your student”
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Educators: Is your school/district looking for a social media/anti bullying tool that gives your students an easy way to report issues and concerns?

This platform allows students to alert their school staff of dangers on campus (and online).

Schedule a call with Josh: SmartSocial.com/partner/



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