

Social Media Q & A

What is too much social media use?

Spending many hours online engaged in healthy behavior, such as talking honestly with friends or learning from credible sources, may not be all bad. But about 50% of teens report at least one sign of problematic social media use including:

- An inability to stop even when they want to
- Social media use interfering with their daily routines
- Going out of one's way or lying to maintain social media use
- Problems with schoolwork or relationships because of social media use
- Be aware of these signs of problematic social media use and help them reduce their time online if needed.

How do I help prevent conflicts on social media?

Acting disrespectfully or hurtfully to others just to gain likes or followers can cause serious harm to victims. Similarly, liking others' cyberhate posts does harm. Studies show this kind of communication not only hurts victims but also other users who witness cyberhate online.

Talk with your family about recognizing examples of cyberbullying, such as posting or sending hurtful or embarrassing messages, encouraging harm, or using digital technology to make others feel excluded.

Encourage youth to talk to you or another adult if they witness cyberbullying. It's also important to talk to your child about kindness and the seriousness of engaging in cyberbullying behavior themselves.



Which tools on social media platforms are safest?

Healthy relationships in adolescence include connections with others characterized by social support, empathy, companionship, and emotional intimacy. Social media is at its best when it helps people foster these kinds of connections. Interacting with supportive peers can help kids and teens develop positive behaviors such as cooperation, empathy, and trust.

Encourage youth to use social media tools that will help depict themselves honestly and feel a true connection to others, such as direct messaging. Passive scrolling or simply liking a post without engaging at a deeper level does not foster psychologically healthy relationships.

Parents should also recognize kids may want to get information and support online to learn about sensitive topics related to their health or identity. These may be things they aren't yet comfortable talking about with you. It's important to balance parental monitoring with your adolescent's appropriate needs for privacy. Discussing this balance with your child ahead of time can help them feel respected while allowing you to establish guidelines to keep them safe.

How do I know when information online is true?

Social media is filled with information that is inaccurate or deliberately designed to mislead people. Both misinformation and disinformation spread easily online. We can be fooled into believing what we see even when we don't realize it. Studies show that mis- and disinformation are more likely to be reposted than factually accurate information, so we are probably exposed to something false more frequently than we realize.

Talk with your family about how to judge whether a source is reliable and trustworthy. The online game [getbadnews.com](https://www.getbadnews.com/), developed by psychological scientists, teaches players how to recognize the tactics people use to spread false information online. Another resource, [spotthetroll.org](https://www.spotthetroll.org/), was developed by psychological scientists to teach kids how to recognize real social media users from bots.