

Information for families regarding social media and computer program use

I have recently received numerous questions from families regarding the use of social media and software programs. The ACT Education Directorate has information on their website about children keeping safe online. The following link provides a wealth of knowledge about how to be cybersmart and how to use the internet safely. <https://www.education.act.gov.au/support-for-our-students/being-safe-online> The website also includes a link to the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner. The site provides information, publications and resources for students, families and schools.

The following information is lifted from the eSafety Commissioner <https://www.esafety.gov.au/> It may assist in making decisions about your child's use of social media and software programs.

When are they ready for social media accounts?

Both the physical age of your child and their level of maturity and resilience can affect their ability to have positive experiences on social media.

Each social media site and app has its own criteria for minimum age requirements. Most require users to be at least 13 years of age before they can register, although some sites are created especially for children under 13.

Generally, the 13-year age requirement is not necessarily because the site is unsafe for children to use but to comply with a US law — the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998 (COPPA), which prevents collection and storage of personal information from children under 13 years of age.

Key questions to help determine your child's readiness for social media:

We suggest considering these questions to determine whether your child is ready for social media.

- **Is your child able to withstand negative online experiences?**
- **If you think your child would be very upset by a negative experience online, you may need to guide them closely if you allow them to establish a social media account.**

Look through online profiles and public feeds together, and talk about how some people behave differently online. Teach them how to filter abusive comments, block and report people.

- **Does your child understand the importance of protecting their personal information?**

Explaining to a child why privacy is important can be difficult. Start by describing what personal information is. Emphasise that it includes anything that can identify them, such as their mobile number, email address, photos, the name of their school, and any sporting clubs they belong to. Remind them that photos can contain information that could be used to identify them, such as a photo taken right outside your house or a photo of them in their school uniform.

Let them know that if they share personal information online, it could mean that others, including strangers could use it in ways they may not have thought about. Does your child understand how privacy settings for social media work? Show your child how to view the privacy settings for each social media service you use. Talk about



the settings you have selected for your accounts and why you chose them. You can find advice on privacy settings on the eSafety website: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>

- **Does your child understand what is safe to share online?**

If you are concerned your child may post personal information that allows people to identify and locate them then they may need your help to use social media sites.

Discuss the risks of 'checking in', tagging people in photos, sharing inappropriate pictures, meeting online friends in person, making offensive comments and other behaviour that is considered unacceptable.

- **Does your child know how to report cyberbullying and other kinds of abusive content?**

Although there are huge benefits to being connected through social media, your child may experience some form of online bullying or harassment. If this happens, it is important that they know how to manage and report this behaviour. Together with your child, check the safety resources for individual social media services and look for information about how to block and report other users. Read The eSafety Guide for more online safety advice including how to report inappropriate content on different platforms. <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>

You can also report online harm to eSafety. <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>

When your child first starts to use social media, talk with them about how to do this in a way that you are both comfortable with. Help them to understand why and how you would like to support them as they begin to explore. It may be tricky having this conversation, particularly with tweens and teens, but getting their agreement will keep the lines of communication open between you and ensure that they feel able to come to you for help if they encounter any problems. This is especially important so you can continue to support them.

Talk with your child about which social media services they would like to use.

Come to an agreement you are both comfortable with about how they can use these services. You might discuss the following:

- Which types of content they can post – it is a good idea to look at examples together and discuss the pros and cons of different posts.
- How often they should post.
- How often you are comfortable with them checking social media.

You can read more about creating a family online safety contract in online safety basics.

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/>

Another strategy is to become their friend or follow their social media accounts. This will enable you to observe what they are doing online and support them to make safer choices about what they share and how they share it. Try to resist talking about the specifics of their online activity unless, for example, you are worried about particular things they have posted — and keep your comments offline. If you intervene too much or comment publicly, it can embarrass them and break their trust. This may prompt them to use a separate profile without your knowledge or restrict what you can see by sharing to restricted groups of friends or followers, before you think they are ready to venture out on their own.

NAME	DESCRIPTION	MINIMUM AGE
 Among Us	Among Us is a cartoon-like strategy game that is based on teamwork and betrayal, players are either 'crewmates' or 'imposters'.	10 according to the Entertainment Software Rating Board.
 TikTok	TikTok (formerly Music.ly) is a social media app for creating and sharing short videos	13+ according to Tik Tok
 Snapchat	Snapchat is a messaging app that lets you send images, videos or instant text messages to friends.	13+ according to Snap chat
 Instagram	Instagram is a social media service designed for people to share photos and videos.	13+ according to Instagram
 Minecraft	Minecraft is a virtual building game that allows players to build with a variety of blocks in a 3D environment to create their own world.	10+ according to Minecraft
 Roblox	Roblox is a game-creation platform that allows users to design their own games and play a wide variety of games created by other users.	8+ According to ROBlox
 Facebook	Facebook is a social media service that lets you create a page about yourself, an organisation or group. You can add friends, write on people's pages, share photos and videos including live videos.	13+ According to FACEbook
 Fortnite	Fortnite is a third-person shooter game where up to 100 players compete to be the last person or team standing.	13+ according to Fortnite
 Clash Royale	Clash Royale is an online multiplayer card game featuring characters from the empire building game, <u>Clash of Clans</u> . Clash Royale players can collect and upgrade cards through in-app purchases, win trophies and crowns, and create or join battle communities to share cards and win territories. Players can compete from anywhere in the world and communicate with each other through text messaging chat.	9+ according to Clash Royale

 Facebook Messenger	<p>Facebook Messenger, commonly known as Messenger, is a messaging app that is accessible within Facebook. You can instant message, share photos, videos, audio recordings or create a group chat.</p>	<p>13+ according to Facebook messenger</p>
 Messenger Kids	<p>Messenger Kids is a free video calling and messaging app owned by Facebook. It is aimed at children under 13 years and is designed for parents to monitor and control. It allows kids to send messages and make one-on-one or group video calls using features like stickers, GIFs, drawing tools, filters, reactions and sound effects.</p>	<p>6+ according to Messenger Kids</p>
 Pokemon Go	<p>Pokémon Go is a hunting game that uses your phone's GPS and camera to create a world inhabited by Pokémon that you must catch to advance through the game.</p>	<p>13+ minimum age to create an account</p>
 Subway Surfer	<p>Subway Surfers is a single player mobile gaming app and website developed by Kiloo. The aim of the game is to outrun a train inspector while dodging oncoming trains, barriers and other objects.</p>	<p>9+ according to subway surfers</p>
 WhatsApp	<p>WhatsApp is a free messaging, voice and video calling app that uses end-to-end encryption. All messages flowing through the platform are secured so that only the sender and the recipient can view them.</p>	<p>13+ according to WhatsApp</p>
 YouTube	<p>YouTube is a user-generated video sharing platform that allows people to discover, watch and share videos.</p>	<p>13+ according to YouTube</p>
 Grand Theft Auto V	<p>Grand Theft Auto V (GTAV) is an online action-adventure game made by Rockstar Games. It is one of sixteen titles in the Grand Theft Auto (GTA) franchise.</p>	<p>18+ according to Grand Theft Auto V</p>

If you have any questions, please do hesitate to ask.

Kind regards,

Kate Flynn
Principal