A SAFER START TO SOCIAL MEDIA

Advice to share with your child when they first start out in the world of likes and shares

When ARE they old enough?

Social platforms like Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook require users to be 13+ (16 for WhatsApp), but these sites and apps cannot verify age. You can manage accessibility with parental controls, but if your child is interested in social media at an earlier age, it's best to be open and discuss their motivations and whether it's really the right time for them. Remember: allowing hundreds of people to comment on their posts can affect their self-esteem, so consider whether they are ready for this.

Explore the safety features first

Most social media sites have their own safety features and reporting procedures. If your child is setting up a new social media account, help them explore these settings and tools. For example, select the right privacy and security options, and check how to block or report other users if something goes wrong online.

Be aware that others can see your location

Location services on apps can be a fun way of showing friends and family where you are. But if your child doesn't turn off settings on certain apps, others can track their whereabouts in real time. Help your child manage their location settings so they are sharing wisely. For example, Snapchat users can switch to 'Ghost Mode' to avoid being tracked.

Not all followers can be trusted

Talk to your child about only accepting friend requests from people they know and trust. Explore settings to limit who can see their posts. It's better that only people they know and get on with can view, like or comment on their posts and activity.

Think twice before clicking

Tell your child to avoid opening links that they are sent in private messages. Even if it appears to be a message from a friend, their friend's account may have been hacked. The link may be a scam or lead them to an inappropriate site.

Think about granny when sharing

Yes, seriously. Encourage your child to follow the 'Granny Rule': if you wouldn't be happy with your granny seeing it, don't post it! It'll get your child thinking before sharing something they may regret – especially as it could be online forever.

Visit **vodafone.co.uk/digitalparenting** for more social media safety tips and security settings.

Check the safety features! A friend might turn on location tracking as a joke – or your phone may auto-update – so regularly check your settings are as you want them.

38% of UK children aged 12-16 believe their parents let them use social media too young.

74% of children aged 12-15 have their own social media profile.

Are you smartphone secure?

Snip and stick. Read p8 before you cut out.

AUTO-LOCK

CHECK: Is your phone set to auto-lock? Protect your device with a pattern, PIN code, password or fingerprint.

PASSWORDS

CHECK: Are your passwords tough enough? Use upper- and lower-case letters, numerals and special characters (!*%). Keep them different for each site.

CAMERA

CHECK: Do you think about what you snap? Images accidentally shared can can give away private information, such as location (e.g. school uniforms, street signs and door numbers).

PRIVACY

CHECK: Are you keeping things private? Social media privacy policies and settings change regularly, so check them every term!

LOCATION

CHECK: Have you turned off location-sharing functions? Only leave location-related services on when you need them, and only for those who need them. Otherwise, turn off!

BLOCKING

CHECK: Do you know how to spot trolls and effectively block them? People won't be told you've blocked them, so don't worry about making someone feel bad or angry.

REPORTING

CHECK: Do you know how to take appropriate action? Tell the platform you're using or an adult you trust if something is upsetting you online.

Tool checklist