

Social Media

Social media is any digital tool that allows users to quickly create and share content with the public. Social media encompasses a wide range of websites and apps.

Social media platforms popular among young people include Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat and TikTok.

What makes social media unique is that it is both broad and relatively uncensored. While many social media companies impose some limitations—such as taking down images that display violence or nudity—there are much fewer limitations on what someone can share than there with other means of mass communication like newspapers, radio stations, and television channels.

Anyone with internet access can sign up for a social media account. They can use that account to share whatever content they choose to, and the content they share reaches anyone who visits their page or profile.

Children and teenagers use social media to have fun, make and maintain friendships, share interests, explore identities and develop relationships with family. It is an extension of their offline and face-to-face interactions. For older teenagers especially, it is often a key part of how they connect with friends.

Social media can connect children and teenagers to online global communities based on shared interests.

Social media can also pose risks. For young people, these risks include:

- being exposed to inappropriate or upsetting content, like mean, aggressive, violent or sexual comments or images
- uploading inappropriate content, like embarrassing or provocative photos or videos of themselves or others
- sharing personal information with strangers – for example, phone numbers, date of birth or location
- cyberbullying

Resources

Social Media and friendships

Social Media safety for teens

Social Media, Young People and Mental Health

Social Media Benefits and Risks: Children and Teenagers

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/teens/entertainment-technology/digital-life/social-media>

Social Media, Online Gaming and Keeping Children Safe Online

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/social-media-online-gaming-and-keeping-children-safe-online>

UK Safer Internet Centre

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/young-people/resources-for-11-19s>

Social Media and Mental Health

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/social-media-and-mental-health.htm>