

Popular Social Media Sites

What Parents Need to Know

- **Facebook**

- *What is it?* Social media platform where users connect by “friending” each other and share pictures and messages on “walls.”
- *What you need to know:* Privacy settings frequently change with Facebook, and typically the default settings are set to public, meaning anyone who searches for your student’s name will be able to find him/her and see what is posted. Users can adjust settings so that friends, friends of friends, or anyone can see and even download what they post. **Facebook’s Terms of Service require users to be at least 13**, but often children make up a birthday to create profiles earlier.



- **Twitter**

- *What is it?* Site that allows people to send 140 character or less messages called “tweets” to followers. The tweets are displayed on a wall or thread.
- *What you need to know:* While there are settings that make tweets private, so that only people you approve can see what you send, most children opt to keep their account public. Talk with them about what they post and how quickly it can spread. Users can delete tweets after posting them, but followers can see what you write and save it.



- **Instagram**

- *What is it?* Platform that allows users to take, edit, and share photos and 15-second videos either publicly or to followers.
- *What you need to know:* Like with Facebook, children may determine their self-worth based on how many “likes” or comments they get on a picture/video. Just like Twitter, although you can make it so that only approved users can see what is posted, most children opt to keep their account public. You can also now private message on Instagram—strangers can send private messages to users, and children may be more likely to share inappropriate pictures this way. **Instagram’s Terms of Service state that users should be at least 13.**



- **Snapchat**

- *What is it?* An app that lets users put a time limit on the pictures or videos (“snapchats”) they send to others before they disappear.
- *What you need to know:* Most teens use the app to send goofy or embarrassing pictures to each other. However, because pictures seem to disappear, it could encourage people to send photos with risky content. It also is not true that the snapchats completely disappear. The person receiving the photo can take a screenshot of the picture before it disappears.



- **Tumblr**

- *What is it?* Combination of a blog and twitter—like a scrapbook of text, photos, videos. Users create and can follow these short blogs (“tumblelogs”) that can be seen by anyone if the tumblelog is made public.
- *What you need to know:* Images of porn, self-harm, violence and offensive language can be easy to find on these sites. Also, the first tumblelog an individual creates is automatically public. You can create a second page to make private, where individuals have to use a password to access.



- **Vine**

- *What is it?* App that lets users post and watch looping six-second videos.
- *What you need to know:* Teens often use the app to create and share silly videos of themselves, their friends, and their families. The app is full of inappropriate videos—there are no filters in regard to nudity, drug use, etc. Anything you post, users that you follow, and comments you make on videos are all public by default. You can change the privacy settings on the videos you post (to approve followers).



- **Kik Messenger**

- *What is it?* App that serves as an alternative to standard texting. The app doesn't have message limits and uses data rather than text messages to communicate.
- *What you need to know:* The app encourages users to invite everyone in their phone's address book to join the app. The app also links to other Kik-enabled apps (encouraging purchases by users). The app also uses real names to identify users, and some of the apps associated with Kik (OinkText) allows for communication with strangers.



- **Ask.fm**

- *What is it?* Social website that lets kids ask questions and answer questions posted by other users. At times, they can do so anonymously.
- *What you need to know:* Bullying can be a huge concern on this site, especially given the anonymity that can occur. Anonymous posts are optional—encourage your child to disable anonymous posts if they use this site. It is also possible to link this site to Facebook, allowing for more people to see a user's questions and answers.

