

Protect Children

Social Media Platforms Parents Should Know About

Introduction

Social media is a significant part of how children and young people communicate, learn, socialise, and express themselves. These spaces can offer **creativity, community and connection**, but they can also expose users to risks such as scams, misinformation, cyberbullying, harmful content and interactions.

This guide gives a brief overview of some of the most used platforms, including what young people use for, key safety and wellbeing considerations, and useful privacy information for parents. Platform popularity and how children use them can **vary between countries, age groups and communities**, and many platforms can be accessed both through apps and web browsers.

Instagram

Instagram is a photo and video sharing platform, where users can post photos, stories, and short videos "reels".

Age requirement: 13 to open an account. **NB! similar to Facebook.**

Benefits:

- Creative self-expression and inspiration
- Easy way to stay connected with friends and communities
- Features such as private account and Close Friends are available

Risks:

- Pressure around appearance and popularity
- Cyberbullying, scams and unwanted messages are common
- Adding locations on posts and screenshots can affect privacy

Youtube

Youtube is a video sharing platform with long-form and short form videos, and livestreams.

Age requirement: 13 for own account, **under 13** Youtube Kids/Supervised account.

Benefits:

- Educational and child-friendly content available
- Children can learn new skills
- Creating videos can encourage creativity

Risks:

- Unrestricted side can have inappropriate content
- Comment sections can be toxic
- Posting videos can create privacy/safety risks

Snapchat

Snapchat is a messaging app around disappearing photos, videos and chats ("snaps").

Age requirement: 13 to open an account.

Benefits:

- Easy and casual communication with friends
- Fun and creative features
- Disappearing communication can feel more private

Risks:

- Snap Map may reveal live location of the user
- Risky sharing due to disappearing communication
- Strangers and predators may target younger users

TikTok

TikTok is a short-video platform focused on trends, entertainment, viral content and music.

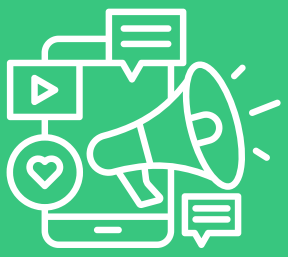
Age requirement: 13 to open an account with extra restrictions for under 18.

Benefits:

- Creative and entertaining content
- Educational content and useful tips
- Strong sense of community and trends

Risks:

- Highly addictive scrolling and video stream is endless
- Harmful or age-inappropriate content
- Privacy and oversharing concerns



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Whatsapp

WhatsApp is a popular encrypted messaging platform.

Age requirement: 13 to open an account
NB! similar to Facebook Messenger

Benefits:

- Easy communication with friends and family
- Free international messaging and group chats
- Encrypted private conversations

Risks:

- Group chats may involve bullying or peer pressure
- Scams and misinformation spreads easily
- Difficult for parents to supervise private chats

Signal

Signal is a messaging platform.

Age requirement: 13-years-old

Benefits:

- Very secure and private
- End-to-end encryption
- Messages can be set to delete themselves after a certain time
- Phone number is required to contact a person

Risks:

- If any abuse happens, retrieving the messages is very difficult for law enforcement if they are deleted.
- Any alarming messages should be documented immediately.

Telegram

Telegram is a messaging platform with large group chats and channels.

Age requirement: EU 18+ to open an account.

Benefits:

- Strong privacy and encryption features
- Large communities and interest-based channels
- Users can hide phone numbers

Risks:

- Harmful or illegal content accessible
- Harmful interactions through misuse private communication features

Parental Controls

Parental controls can help families create safer and healthier digital experiences. Download our Parental Safety Control Guide for more help on how to use some of the most common parental tools, what they can help with, and their important limitations.

Other **platforms to be mindful of** include: Jodel, BeReal, Kik, Twitch, Reddit, and previously mentioned Facebook and Facebook Messenger