

# Social Media and Young People

Volume | 415



Edited by Justin Healey

**ISSUES**  
**IN SOCIETY**

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Volume | 415

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# INTRODUCTION

**Social Media and Young People** is Volume 415 in the 'Issues in Society' series of educational resource books. The aim of this series is to offer current, diverse information about important issues in our world, from an Australian perspective.

## KEY ISSUES IN THIS TOPIC

Social media has revolutionised how most of us communicate; no one more so than teenagers and young adults, who spend on average 2-3 hours a day connected to social media sites.

Online social networking provides young people with a range of positive opportunities to maintain social connections and share emotional support, learning and an almost infinite array of interests. However, social media use can also have negative impacts, such as excessive use, social isolation, loss of privacy, cyberbullying, anxiety and self-esteem pressures.

This book examines the prevalence of social media use by young Australians, and explores its impacts on their wellbeing. The book also offers helpful tips on appropriate ways of using and staying safe on social media sites. How do young, developing digital natives get the balance right when so much of their lives is being lived online?

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Titles in the 'Issues in Society' series are individual resource books which provide an overview on a specific subject comprised of facts and opinions.

The information in this resource book is not from any single author, publication or organisation. The unique value of the 'Issues in Society' series lies in its diversity of content and perspectives.

**The content comes from a wide variety of sources and includes:**

- Newspaper reports and opinion pieces
- Website fact sheets
- Magazine and journal articles
- Statistics and surveys
- Government reports
- Literature from special interest groups

## CRITICAL EVALUATION

As the information reproduced in this book is from a number of different sources, readers should always be aware of the origin of the text and whether or not the source is likely to be expressing a particular bias or agenda.

It is hoped that, as you read about the many aspects of the issues explored in this book, you will critically evaluate the information presented. In some cases, it is important that you decide whether you are being presented with facts or opinions. Does the writer give a biased or an unbiased report? If an opinion is being expressed, do you agree with the writer?

## EXPLORING ISSUES

The 'Exploring issues' section at the back of this book features a range of ready-to-use worksheets relating to the articles and issues raised in this book. The activities and exercises in these worksheets are suitable for use by students at middle secondary school level and beyond.

## FURTHER RESEARCH

This title offers a useful starting point for those who need convenient access to information about the issues involved. However, it is only a starting point. The 'Web links' section at the back of this book contains a list of useful websites which you can access for more reading on the topic.

### SOCIAL MEDIA AND KIDS

RESEARCH FINDINGS BY NEILSEN ONLINE, PROVIDED COURTESY OF THE OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN'S ESafety COMMISSIONER

#### IT'S SOCIAL – HOW KIDS ARE CONNECTING ONLINE

##### Aussie kids are online

- There were 1.49 million children and young people online during April 2015
- 1.04 million or 70% of them accessed social media or game sites.

##### They're spending a lot of time socialising

Children and young people spent a total of 5.4 million hours accessing social media or game sites in April 2015.

##### Percentage of time kids online spent on websites, by type of website:

- Social networking\* 32%
- Games 14%
- Videos, movies and music\*\* 13%
- Consumer electronics, telecommunications and general commerce 11%
- Education, careers and news 9%

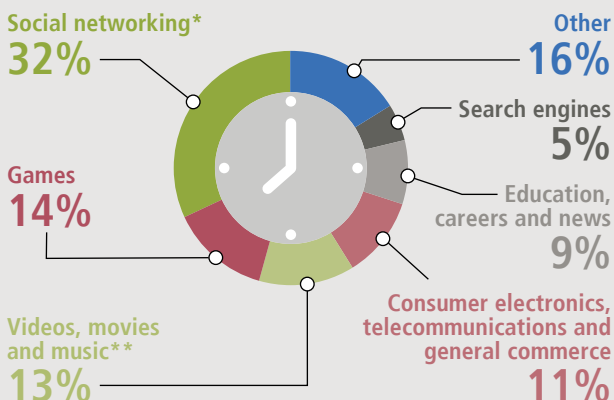


- Search engines 5%
- Other 16%.

#### Children and young people spent a total of

**5.4 million hours** accessing social media or game sites in April 2015.

##### % of time kids online spent on websites, by type of website:



Note: Educational activities can be undertaken on sites other than those classified under the education category.  
Other category covers a wide variety of websites not classified elsewhere.  
\* Includes YouTube. \*\* Excludes YouTube.

##### They accessed loads of content on social media sites

Children and young people viewed 107,253,000 web pages on social media or game sites during April 2015 or 34% of all web pages of content viewed by that group.

##### And they visited often

They visited social networking sites 13,583,000 times or 69% of all website visits during April 2015.

Source: Nielson Online, April 2015.

- Data excludes mobile or tablet app data. Includes mobile browsing data which is either m. sites or .mobi sites.
- Game sites included due to many sites providing social networking functionality.
- Metrics relate to use of social media services by Australian youth aged 2-17 years.

© Australian Government.

Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner (2015). *Social media and kids: It's social – how kids are connecting online.* Retrieved from [www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au) on 16 August 2016.



## Social media explained

**S**ocial media are forms of electronic communication – such as websites for social networking and microblogging, digital platforms and apps – through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos). Young people use a number of different social media platforms for sharing thoughts, images and achievements; convenient communication and making plans; building friendships and connecting with family and new people; relaxation; and checking out what other people are doing. Following are examples of the most popular social media platforms:

### Facebook

Social networking site that allows members to connect and share pictures, links, videos, and other content with their 'friends' who are other users that they have connected with. Interaction between 'friends' can occur publicly (via comments and 'liking' shared content), or privately (via private messaging).

### YouTube

User-generated video sharing platform which allows people to discover, watch and share videos.

### Instagram

Free image sharing service used mainly on mobile devices. People typically 'follow' people they don't know such as celebrities, as well as pages of personal interest content.

### Tumblr

Blogging website, on which people publish and share their own content with people who follow them.

### LinkedIn

Professional networking site used to create a professional profile, explore jobs and schools, and stay up to date with changes happening in users' related industry.

### Twitter

Information network which functions in real time and allows users to find their preferred information streams and 'follow' the related conversation. Posts are called tweets, which are brief and only limited to 140 characters or less.

### WhatsApp

Messaging app that lets you contact friends using internet data or wifi, allowing users to send messages to a group of friends at one time.

### Snapchat

Mobile phone messaging app that allows you to send videos or photos to one or more people at a time. Users decide how long the messages will be viewed for and who can view them.

### Tinder

Location-based social discovery dating app that facilitates communication between mutually interested users.

### Online games

Many games, such as World of Warcraft and Pokémon Go, enable social interaction within them, and are therefore also considered forms of social media.

**Sources:** ReachOut.com (2016). *Social media 101*; Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner, *Games, apps and social networking*.

# Benefits of internet and social media

## PROFESSIONAL FACT SHEET ADVICE FROM REACHOUT

The internet and social media provide young people with a range of benefits, and opportunities to empower themselves in a variety of ways. Young people can maintain social connections and support networks that otherwise wouldn't be possible, and can access more information than ever before. The communities and social interactions young people form online can be invaluable for bolstering and developing young people's self-confidence and social skills.

### *This will help you to:*

- Understand some of the benefits of internet and social media
- Understand why technology is so attractive to young people
- Understand the positive uses of social media and online spaces
- Talk to young people about what they use technology for.

The use of social media and networking services such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat have become an integral part of Australians' daily lives. While many associate social media with a degradation of young people's social networks and communication skills, a recent literature review published by the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre found that social networking services actually

play a vital role in young people's lives – delivering educational outcomes; facilitating supportive relationships; identity formation; and, promoting a sense of belonging and self-esteem.

In collaboration with young people, we've documented some of the positive benefits of internet and social media for young people.

### **Young people as social participants and active citizens**

Social networking services can provide an accessible and powerful toolkit for highlighting and acting on issues and causes that affect and interest young people. Social networking services can be used for organising activities, events, or groups to showcase issues and opinions and make a wider audience aware of them e.g. coordinating band activities, fundraisers, and creating awareness of various causes.

A recent literature review found that social networking services actually play a vital role in young people's lives – delivering educational outcomes; facilitating supportive relationships; identity formation; and, promoting a sense of belonging and self-esteem.







### Young people developing a voice and building trust

Social networking services can be used to hone debating and discussion skills in a local, national or international context. This helps users develop public

ways of presenting themselves. Personal skills are very important in this context: to make, develop and keep friendships, and to be regarded as a trusted connection within a network. Social networking services can provide young people with opportunities to learn how

## Social media statistics in Australia

*The following monthly statistics have been reproduced courtesy of David Cowling at [SocialMediaNews.com.au](http://SocialMediaNews.com.au)*

*Current as at January 2017*

1. Facebook – 16,000,000 users
2. YouTube – 14,800,000 UAVs
3. WordPress.com – 5,150,000
4. Instagram – 5,000,000 monthly active Australian users (Facebook/Instagram data)
5. Snapchat – 4,000,000 daily active Australian users (Snapchat data)
6. Tumblr – 4,000,000
7. LinkedIn – 3,600,000
8. WhatsApp – 3,100,000 active Australian users (30% increase since 2015)
9. Twitter – 2,800,000 monthly active Australian users approx
10. TripAdvisor – 2,800,000
11. Tinder – 2,000,000 Australian users (estimated)
12. Blogspot- 1,700,000
13. Yelp – 1,550,000
14. Flickr – 500,000
15. Pinterest – 280,000
16. Reddit – 100,000

17. MySpace – 80,000
18. Google Plus – 60,000 monthly active Australian users approx (estimated)
19. StumbleUpon – 39,000
20. Foursquare/Swarm – 11,000
21. Digg – 10,000
22. Periscope – 9,000
23. Delicious – 8,000

*(All figures represent the number of Unique Australian Visitors [UAVs] to that website over the monthly period – unless otherwise stated above).*

#### **Key points to note:**

- 65.8% of the total Australian population is an active monthly user on Facebook.
- 1 in 6 Australians are a daily user on Snapchat.
- Over the year we have seen both Instagram and Snapchat grow their Australian user base considerably.
- Twitter has experienced stagnant user growth over the past 2 years and has a considerable churn rate of new users signing up but then never using the service.
- TripAdvisor has seen a slight increase over the month as the summer period entices people to holiday and travel.

Cowling, D (1 February 2017). 'Social media statistics Australia – January 2017', *Social Media News*. Retrieved from [www.socialmedianews.com.au](http://www.socialmedianews.com.au) on 16 February 2017.

# Minimum age requirements for social media

**M**ost social media services and apps require users to be 13 years old to join, due to a US law called the *Children's Online Privacy Protection Act* which applies to the online collection of personal information by persons or entities under United States jurisdiction from children under 13 years of age.

COPPA details what a website operator must include in a privacy policy within its Terms of Use, when and how to seek verifiable consent from a parent or guardian, and what responsibilities an operator has to protect children's privacy and safety online including restrictions on the marketing to those under 13. While children under 13 can legally give out personal information with their parents' permission, many social media sites disallow underage children from using their services altogether due to the cost and work involved in complying with the law.

Following is a list of the major social media platforms and their minimum age limits:

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| ASK.fm               | 13 years  |
| Blogspot             | 13 years  |
| Club Penguin         | All ages (aimed at 6-14 year olds)  |
| Delicious.com        | 13 years  |
| Digg                 | 13 years  |
| EA (Electronic Arts) | 18 years (parental permission required up to 17 years)                            |
| Facebook             | 13 years  |
| Facebook Messenger   | 13 years  |
| Flickr               | 13 years  |
| Foursquare           | 13 years  |
| Google+              | 13 years  |
| Instagram            | 13 years  |
| Keek                 | 13 years (parental permission required up to 17 years)                            |
| Kik                  | 13+ (parental permission required up to 17 years)                                 |
| Linkedin             | 14 years  |
| Minecraft            | All ages (parental permission required for mojang account if user under 13 years) |
| Moshi Monsters       | All ages (aimed at 6-12 year olds. If user is under 13, parental email required)  |
| MySpace              | 13 years  |
| Periscope            | 13 years  |
| Pinterest            | 13 years  |
| Reddit               | 13 years  |
| Skype                | 18 years (parental permission required up to 17 years)                            |
| Snapchat             | 13 years  |
| Steam                | 13 years  |
| StumbleUpon          | 13 years  |
| Tinder               | 13 years  |
| TripAdvisor          | 13 years  |
| Tumblr               | 13 years  |
| Twitter              | 13 years  |
| Vimeo                | 13 years (parental permission required up to 17 years)                            |
| Vine                 | 13 years  |
| WhatsApp             | 13 years  |
| WordPress.com        | 13 years  |
| Yelp                 | 13 years (minimum age 18 years old to purchase a Yelp Deal or Yelp Certificate)   |
| YouTube              | 13 years  |

to function successfully in a community, navigating a public social space and developing social norms and skills as participants in peer groups.

## Young people as content creators, managers and distributors

Social networking services rely on active participation: users take part in activities and discussions on a site, and upload, modify or create content. This supports creativity and can support discussion about ownership of content and data management.

Young people who use social networking services to showcase content – music, film, photography or writing

– need to know what permissions they are giving the host service, so that they can make informed decisions about how and what they place on the site.

Users might also want to explore additional licensing options that may be available to them within services – for example Creative Commons licensing – to allow them to share their work with other people in a range of ways.

## Young people as collaborators and team players

Social networking services are designed to support users working, thinking and acting together. They also require listening and compromising skills. Young



people may need to ask others for help and advice in using services, or understand how platforms work by observing others, particularly in complex gaming or virtual environments. Once users have developed confidence in a new environment, they will also have gained the experience to help others.

### **Young people as explorers and learners**

Social networks encourage discovery. If someone is interested in certain books, bands, recipes or ideas, it's likely that their interest will be catered for by a social networking service or group within a service. If users are looking for something more specific or unusual then they could create their own groups or social networking sites. Social networking services can help young people develop their interests and find other people who share the same interests. They can help introduce young people to new things and ideas, and deepen appreciation of existing interests. They can also help broaden users' horizons by helping them discover how other people live and think in all parts of the world.

### **Young people becoming independent and building resilience**

Online spaces are social spaces, and social networking services offer similar opportunities to those of offline social spaces: places for young people to be with friends or to explore alone, building independence and developing the skills they need to recognise and manage risk, to learn to judge and evaluate situations, and to deal effectively with a world that can sometimes be dangerous or hostile. However, such skills can't

be built in isolation, and are more likely to develop if supported. Going to a social networking service for the first time as a young person alone can be compared to a young person's first solo trip to a city centre, and thus it is important for a young person to know how to stay safe in this new environment.

### **Young people developing key and real world skills**

Managing an online presence and being able to interact effectively online is becoming an increasingly important skill in the workplace. Being able to quickly adapt to new technologies, services and environments is already regarded as a highly valuable skill by employers, and can facilitate both formal and informal learning. Most services are text-based, which encourages literacy skills, including interpretation, evaluation and contextualisation.

### **Working with parents**

Sometimes parents get nervous about their teenager using the internet or social media. ReachOut Parents has information for carers and parents of teenagers to help them understand social media and help their teenager use it safely.

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ReachOut.com. *Benefits of internet and social media*. Retrieved from <http://au.professionals.reachout.com> on 18 July 2016.

# AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN SPENDING MORE TIME ON SCREENS

A majority of Australian children are spending large amounts of time on screen activities in excess of the recommended 2-hour daily limit for screen entertainment, according to research by the [Australian Institute of Family Studies](#)

The *Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* has tracked the screen habits of 4,000 pre-schoolers through to their early teens over the last decade, recording a steady increase in time spent watching television, on computers and playing electronic games.

Institute Director, Anne Hollonds said by the age of 12-13 years old, Australian children spent an average of 3 hours per weekday and almost 4 hours per weekend day using screens, or around 20 per cent of their waking time on weekdays and 30 per cent on weekends.

“By their early teens, 64 per cent of 12-13 year olds are spending considerably more than the Australian Government’s daily recommended 2-hour limit on screen time for entertainment,” she said.

LSAC Manager, Associate Professor Ben Edwards said that watching television was the main contributor to screen time across all age groups, peaking during the late afternoon, with a smaller peak for younger children in the morning.

“Children watched more TV on weekends than weekdays, with overall viewing rates high at age 4-5, reducing at 6-7 and then edging their way back up again every two years after that, to peak when kids are 12-13 years old,” he said.

“However, parents can help curtail their children’s screen time by setting rules about watching television and not allowing TVs into kids’ bedrooms.

“The proportion of children watching 2 or more hours daily TV was higher in families with a large number of TVs, when there was a TV in the child’s bedroom and in homes where there are no rules limiting the amount of TV children can watch.

“Among households with more

“While technology can unlock new skills and there is value in children using computers for gathering information and socialising, it may be time to have another look at how realistic these guidelines are.”

educated parents there were fewer children watching 2 hours of TV during the week. But by the weekend, all kids were watching roughly the same amount.

“However, kids who take part in a team sport or activities, like art or music were less likely to exceed the 2 hours, particularly boys whose usage dropped significantly compared to boys without extra-curricular activities.”

Professor Edwards said the study also examined children’s enjoyment of physical activities and their physical wellbeing and found a link to less screen time.

“Boys and girls from 10-13 years who reported that they were ‘fit’ were significantly less likely to spend

more than 2 hours with screens on a weekday, compared to those who said they were ‘unfit,’” he said.

“Boys and girls who classified themselves as ‘high energy’ were also significantly less likely to be watching more than 2 hours of TV a day. These children tended to be less interested in screens and had more time for physical activities.

“At the same age, children who spent more time on devices reported feeling less energetic and fit.

“Our research suggests that if children are offered physical activities they enjoy, they will tend to reduce their screen time.”

Professor Edwards said that as screens become more ubiquitous in adults and children’s lives, expecting



3 HOURS WEEKDAYS  
4 HOURS WEEKENDS

*By 12-13 years old,  
children spend on  
average up to 30%  
of their daily waking  
time on screens*



By 13 years of age, the daily average was 150 minutes watching TV compared to 60 minutes on a computer and 45 minutes gaming.

children to stick to 2 hours of daily screen entertainment might no longer be achievable.

“While technology can unlock new skills and there is value in children using computers for gathering information and socialising, it may be time to have another look at how realistic these guidelines are,” he said.

“However, some management of screen time is important so kids have a quality engagement with television, computers or games and they are not undertaking these activities at the expense of keeping fit and well.”

© Commonwealth of Australia 2016.

Australian Institute of Family Studies (20 September 2016). *Australian children spending more time on screens* (Media release). Retrieved from [www.aifs.gov.au](http://www.aifs.gov.au) on 21 September 2016.

## Children's screen time

### Key findings from the *Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Annual Statistical Report 2015*

A majority of Australian children are spending more than the recommended two-hour daily limit for screen time (watching television, on computers and playing electronic games). At 4-5 years old, children average more than two hours screen time per weekday. By 12-13 years old, this increases to more than three hours average per weekday and almost four hours per weekend day. This means that up to 30% of a child's waking time is spent in front of a screen. The study found that children who engage in physical activities that they enjoy, will tend to also spend less time in front of screens.

#### Screen time by the numbers

##### Television

- TV is children's main form of screen time, accounting for about 60% of total screen time.
- By 13 years of age, the daily average was 150 minutes watching TV compared to 60 minutes on a computer and 45 minutes gaming.
- TV viewing is higher on weekends than on weekdays.
- Children who watch TV for more than two hours a day are more likely to have:
  - Parents with low levels of education
  - A TV in their bedroom, and
  - No household rules limiting TV viewing.
- The more TVs there are in a house, the more likely a child is to watch excessive TV.
- Around 60% of 4-5 year olds reported having more than two household TVs.
- Around 20% of 6-7 year olds have a TV in their bedroom; at 12-13 years old this climbs to 45%.

##### Electronic games and computers

- As children get older, their computer and electronic game time increases. The percentage of children spending at least one hour per weekday on a computer or gaming increases from 25% at 6 years of age to 53% by 11 years. This may be due to increased availability of devices, but perhaps also to increased computer-based homework.
- Children spend more time on computers and games on the weekend. Boys play more games than girls, with 85% of 12-13 year boys gaming for at least an hour per weekend day, compared to 58% of girls.

© Commonwealth of Australia 2016.

Australian Institute of Family Studies (September 2016). *Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, 2015 Report*. Retrieved from <http://aifs.gov.au> on 21 September 2016.

# IS TWO HOURS OF SCREEN TIME REALLY TOO MUCH FOR KIDS?

TABLETS WERE NOT INVENTED WHEN THE ORIGINAL RULES ON SCREEN TIME FOR CHILDREN WERE DEVELOPED, OBSERVES **JOANNE ORLANDO**

One of the most frustrating issues modern parents face is how to manage children's screen time. Official guidelines say kids aged five to 18 years should spend no more than two hours a day using screens, and children under two years should not use a screen at all. But in a world dominated by tablets and mobile phones, these limits are proving to be virtually impossible to uphold.

A recent online poll of 18,000 children by ABC children's program *Behind the News* found that 56% of respondents exceed that two-hour daily limit.

A survey of 2,620 Australian children aged eight to 16 years had similar results. The study showed that 45% of eight-year-olds to 80% of 16-year-olds exceed the recommended less than two hours per day limit.

## Guidelines obsolete

We tend to justify children's 'overuse' in terms of the irresponsibility of youth. But a different and very plausible explanation is that the guidelines we use to benchmark how long children should spend on a screen are out of date.

They were actually developed years before tablets and the many devices we use today were even invented.

The screen time guidelines we currently use were developed by The American Academy of Pediatrics in the 1990s to direct children's television viewing. In particular, they were a response to kids watching violent content.

While the guidelines may have been relevant at that time, screens have changed a lot in the past 20 years, and children are showing us that an ironclad two hours is no longer workable if you're growing up circa 2016.

The continued use of these guidelines has left many parents feeling frustrated, guilty or simply unsure about what to think or what to do. Parents try to get their child to stick to the time limits but it's just not possible when they still have three hours of homework left to do on their laptop.

Official guidelines say kids aged five to 18 years should spend no more than two hours a day using screens, and children under two years should not use a screen at all. But in a world dominated by tablets and mobile phones, these limits are proving to be virtually impossible to uphold.



## Kids and excessive time online

According to the Children's eSafety Commissioner, spending a lot of time online can significantly impact health, family/social life and academic performance.

Signs you are spending excessive time online include:

- Persistent eye strain, headaches, disturbed sleep
- Online activities interfering with relationships, health and wellbeing, decline in school work and performance
- Prioritising online activities over everything else
- Withdrawing from 'real world' activities and friends
- Constant talk about particular sites, e.g. online games.

Source: Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner, *Balancing online time*.

Sometimes, guidelines, rules, and even laws, are legally binding but so out of date that they no longer provide meaningful support.

For example, it was once a requirement in some parts of the United States and Canada for producers to make their margarine different colours to ensure consumers didn't mix it up with butter. The last place in North America to stop this requirement was Quebec, in 2008.

While interesting and even amusing, many question the relevance of these laws to modern life.

It seems traditional guidelines that advise parents and educators on children's screen use have followed the same path and just don't fit with reality of today's technology-driven world.

## A rethink in the works

In a nod to the increasing ubiquity of technology in our world, the American Academy of Paediatrics announced in October last year that it is beginning the process of revising its guidelines for children and screens. The academy says it has realised that in a world where screen time is becoming simply 'time', its policies must evolve or become obsolete.

The new formalised guidelines will be published later this year and many expect screen time allowed to be lengthened. It is unrealistic for high school students to only spend two hours per day on screens, particularly when school work obliges them to do that or more.

Time is also not necessarily the best measure to ensure children's screen use is part of a healthy and balanced approach to life.

All screen use is not the same and it is expected that the new formalised guidelines will also acknowledge that children can use screens for very different purposes.

There's consumption, there's creation and there's communication. There's a big difference between endless hours of watching YouTube videos of chocolate sweets being unboxed to videochatting with a parent who is away from home.

Compulsive or non-stop checking of texts, emails, news feeds, websites or other apps can interfere with anyone's daily life, work and relationships ...

... If a child is spending most of their day and night on a screen, then that needs reassessment and management. But the ultimate message is that whatever resource we use to manage children's screen usage, they ultimately need to learn to manage it themselves.

## Quality screen time

A better alternative is to determine children's screen use based on the quality of the activity and the level of stimulation that children are getting.

There are more than 80,000 apps labelled as educational, but the quality of experience they offer differs. Activities that are creative, that stimulate imagination and that allow meaningful connection with others can and should be given more time than ones that offer little educational value.

We should still keep an eye out for excessive time online. About 15% of the respondents in the *Behind the News* survey reported they couldn't go without technology for even one day.

Compulsive or non-stop checking of texts, emails, news feeds, websites or other apps can interfere with anyone's daily life, work and relationships. If a child is spending most of their day and night on a screen, then that needs reassessment and management.

But the ultimate message is that whatever resource we use to manage children's screen usage, they ultimately need to learn to manage it themselves.

We must introduce them to the concept of mindful usage. As children get older and accumulate more and more devices, and greater need to use technology, helping them recognise the importance of a balance becomes an important basic life skill.

**Joanne Orlando** is Researcher: Technology and Learning at Western Sydney University.

## THE CONVERSATION

Orlando, J (4 May 2016). *Is two hours of screen time really too much for kids?* Retrieved from <http://theconversation.com> on 20 July 2016.

# LOGGING OUT? WHY YOUNG PEOPLE LOVE TO HATE FACEBOOK

Young people can be both ambivalent and positive about Facebook, often at the same time, contrary to conventional wisdom. **Brady Robards** and **Ariadne Vromen** investigate in this article from *The Conversation*

Researchers, journalists writing about research, and young people themselves have been writing about the perceived decline of Facebook for a while now. Young people are leaving Facebook in droves; Facebook is no longer hip with the kids; Facebook is dead.

As 19-year-old Andrew Watts described it, Facebook is: *... an awkward family dinner party we can't really leave.*

The great tension in Watts' account of his own use of Facebook – which, as social media researcher Danah Boyd has already pointed out, appears to be a privileged one – is that while Facebook is dead, it's also essential to have.

*If you don't have Facebook, that's even more weird and annoying.*

While it might no longer be 'cool', young people still use Facebook. It is still very much at the heart of the social web, even if new forms of social media are emerging around it. According to one of the authors' (Ariadne's) research, more than 90% of 16- to 29-year-olds are on Facebook.

So why do young Facebook users love to hate it, even when it's part of their everyday lives?

## The parental gaze

Facebook is not 'cool' because it is now widely used by parents and other adults, who – perhaps unwittingly, perhaps very deliberately – subject young users to the 'familial gaze'. It makes sense that young people will want space for socialising and hanging out free of adult supervision and control.

This is certainly not new, but social media does complicate our understanding of presence. Presenting an 'appropriate' version of oneself online, where multiple audiences and contexts are collapsed into a singular 'performative medium', is complicated.

In one of the authors' (Brady's) previous research on when and why young Australian social media users moved from MySpace to Facebook, he found a group of participants in his qualitative sample who were still using MySpace back in 2010, two years after Facebook had overtaken it as the dominant social network site in Australia. One 16-year-old male participant explained:

*... because I have family and stuff on there, I make sure I filter what I put on Facebook. I don't want*

*aunties seeing some things. It could be completely different to what I actually meant. So I'll leave that for MySpace. Facebook I'm a bit more conservative.*

In other words, some of what is shared with friends online relies on a pre-existing context, like in-jokes or references only friends would understand. For people outside that context – parents, aunties, teachers and basically anyone outside his network – the actual meanings behind disclosures were at risk of being decontextualised on Facebook.

Yet, for other young people, maintaining familial networks on Facebook is crucial, and not something to be avoided. For another of Brady's participants, a 15-year-old female, Facebook served as an important link to her sisters after the death of her father. She explains why she started using Facebook:

*My dad passed away ... I got my boyfriend ... and I sort of just became more family-oriented. I moved onto Facebook where they all were. I don't live with most of my sisters.*

While it might no longer be 'cool', young people still use Facebook. It is still very much at the heart of the social web, even if new forms of social media are emerging around it.

In Brady's current research on sustained Facebook use among twentysomethings, participants have also described the growing importance of using Facebook to stay in touch with family as they undertake rites of passage like moving out of home, entering into further education and employment, travel and building families of their own.

And yet, these positive stories about connectivity often run alongside and in tension with ambivalent accounts of Facebook being banal and a waste of time. Facebook isn't just about friends and family though.

## Facebook and civic life

It is clear that Facebook is important for young people to remain connected to their social networks; they continue to make use of its functionality.

Ariadne's research found that Facebook is also a place for young people's civic participation. Those actively involved in organisations or causes use Facebook





Each form of social media comes with its own set of affordances and audiences. But no matter what the platform, we need to be wary of all-encompassing generalisations in understanding young people's use of social media in their familial and civic lives.

to have political discussion, share information and organise events.

Facebook's functionality means it is easily used in these contexts, often replacing traditional means of activist communication such as group meetings, posting and email lists. One young political party activist said:

*... these days, you assume that everyone has social media as a given. That's your go-to mechanism.*

A young LGBTI activist said:

*There's no other way to invite 100 people to an event at once apart from Facebook. And also to remind me where I need to be at what time, it's very useful.*

Despite the ubiquity of Facebook and the usefulness of its simple organising affordances, many young activists in Ariadne's project also felt unease and ambivalence about such things as the credibility of information shared and the erosion of opportunities for in-person political debate and action.

In Ariadne's current project, online discussion groups and surveys of ordinary young people highlighted that most relied on Facebook for information about political news, but they were reluctant to share their opinions or post comments. When asked why, many were concerned about disagreements or being

wrong. Others believed that social media needed to be kept as purely a social space, not a political one.

Our young participants were also very aware of who their Facebook audience was, expressing similar reservations to Brady's research participants about the presence of family who may be more disapproving than their friends. For example, one young male said:

*I do care who can see my opinions because even though I might have my own opinions about an issue, I don't want to look bad in front of, let's say, my aunts that I've friended on Facebook if they had an opposite opinion. I probably wouldn't respond if I agreed or disagreed unless I'm close to that person.*

Importantly, this post led to a lengthy discussion among four participants on how they actively used privacy settings to control who saw what they said on politics, and that Facebook was better than in-person conversations because you could post links to where information was from. One young woman pointed out:

*Often, when there is a disagreement when face-to-face, I have to simply wonder where they're getting their data or if they're just making it up because it sounds good to go with the point they're making.*

Most young people use Facebook but they do not all view it in the same way. As boyd has cogently pointed out, often the views of the economically and technically privileged are given prominence.

In Ariadne's data, politically engaged young people who were not from a privileged background were the most optimistic about using Facebook for politics. It is their voices in the conversation quoted above.

### Social media and diversification

Facebook is just one piece in a broader social media landscape, which includes Reddit, Snapchat, Tumblr and Instagram. Each form of social media comes with its own set of affordances and audiences. But no matter what the platform, we need to be wary of all-encompassing generalisations in understanding young people's use of social media in their familial and civic lives.

Instead, we should seek to focus on diversity in experiences. Young people can be both ambivalent and positive about Facebook (often at the same time), pointing out its wide array of uses.

At least for now, Facebook will continue to be the site young people love to hate, but can't easily leave behind.

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**Ariadne Vromen** is Associate Professor, University of Sydney.

## THE CONVERSATION

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*Logging out? Why young people love to hate Facebook.*  
Retrieved from <http://theconversation.com> on 16 August 2016.

# So long social media: the kids are opting out of the online public square

Phones out, but today's students are less likely to have Facebook or Twitter open, according to US academic [Felicity Duncan](#)

When my digital media students are sitting, waiting for class to start and staring at their phones, they are not checking Facebook. They're not checking Instagram, or Pinterest or Twitter. No, they're catching up on the news of the day by checking out their friends' Stories on Snapchat, chatting in Facebook Messenger or checking in with their friends in a group text.

If the time drags, they might switch to Instagram to see what the brands they love are posting, or check in with Twitter for a laugh at some celebrity tweets. But, they tell me, most of the time they eschew the public square of social media for more intimate options.

## The times, they are a-changing

For a few years now, alarms have been sounded in various quarters about Facebook's teen problem. In 2013, one author explored why teens are tiring of Facebook, and according to *Time*, more than 11 million young people have fled Facebook since 2011. But many of these articles theorised that teens were moving instead to Instagram (a Facebook-owned property) and other social media platforms. In other words, teen flight was a Facebook problem, not a social media problem.

Today, however, the newest data increasingly support the idea that young people are actually transitioning out of using what we might term broadcast social media – like Facebook and Twitter – and switching instead to using narrowcast tools – like Messenger or Snapchat. Instead of posting generic and sanitised updates for all to see, they are sharing their transient goofy selfies and blow-by-blow descriptions of class with only their closest friends.

## MOBILE MESSAGING APPS PARTICULARLY POPULAR AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

Among smartphone owners, the % who use messaging apps and apps that automatically delete sent messages.

|                                       | Messaging apps | Auto-delete apps |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>36%</b>     | <b>17%</b>       |
| <b>Men</b>                            | 37             | 17               |
| <b>Women</b>                          | 36             | 18               |
| <b>White, Non-Hispanic</b>            | 34             | 18               |
| <b>Black, Non-Hispanic</b>            | N/A*           | N/A*             |
| <b>Hispanic</b>                       | N/A*           | N/A*             |
| <b>18-29</b>                          | 49             | 41               |
| <b>30-49</b>                          | 37             | 11               |
| <b>50+</b>                            | 24             | 4                |
| <b>High school grad or less</b>       | 30             | 19               |
| <b>Some college</b>                   | 34             | 20               |
| <b>College+</b>                       | 45             | 13               |
| <b>Less than \$50,000/yr</b>          | 37             | 18               |
| <b>\$50,000+</b>                      | 36             | 17               |
| <b>Urban</b>                          | 42             | 22               |
| <b>Suburban</b>                       | 37             | 15               |
| <b>Rural (n=99 smartphone owners)</b> | 22             | 13               |

Source: Pew Research Center, March 17-April 12, 2015.

\*Because some questions were given to half the respondents, there are not enough cases to allow sufficient statistical analysis for these groups.

*The newest data increasingly support the idea that young people are actually transitioning out of using what we might term broadcast social media – like Facebook and Twitter – and switching instead to using narrowcast tools – like Messenger or Snapchat.*

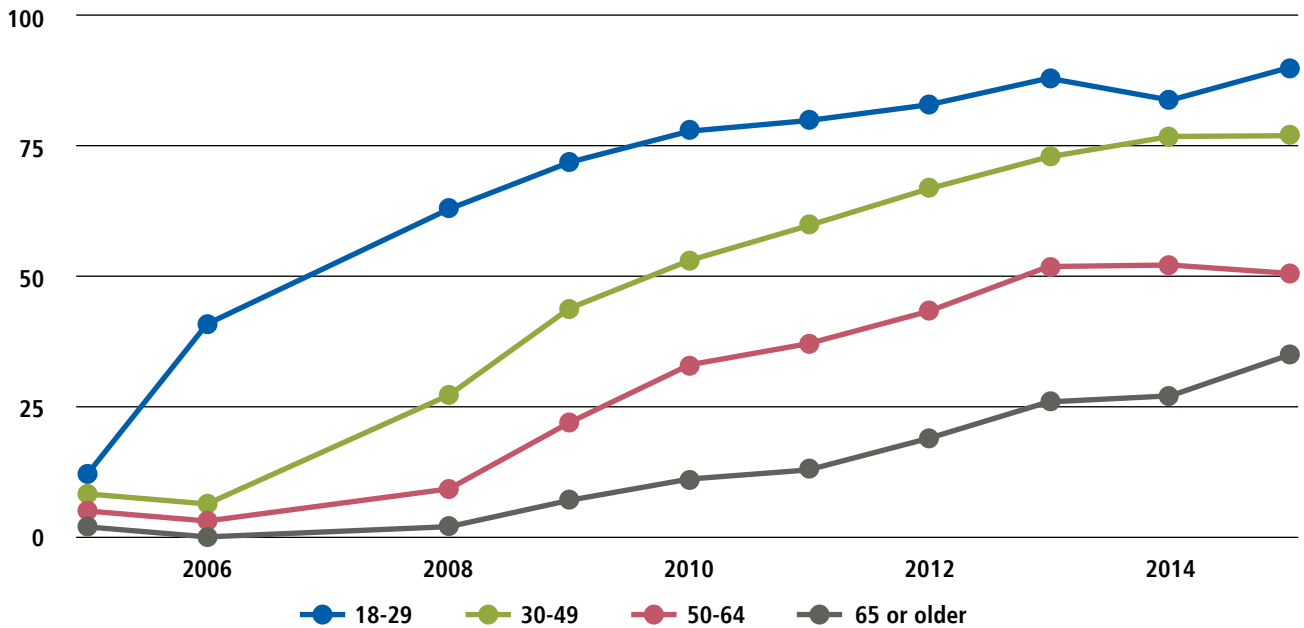
For example, in a study published in August last year, the Pew Research Center reported that 49 per cent of smartphone owners between 18 and 29 use messaging apps like Kik, Whatsapp or iMessage, and 41 per cent use apps that automatically delete sent messages, like Snapchat. For context, note that according to another Pew study, only 37 per cent of people in that age range use Pinterest, only 22 per cent use LinkedIn and only 32 per cent use Twitter. Messaging clearly trumps these more publicly

accessible forms of social media.

Admittedly, 82 per cent of people aged 18 to 29 said that they do use Facebook. However, that 82 per cent affirmatively answered the question, “Do you ever use the internet or a mobile app to use Facebook?” (emphasis added). Having a Facebook account and actually using Facebook are two different things.

While Pew does have data on how frequently people report using Facebook (70 per cent said at least once a day), those data are not broken

## AMONG ALL AMERICAN ADULTS, % WHO USE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES, BY AGE



Source: Pew Research Center surveys, 2005-2006, 2008-2015. No data are available for 2007.

*We may be seeing the next evolution in digital media. Just as young people were the first to migrate on to platforms like Facebook and Twitter, they may now be the first to leave and move on to something new.*

down by age. And anecdotal evidence such as what I've gathered from class discussions and assignments suggests that many younger people are logging in to Facebook simply to see what others are posting, rather than creating content of their own. Their photos, updates, likes and dislikes are increasingly shared only in closed gardens like group chat and Snapchat.

### Why would they leave?

Although there is not a great deal of published research on the phenomenon, there seem to be several reasons why younger people are opting for messaging over social media. Based on my discussions with around 80 American college students, there appear to be three reasons for choosing something like Snapchat over Facebook.

#### **My gran likes my profile picture**

As Facebook has wormed its way into our lives, its demographics have shifted dramatically. According to Pew, 48 per cent of internet users over the age of 65 use Facebook. As social media usage has spread beyond

the young, social media have become less attractive to young people. Few college students want their parents to see their Friday night photos.

#### **Permanence and ephemerality**

Many of the students I've spoken with avoid posting on sites like Facebook because, to quote one student, "Those pics are there forever!" Having grown up with these platforms, college students are well aware that nothing posted on Facebook is ever truly forgotten, and they are increasingly wary of the implications.

Teens engage in complex management of their self-presentation in online spaces; for many college students, platforms like Snapchat, that promise ephemerality, are a welcome break from the need to police their online image.

#### **The professional and the personal**

Increasingly, young people are being warned that future employers, college admissions departments and even banks will use their social media profiles to form assessments. In response, many of them seem to

be using social media more strategically. For example, a number of my students create multiple profiles on sites like Twitter, under various names. They carefully curate the content they post on their public profiles on Facebook or LinkedIn, and save their real, private selves for other platforms.

### Is this a problem?

We may be seeing the next evolution in digital media. Just as young people were the first to migrate on to platforms like Facebook and Twitter, they may now be the first to leave and move on to something new.

This exodus of young people from publicly accessible social media to messaging that is restricted to smaller groups has a number of implications, both for the big businesses behind social media and for the public sphere more generally.

From a corporate perspective, the shift is potentially troubling. If young people are becoming less likely to provide personal details about themselves to online sites, the digital advertising machine that runs on such data (described in detail by Joe Turow in his book *The Daily You*) may face some major headwinds.

For example, if young people are no longer 'liking' things on Facebook, the platform's long-term value to

advertisers may erode. Currently, Facebook uses data it gathers about users' 'likes' and 'shares' to target advertising at particular individuals.

So, hypothetically, if you 'like' an animal rescue, you may see advertisements for PetSmart on Facebook. This type of precision targeting has made Facebook into a formidable advertising platform; in 2015, the company earned almost US\$18 billion, virtually all of it from advertising. If young people stop feeding the Facebook algorithm by clicking 'like', this revenue could be in jeopardy.

From the perspective of parents and older social media users, this shift can also seem troubling. Parents who may be accustomed to monitoring at least some proportion of their children's online lives may find themselves increasingly shut out.

On the other hand, for the growing number of adults who use these platforms to stay in touch with their own peer networks, exchange news and information, and network, this change may go virtually unnoticed. And, indeed, for the many older people who have never understood the attraction of airing one's laundry on social media, the shift may even seem like a positive maturation among younger users.

From a social or academic perspective, the shift is both encouraging, in that it is supportive of calls for more reticence online, and also troubling.

As more and more political activity migrates online, and social media play a role in a number of important social movement activities, the exodus of the young could mean that they become less exposed to important social justice issues and political ideas.

If college students spend most of their media time on group text and Snapchat, there is less opportunity for new ideas to enter their social networks. Emerging research is documenting the ways in which our use of social media for news monitoring can lead us to consume only narrow, partisan news. If young people opt to use open messaging



*As more and more political activity migrates online, and social media play a role in a number of important social movement activities, the exodus of the young could mean that they become less exposed to important social justice issues and political ideas.*

services even less, they may further reduce their exposure to news and ideas that challenge their current beliefs.

The great promise of social media was that they would create a powerful and open public sphere, in which ideas could spread and networks of political action could form. If it is true that the young are turning aside from these platforms, and spending most of their time with messaging apps that connect only those who are already connected, the political promise of social media may never be realised.

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## THE CONVERSATION

Duncan, F (2 February 2016). *So long social media: the kids are opting out of the online public square*. Retrieved from <http://theconversation.com> on 19 July 2016.

## SCAREMONGERING ABOUT KIDS AND SOCIAL MEDIA HELPS NO ONE

Young people are natives to social media, but is that a bad thing? The following article by [Teresa Swist](#), [Amanda Third](#) and [Philippa Collin](#) investigates

**T**he way children and young people use social media is often portrayed in the mainstream media via stereotypes in a way that inspires fear and concern. Adults are often portrayed as either ignorant of young people's use of social media or skillful cyber-predators, while children are often perceived as experts or empty vessels: if they're not empowered, then they're exploited.

Why do we tell these modern day horror stories? These stories often focus on potential harms without acknowledging the benefits that can emerge from the social relations enabled by technology.

While it is important to recognise the very real dangers associated with social media use, it is equally important to identify and leverage the benefits by taking a more holistic approach.

### Dimensions of social media use

The biggest challenge is in understanding the diverse dimensions of media use without pathologising children, young people or adults. Our recent literature review for the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Western Australia) builds on previous research and highlights the range of factors influencing how children and young people use social media.

We argue there are four dimensions of social media use which, in combination, shape the effects of social media practice on safety and wellbeing:

The **technical dimension** is the most common focus: who goes online, how often and with what hardware and software?

Australian children and young people report high levels of social media use via online games, social network services and content sharing platforms, such as YouTube.

In 2012 an Australian Communications and Media Authority study found that 99% of 16 to 17 year olds have used a social network, with Facebook being the most popular social network service for 12 to 17 year olds.

The **material dimension** takes into account the digital traces generated by social media practices and includes the content produced by children and

young people through sharing and uploading, as well as consuming and downloading.

The *AU Kids Online* study found that "although creating content is generally less common than receiving content, Australian children do this more than in many other countries".

The **social dimension** refers to the interactions of networked people, places and information that extend children and young people's connections to diverse communities and ideas.

Australian children have more social network contacts than their EU counterparts, with 16% (compared to 9% of European children) reporting that they have over 300 contacts.

The **motivational dimension** refers to the diverse aspects of children and young people's social media use which can span friendship, maintaining relationships, expressing themselves as well as discovering new information and ideas.

For example, social networks and other forms of social media are viewed as central to a sense of acceptance and belonging for children and young people who experience discrimination or exclusions, for instance due to homelessness, or chronic illness, a serious condition or a disability.

While each of these dimensions deserves scrutiny, a holistic approach recognises that they are interwoven and can provide a richer picture of children and young people's everyday practices.

### Holistic approach

We need mechanisms such as the new Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner to help promote digital literacy and deal with offensive and harmful digital practices, but these must be aligned with holistic approaches.

Nationally and internationally, there are initiatives underway to consider how to use the benefits of digital engagement to minimise the potential harms.

For example, in Australia, more than 75 organisations are collaborating in Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre research, which is leading to new



evidence, improved policies, programs, tools and parenting/professional practices that maximise the benefits of young people's online engagement.

In the United States, the Aspen Institute Task Force for Internet and Learning highlights the need for "digital age literacies", emphasising that media, digital, social and emotional literacies must not only reflect what adults think children and young people must be able to know and do, they must be meaningful to children and young people.

Our report highlights the complexity of children and young people's social media use and the need for researchers, policymakers, services and caregivers to work with young people to maximise the benefits of their experiences.

In order to explore and understand the issues being raised in the context of social media use, we need to promote intergenerational dialogue: focusing on building young people's capacity to recognise and deal with risks online in order to foster their resilience and help them leverage the positive aspects of their technology use.

In her book, *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*, danah boyd argues that:

*Rather than resisting technology or fearing what might happen if youth embrace social media, adults should help youth develop the skills and perspective to productively navigate the complications brought about by living in networked publics.*

To achieve this, let's think multidimensionally rather than deterministically. This week at the Australian Internet Governance Forum the Children's eSafety Commissioner, Alastair MacGibbon noted it is how we

Rather than resisting technology or fearing what might happen if youth embrace social media, adults should help youth develop the skills and perspective to productively navigate the complications brought about by living in networked publics.

use the technology that matters. Our policy, program and legal responses must be informed by understanding of the technical, material, social and motivational dimensions of children and young people's social media use rather than simple regulation, surveillance and control.

Most significantly, parents, carers, policymakers, the media and institutions need to become more aware of the advantages of young people's connectivity.

This requires moving from a reactive position, striking fear into the hearts of young people, and attempting to control their digital practices, toward proactive practices which acknowledge young people's expertise and the integral role of digital media in their everyday lives. Scaremongering isn't helping anyone.

**Teresa Swist** is Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Western Sydney University.

**Amanda Third** is Senior Lecturer – Cultural and Social Analysis, Western Sydney University.

**Philippa Collin** is Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University.

## THE CONVERSATION

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# Social media and the wellbeing of children and young people: a literature review

Executive summary from a report prepared by **Dr Teresa Swist, Dr Philippa Collin, Ms Jane McCormack and Associate Professor Amanda Third** for the Commissioner for Children and Young People, Western Australia

Children and young people's use of technology and social media is evolving at a rapid pace, with implications for their wellbeing. To understand these changes there needs to be wider awareness of the types and use of social media, impacts on wellbeing – plus the range of good practice and opportunities available.

Highlighting these can help parents, caregivers, service providers, educators, policymakers and other adults better identify and respond to the challenges and opportunities of children and young people's social media use. To support effective policy, practice and service innovation, this review examined literature published since 2010 on children and young people's use of social media and effects on their wellbeing.

From the age of five nearly all Australian children regularly access the internet and by the time they become teenagers are avid users of social network services (SNS), online games and chat rooms, forums and instant messaging. As they increasingly go online via a mobile device or phone their access has become more personalised, frequent, and possible in a wide range of public and private spaces.

Social media is a set of web applications that enable production, aggregation, sharing and remixing of content from multiple sources by mass, networked participants. They are giving rise to a rapidly evolving set of media practices and are increasingly embedded in other media modalities – such as television, online games and search. Consequently, social media is becoming a common feature of children's and young people's everyday lives. However, social media are diverse and their effects on the wellbeing of children and young

people are an emerging focus for research, policy and service delivery.

## *Dimensions of social media use*

This report identified four key dimensions that influence children and young people's social media use:

- i) *Technical dimension*: hardware, software, connectivity and devices that enable social media practices.
- ii) *Material dimension*: text, images and interactions that are produced and made visible on digital platforms and devices.
- iii) *Social dimension*: with whom and how children and young people interact via social media, which can promote and enhance interpersonal connections at peer, family, local and global scales.
- iv) *Motivational dimension*: values and drivers of children and young people's social media use expressed in the different ways they approach and utilise social media.

Children and young people's social contexts, along with their desires to maintain relationships, express themselves to diverse audiences, and discover new information and ideas, profoundly shape their social media engagement.

## *Impacts of social media on wellbeing*

The review identified eight key domains of social media's impact on children and young people: physical and mental health; identity and belonging; formal and informal learning; play and recreation; consumer practices; civic and political engagement; risk and safety; and, family and intergenerational relationships.

Among other findings, the review has identified that positive and negative impacts are contextual and that social media:

- Promote positive norms about health and wellbeing and enhances health promotion initiatives. The range of content and culture of social media provides low level exposure to a range of risks. However, experiencing some level or risk is necessary to build resilience online and offline. The rapidly increasing volume of information available online also opens up new questions about the sources and accuracy of information in the digital age.
- Foster identity formation, community-building and creativity. Across these positive developmental processes, children and young people can also experience upsetting and potentially harmful content and practices which can have serious effects on their wellbeing.
- Support the self-directed learning and aspirations of marginalised young people and extend formal and informal knowledge networks and social support for young people generally. However, poor integration of social media in formal and informal learning networks can reinforce social exclusion.
- Provide new leisure, play and recreation spaces for children and young people. Online and video games in particular provide opportunities for learning, creativity, identity formation, socialisation, relaxation and stress relief. There are significant opportunities for the exploration (and development)

of games that enhance wellbeing. Additional research is necessary to fully examine the range of concerns raised about online games.

- Can positively influence the consumption patterns of children and young people by facilitating supportive networks and attitudes to financial wellbeing and empowering young people's consumer and financial literacy. More research is required to understand the multiple influences from which harmful consumption practices can emerge.
- Create new spaces for young people's civic and political engagement by opening up opportunities for diverse forms of participation, self-expression – as well as creatively addressing social issues. While only a small minority of young people are considered to be at risk of radicalisation, social media can also be used to circulate politically extremist messages which, alongside other complex factors, can potentially lead to harmful practices.
- Can amplify risks to physical and emotional safety but can also promote proactive approaches to issues of risk and safety that empower children and young people, develop their resilience and support their wellbeing.
- Support family and intergenerational relationships that utilise different forms of expertise – including knowledge and skills of children and young people, peers, family and other adults – to promote safety, wellbeing and resilience. Also important to consider are the range of factors which influence children and young people's social media use (such as where they are, what device they are using, what activity they are doing – and who they are with).

### **Good practice and opportunities**

This review finds that the benefits of social media for wellbeing can be

maximised by valuing the positive possibilities of children and young people's social media use.

That is, good practice in research, policy and service design should focus on the multiple dimensions (technical, material, social and motivational) that support and strengthen children and young people's social media use, such as:

- Fostering 'digital age literacies' among children and young people which span media, internet and social-emotional literacies that consider not only the safe use of social media, but the moral and ethical repercussions of their everyday practices.
- Promoting peer and intergenerational capacities and support (online and offline) so as to foster skills, promote shared understandings and maximise positive opportunities for children and young people's wellbeing.

- Involving children and young people in the design of social media platforms, mobile devices, policies and programs for wellbeing. In these processes it is important to consider cultural and linguistic norms, technology access and opportunities to participate.
- Encouraging industry involvement in developing strategies to promote the positive impacts of social media on wellbeing and supporting strategies to promote the digital capacity and resilience of individuals and communities.
- Building formal, informal and shared learning networks enabled through social media, cloud computing and mobile technology which connect diverse pathways, knowledge and expertise.

Further research which looks more specifically at the commercial imperatives and technical

*From the age of five nearly all Australian children regularly access the internet and by the time they become teenagers are avid users of social network services (SNS), online games and chat rooms, forums and instant messaging. As they increasingly go online via a mobile device or phone their access has become more personalised, frequent, and possible in a wide range of public and private spaces.*







and socio-economic advantage, there is a lack of close analysis on other aspects of lived experience (such as geographical location and culturally and linguistically diverse background).

What is clear is that the benefits and risks of social media use map to broader patterns of literacy levels, as well as socio-economic disadvantage. Intervening in this cycle has the potential to generate a steep change in the wellbeing of the children and young people who stand most to gain from the benefits social media offer. Such efforts must not only be informed by research, but by the views and preferences of children and young people themselves.

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Swist, T, Collin, P, McCormack, J and Third, A (July 2015). *Social media and the wellbeing of children and young people: A literature review*, pp. 4-7. Retrieved from [www.uws.edu.au](http://www.uws.edu.au) on 20 July 2016.

*The effects are broadly positive, but are mediated by the social contexts, shared communication and familial conditions in which children and young people live and grow up.*

affordances of particular social media platforms, alongside the complex circumstances of children and young people (spanning the geographical, social, cultural, political, emotional and psychological) is vital to ongoing policy, service and practice innovation.

### **Future needs**

While research on children and young people's social media practices and wellbeing is burgeoning, there is relatively little research on the practices of children under the age of twelve. Internet access for children under the age of nine has significantly increased in recent years, yet there are major gaps in research and evidence about their activities, capacities and the risks and benefits of their online practices.

More research on this demographic – and marginalised population

groups – is needed so that findings from older groups are not simply extrapolated to younger children. This requires building rigorous local, national, regional and international strategies for the study of children and young people's social media use. Such strategies must keep pace with technological change, address restrictions and challenges on researching younger age groups, and be meaningful to diverse contexts and communities.

This review provides a high level snapshot of the evidence of children and young people's social media use and the effects on wellbeing. It shows the effects are broadly positive, but are mediated by the social contexts, shared communication and familial conditions in which children and young people live and grow up.

While the existing literature provides for some insights on difference according to gender

# Psychologists scramble to keep up with growing social media addiction

FOMO, FOBO, and NoMo are among a growing list of acronyms relating to people's fear of not being able to check their social media feed, and the issue has psychologists scrambling to keep up, reports Louise Merrillees for *ABC News*

Every time you have a spare moment, people are checking their Facebook or Snapchat, or various social networks," Perth psychologist Marny Lishman said.

"There is that rising anxiety causing the urge and if you don't get to check it because you are at work, or out of mobile range, or have forgotten your phone, it is quite stressful.

"And because of smartphones we can be connected all the time. We can check social media the minute we get up, we don't even have to get out of bed."

Ms Lishman said people were becoming genuinely addicted to their devices, because of the rush generated by positive reinforcements and messages from friends.

## Acronym cheat sheet

**FOMO** – Fear Of Missing Out  
**FOBO** – Fear Of Being Offline  
**NoMo** – No Mobile

"These kids are getting messages all the time. The minute that happens, your senses take in the information and your brain has to do something with that information, and if it is stressful content, then there is a change physiologically, your brain is going to release adrenalin and cortisol before you go to bed."

## FOBO 'rewiring' brains

Sydney-based relationship psychologist Philipa Thornton will be speaking about online addictions at the Australia-New Zealand addictions conference in Queensland next month.

Ms Thornton said unlike internet gaming disorder, social media addiction was not yet officially recognised in the "bible of psychology and psychiatry", the DSM 5 (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, version 5) but there were definite similarities.

"FOBO [Fear Of Being Offline] is definitely along those lines, it is a behaviour, and through repetition and coping mechanisms, you are re-wiring your brain," she said.

"It is different from a habit, because I can brush my teeth, and I can forget to brush my teeth, but I am not going to be having any angst around that."

Ms Thornton said she recently came across the NoMo phobia, the fear of being without a mobile phone.

"There is a lot of anecdotal research, psychologists are seeing people coming in whose phone and social media addiction was interfering with their ability to fully live their life," she said.

## Parents create '10 commandments of internet use'

Ms Thornton said parents had a vital role to play.

"It is critically important to create a household where you have guidelines about what is OK and what is

## Teens report 'brain burnout'

The Australian Psychological Society issued its *Stress and Wellbeing in Australia* report last year, which included a section on social media FOMO, or 'fear of missing out'.

The report found adults were spending 2.1 hours per day and teens 2.7 hours per day connected to social media.

It also found 56 per cent of teens were heavy social media users, connecting more than five times per day, with 24 per cent being constantly connected.

Sixty per cent felt brain 'burnout' from constant connectivity of social media.

"There is research about sleeping deprivation with children with smartphones," Ms Lishman said.



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not OK, and to limit use, restrict inappropriate sites and foster a family environment,” she said.

“And parents have the power

because they have the money. Who is paying for the internet connection? Turn the modem off overnight, have a password on the account

## Social media: pros and cons

There are a range of arguments for and against social media and its impacts on the mental health and social development of young people. Here are some of the most common arguments in the social media debate:

### CONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- **Social isolation:** excessive use of social media reduces the need for direct, face-to-face contact with people.
- **Emotional context:** difficult to convey emotions; development of social skills such as listening, feeling, empathy can be impaired on social media where there is no body language to interpret.
- **Privacy:** greatly diminished, greater risk of identity theft.
- **Poor grammar and spelling:** due to overuse of typing shortcuts and emoticons.
- **Online predators:** opportunity to prey on younger people via social networks.
- **Sleep and homework:** can be interrupted by the overuse of social media.
- **Cyberbullying and trolling:** occurs extensively on social media.
- **Low self-esteem:** young people can feel defined by the number of ‘likes’ they receive on social networks.
- **Distorted self-image:** people tend to post enhanced images of themselves, showing off only the most positive aspects of their life to impress an audience.

### PROS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- **We are more connected:** we can now communicate effectively and conveniently in many different ways.
- **Greater sense of belonging:** increased connectivity via social media makes us feel more in touch with each other.
- **Emotional support:** more easily sought online, especially for people who are shy, anxious or find face-to-face interactions difficult.
- **Information sharing:** social networking enables the real-time sharing of information for a more engaging and interactive way of learning/working, allowing information to reach a large audience.
- **Collaboration and multi-tasking:** information sharing via social media enhances collaboration and shared learning, and is a means of promoting creativity and exploration.

Source: Hall, L, *Social Media and Mental Health: Is Social Media Good or Bad?*

that only you know; unless we put boundaries in place there will be huge repercussions.”

Nigel Gordon is the parent of four children aged seven to 13. He and his wife Liz said they had just written the ‘10 commandments of internet use’ to try to control the amount of time and the type of content their children were accessing online.

Mr Gordon said the “game changer” for their family was when the two eldest children got mobile phones.

“Before that was easier; just limiting screen time and having rules around that,” he said.

“We tried to hold off, and Charlie didn’t have a phone when he started high school this year, but in the first week, the teacher told the students to ‘take a photo of this for your homework’. So what do you do?”

Mr Gordon said their children were not allowed on phones or any screens before 7:30am and between 6:00pm and 7:30pm.

“So the idea is plan your day in the morning, share your day in the evening, and try and engage with your family,” he said.

### Too busy to do nothing

Ms Lishman said people were not getting enough time in the day to simply do nothing.

“We are filling blank moments that your body would normally be recharging, and the minute you read social media your brain is firing, it’s making judgements, it’s stressing,” she said.

Ms Thornton agreed. “We are in information overload. There isn’t enough time to take a breath and let that information process without more coming in,” she said.

“We can’t do without technology now. And there are good things on the internet, but a virtual relationship is no match for a real, physical relationship.”

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Merrillees, L (3 April 2016). ‘Psychologists scramble to keep up with growing social media addiction’, ABC News. Retrieved from [www.abc.net.au/news](http://www.abc.net.au/news) on 18 July 2016.

# IS FOMO AFFECTING AUSTRALIANS?

## KEY FINDINGS FROM A SURVEY BY THE AUSTRALIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

**O**f the Australians that responded to the FoMO Questionnaire, adults were spending 2.1 hours per day and teens 2.7 hours per day connected to social media. This provides a direct comparison between adults and teens.

Social media is affecting how Australians behave, with 56 per cent of teens reporting they are heavy social media users (connecting 5+ times per day), with 25 per cent being constantly connected.

When we look at the adult population – almost one in four (23%) report being heavy social media users, with 6 per cent of those being constantly connected.

### **Social media is both a cause of stress and a means of managing stress.**

- More than one in ten Australians (12%) report 'issues with keeping up with social media networks' as a source of stress (2015).
- More people are reporting using social media to manage stress, with almost one in two Australians now reporting visiting social media sites to manage stress (37% in 2011 vs 51% in 2015).

### **Social media dominates the life of many teens.**

- Over half of Aussie teens (53%) connect to social media 15 minutes before bed every night.
- Almost two in five connect (37%) in the presence of others and within 15 minutes of waking up.
- Almost one in four Australian teens (24%) reported using social media when they were eating breakfast and lunch seven days a week. The impact of social media use on Australian's wellbeing is evident in a range of ways: more than one in two teens (57%) find it difficult to sleep or relax after spending time on social networking sites and 60 per cent feel brain 'burnout' from constant connectivity of social media.
- Both Australian adults and teens experience Fear of

Missing Out (FoMO): one in two teens and one in four adults experience FoMO.

**Teens connected to social media more frequently (five or more times a day, i.e. heavy users) are significantly more likely to experience aspects of FoMO such as:**

- It is important that I understand my friends' in-jokes (78%)
- Fearing their friends are having more rewarding experiences than them (54%)
- Worrying when they find out their friends are having fun without them (60%), and
- Being bothered when they miss out on planned get-togethers (63%).

**At the same time, not only do fewer adults report being constantly connected to social media (6%), they are also less affected by FoMO than teens. For instance, of those adults connected to social media more frequently (five or more times a day, i.e. heavy users):**

- It is important that I understand my friends' in-jokes (32%)
- Fearing their friends are having more rewarding experiences than them (26%)
- Worrying when they find out their friends are having fun without them (17%), and
- Being bothered when they miss out on planned get-togethers (31%).

When looking at the relationship between heavy social media use and FoMO, teens are significantly more likely to experience all aspects of FoMO than adults. This suggests that social media has a greater impact on teens and plays a role in their identity formation and their search for a sense of self.

Australian Psychological Society.  
*Fear of Missing Out survey results 2015.* Retrieved from [www.psychology.org.au](http://www.psychology.org.au) on 20 July 2016.



# Is social media making people depressed?

We currently don't know enough about the way that social media is used and its impact on mood and longer-term mental health, writes **Mark Widdowson**

Anyone who regularly uses social media will have had the experience of feeling envious of the fun their friends all seem to be having. This might especially be the case if you're sitting at home on a cold wet evening, feeling bored while everyone else is partying or having a glamorous holiday in the sun.

But is it possible that these feelings could be the start of something worse? Could using social media actually make you depressed? A recent US-based study, sponsored by the National Institute for Mental Health, identified a "strong and significant association between social media use and depression in a ... sample of US young adults". The study found that levels of depression increased with total amount of time spent using social media and number of visits to social media sites per week.

Previous studies have painted a more mixed picture. It would seem that the relationship between social media and depression and well-being is complex and likely to be influenced by a number of factors.

At its best, social media allows us to connect and keep up with friends and people we don't see very often. It allows us to have short interactions with them that keep the relationships going when we don't have much free time. At its worst, social media can, it seems, feed into feelings of inadequacy.

There are likely to be many complex reasons why social media use might be associated with depression. For instance, it is possible that

people who are already depressed might be more inclined to rely on social media instead of face-to-face interactions, so greater social media use may be a symptom rather than a cause of depression.

## An unsatisfactory fix

We all have a basic need to be liked and accepted by others and social media can play into this vulnerability. 'Likes' are the currency of social media, and people who have low self-esteem may place great value on seeking validation from their social media use by trying to attract likes to their comments as a way of increasing their self-esteem. In this way, social media can be a bit of a popularity contest. Of course, 'winning' the popularity contest by garnering the most likes is only a short-term boost to morale. It's a precarious way to boost self-esteem.

It is human nature to compare ourselves to others. Sometimes comparison can be a way to inspire ourselves to improve in some way, but, more often than not – especially when someone is feeling down or is prone to depression – the comparisons become negative, and erode self-esteem.

One problem with social media is that the image people portray of themselves tends to be positive, interesting and exciting. Let's face it, most of us would rather post a photograph of ourselves looking great on a night out than one where we are in our pyjamas, washing the dishes. If someone is feeling down or dissatisfied with their life then, instead of being a bit of a



distraction, social media use can give the impression that everyone else is having way more fun than we are.

## Not all bad

Many parents have misgivings about their children's use of social media and more than one parent has had to console a tearful teenager, distraught over an online argument. Whether we like it or not, social media is here to stay and, for many young people, opting out of social media would mean losing access to their network of friends. For them, it is not a viable option.

At the moment, we don't know enough about how the way that social media is used and its impact on mood and longer-term mental health. Until we do, perhaps the best option is to recognise that social media can be a valuable tool to keep in touch with friends and that our interactions on social media should not overly influence our self-esteem.

It might also be worth remembering that, although everyone else might seem to be having a great time, newsfeeds are more biased towards showing all the fun, interesting things that people are doing. So they are just curating the best bits of their life – not necessarily having a better time than you are.

**Mark Widdowson** is Lecturer in Counselling and Psychotherapy, University of Salford.

## THE CONVERSATION

Widdowson, M (27 April 2016). *Is social media making people depressed?* Retrieved from

<http://theconversation.com> on 19 July 2016.

At its best, social media allows us to connect and keep up with friends and people we don't see very often. It allows us to have short interactions with them that keep the relationships going when we don't have much free time. At its worst, social media can, it seems, feed into feelings of inadequacy.

# Internet and gaming use linked to serious mental health disorders in young people

**Telethon Kids Institute** researchers have found a strong link between excessive internet use and increased levels of psychological distress, including suicidal thoughts, in young people

Researchers used data from *Young Minds Matter*, the largest youth mental health survey ever conducted in Australia, for the study published in the *BMC Public Health journal*.

They found that while most young people aged 11-17 used the internet or played electronic games, around 78,000 or 4 per cent of children and adolescents experienced problematic internet or games use behaviour which caused negative impacts on their life.

“Our findings were similar to other research which found associations with excessive internet use and psychological distress, depression, suicide ideation, self-harm, and alcohol abuse,” said lead author Ms Wavne Rikkers.

However, Ms Rikkers stressed that it was unclear from the research whether psychological distress led to overuse of the internet or vice versa.

“These young people could be experiencing more mental health problems as a result of their internet use, or they could be turning to the web to help them deal with their psychological distress,” Ms Rikkers said.

“It really is a chicken or egg scenario,” Ms Rikkers said. “Nevertheless, the significance of the links is sufficient to warrant concern and further research.”

Ms Rikkers said new technology now dominated all aspects of a young person’s life in a way we have not seen in previous generations.

“This has led to a cultural change in how young people may deal with issues of social isolation, bullying, depression, behavioural disorders, boredom, or family breakdown,” Ms Rikkers said.

“Quite often young people will turn to a screen instead of another person, with a third of them sourcing information online about mental health problems and many using the internet to remain socially connected.”

“Regardless of whether internet and gaming is the cause or response to psychological distress, these associations are cause for concern amongst parents, educators and service providers, particularly with respect to links identified between youth suicide attempts, high levels of psychological distress, and problem behaviour.”

## MAIN FINDINGS

- About one in four (25%) young people with problematic internet use also suffered from major depressive disorder based on self-reported information.
- In comparison, for those without problem behaviour, nearly 7 per cent had major depressive disorder.
- 14 per cent of young people with problematic internet use had attempted suicide in the previous 12 months.
- Over one in five young people (22%) with problematic internet use had binged on alcohol in the previous 12 months.
- In the 12 months prior to the survey, about one in four (25%) young people who had attempted suicide or experienced high to very high levels of psychological distress also had problematic internet use behaviour.
- 13 per cent of those with major depressive disorder had problematic internet use behaviour.
- 13 per cent of those who had self-harmed also had problematic internet use behaviour.



Telethon Kids Institute (17 May 2016). *Internet and gaming use linked to serious mental health disorders in young people*. Retrieved from <http://telethonkids.org.au> on 20 July 2016.

# Unliking Facebook – the social media addiction that has you by the throat

*There's an addiction in society that is spreading daily, shows no signs of stopping, affects more people than drugs and alcohol, and it's so clever that you might not even know you're suffering. It's an addiction to social media. By Justin Huntsdale for ABC Illawarra*

What seems like harmless online socialising and entertainment is fast turning into an addiction that is creating diverse problems with mental health, physical health and social skills.

It's within reach all over our smart phones, and as social media use grows, researchers are starting to realise the consequences.

Seven months ago, Wollongong's Lauren Thrift did what many people would find unthinkable – she deleted her Facebook account.

"There wasn't a particular event, I just became aware that my Facebook feed was directly affecting how I felt," she says.

"You see negative things and you feel negatively, and I had a moment of clarity that it wasn't just something you do in your spare time – it was affecting how I felt and went about my day."

She contacted her friends and told them to email or contact her by

phone, and now says her only regret was that she didn't do it sooner.

"The first week felt hard like [giving up] a genuine addiction, but it was wonderful.

"It sounds so strange and it [social media use] seems like such a small thing because everyone does it and it seems so natural, but it truly felt liberating.

"I no longer have to see everyone else's stuff I wasn't asking for and you get to interact with your friends how you're supposed to."

*You might be suffering from a social media addiction without even knowing it.*

## A WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

Social media is presented as a fun, innovative and exciting technology we should give ourselves to because it's a major part of modern business and keeping up to date.

Social media addiction is a special

area of interest for University of Wollongong technology lecturer Associate Professor Katina Michael.

She researches how emerging technology affects society and says we have created a 'look down' generation, where people are now obsessed with using social media on their smart phones.

But like anything that stimulates our brain to release feel-good chemicals, it needs to be kept in check, and when it doesn't, the consequences of this new technology are looking bad.

"Some of the implications are grave – some people have begun to link social media addiction with feelings of anxiety, depression and mental health issues," Associate Professor Michael says.

"It can trigger an obsessive compulsive disorder, but increasingly the social impacts on health have yet to be defined.

"We don't have names for the health implications yet because we're just starting to see the effects of it."



## HOW TO KNOW WHEN YOU'RE ADDICTED?

You might be suffering from a social media addiction without even knowing it.

Katina Michael says you may be hooked if:

- You get anxious when you wake up and feel pressure to access your social media accounts, and you do so while you're still in bed.
- When you're not on Facebook, you're preoccupied with it even if you're not online.
- You close the Facebook screen and instantaneously re-open it and not know why.
- You hear social media notifications come through on your phone and act on them, even if you're in the middle of a conversation.

Lauren Thrift says she kicked her social media addiction by going cold turkey, and now volunteers herself as a success story for deleting your Facebook account.

"I hear people complaining about it, so I'm an advocate [for deleting it] – I did it and I'm telling them to please do it because it's wonderful."

### A DIFFERENT VERSION OF YOURSELF

Scroll through your Facebook news feed and you may notice a reoccurring theme of boasting.

In an effort to attract attention, people post their latest gourmet dish, their new haircut, the spectacular view on their holiday, or their harmonious and happy family.

According to Katina Michael, this causes a personality division – there is the online 'varnished' version of you, and then there is your everyday ordinary life.

This forces people to become more expert at curating their online self in all its flawless, lightly saturated, vignetted glory.

We then become addicted to the likes, comments and virtual pats on the back we receive from posting this material.

It's the same sense of satisfaction



*In an effort to attract attention, people post their latest gourmet dish, their new haircut, the spectacular view on their holiday, or their harmonious and happy family ... this causes a personality division – there is the online 'varnished' version of you, and then there is your everyday ordinary life.*

and excitement we get from eating chocolate or having sex – activities that stimulate the neurotransmitter dopamine's pathways in our brain.

"What we're doing is filling up our time with nothingness, when we should be reflecting," Associate Professor Michael says.

"There's no time to reflect on our actions – we are always reporting from where we are but not reflecting, and that time to physically reflect is diminishing."

### WHY WE REVEAL SO MUCH OF OURSELVES ONLINE

The social media environment is incredibly noisy. At any given time, millions of people are posting every element of their waking life to their social media accounts.

Social media gives us an avenue for us to be heard – something Katina Michael says is at the heart of why people share so much online.

But we're not only able to be heard, we're also hearing a lot from everyone else, and this can lead to more problems.

"It's been shown people are envious when they benchmark themselves with their peers," Associate Professor Michael says.

"Social media becomes a type of confession – you used to go to a priest to confess, but now we confess to a thing – it's an application.

"Possibly nobody's listening to us, but there's a need to share."

And in an effort to be heard when the noise is deafening, people share more of themselves than they ordinarily might, and post more often, with more mundane content.

At the top of your Facebook profile where you can write something for everyone to see, it asks 'What's on your mind?'

The answer is fast becoming 'this, at the expense of everything else'.

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Huntsdale, J (23 January 2015). *Unliking Facebook – the social media addiction that has you by the throat*. Retrieved from [www.abc.net.au](http://www.abc.net.au) on 20 July 2016.



# Can social media affect self-esteem?

*All social networks measure the popularity or reach of your interaction with the online community. Twitter has 'retweets', Instagram has 'followers' and Facebook has 'likes'. According to [ReachOut Australia](#), this can be unhealthy if these online forms of kudos make or break a person's mood or self-esteem*

## **This will help you to:**

- Understand why social media is important to young people
- Understand how social media impacts on self-esteem
- Learn ways that you can help young people have a positive experience with social media.

## **Why is social media so important to young people?**

There are many reasons why young people love social media. It's a platform for self-expression, as well as for staying in touch with friends. Understanding the benefits of social media will help you to keep up with the young people you work with.

## **Help young people have positive social media experiences**

Young people place a lot of value in the feedback they receive on social media.

There are lots of things you can do to help the young people you work with understand that social media follower count, likes, and interactions are not a measure of their actual worth.

- **Remind them that self-worth isn't defined by likes or follows.** Sometimes people need a little reminder that self-worth will never be measured by numbers on social media. Encourage young people to focus on the positive friendships and relationships that they have.
- **Discuss how social media is not a competition.** Just because a person has more likes on their post does not mean their contribution is better or more interesting. Encourage them to focus on gratitude for their own lives, instead of making social comparisons with others.
- **Help them choose good online role models.** It's good to understand the connection between the images that young people consume online and their attitudes to identity and body image. You can help by encouraging them to follow positive and inspiring people on social media who promote a healthy body image.
- **Talk about the real world vs the online world.** An Instagram post is only one tiny (filtered) moment from a person's day. It does not depict the full story. It is important to remind young people to be mindful when using social media that posts rarely reflect real life.
- **Show them how to filter out particular content.** If you know there is a person or theme (such as 'thinspo') that could upset a young person you

know, suggest they unfollow or hide posts from this person. This can be a good way to protect them from comparing themselves to others

## **When to worry**

It's important to notice unhealthy behaviour relating to social media use. Ask yourself these questions if you are concerned about a young person you work with:

- Are they valuing these online forms of kudos the same way as real-life interactions?
- Do they have an unhealthy obsession over how many 'friends', 'likes' or 'followers' they have?
- Do these social network interactions define your their sense of self-worth?
- Do 'likes' on photos or more 'followers' generate a sense of accomplishment for them?
- Are they comparing their online popularity to others?

## **What to do if you're worried**

- **Encourage face to face interaction** to nurture meaningful friendships and relationships.
- **Suggest positive role models for them to follow.** Find some examples of people sharing content that is helpful and positive, and encourage them to have more of this in their newsfeed.
- **Encourage activities to do that don't involve screens.** Sometimes all that's needed is a little fresh air. Help the young person you work with develop a plan for activities (such as sport, movies, taking short courses, or outdoor adventures) that they can engage with instead.
- **Let them know they can take a break from social media.** If their relationship with social media is getting out of hand, they can always deactivate their account and reactivate when they feel ready.
- **Get them to talk to someone.** If you are really worried that their self-esteem is being impacted negatively, let them know that they can speak with a parent or carer, a school counsellor or a GP. If body image is a big issue, The Butterfly Foundation offers free counselling.

## **Next steps**

- **Let parents know that they can help.** It's a good idea to encourage parents to talk about social media with their kids. Let parents know of the support and information they can access on ReachOut Parents about social media and teenagers.

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ReachOut.com. *Can social media affect self-esteem?* Retrieved from <http://au.professionals.reachout.com> on 18 July 2016.

# ADDICTED TO SOCIAL MEDIA? TRY AN E-FASTING PLAN

**RITESH CHUGH PRESENTS SOME EASY TIPS ON HOW TO DISCONNECT FROM SOCIAL MEDIA AND CONNECT WITH THE REAL WORLD**

**S**ocial media is a double-edged sword, providing both benefits and drawbacks. In order to stay connected, many of us are becoming captivated by these pervasive tools. A social media report by Sensis in 2015 reported that nearly half of all Australians access one or more social networking sites every day.

The report also found that Australians now spend an average of 8.5 hours a week on Facebook alone, with 24% checking social media more than five times a day. Seven in ten people used a smartphone to access their accounts.

Spending excessive time, often repeatedly and aimlessly, on social media can be called an addiction. In fact, social media could even be seen to have become a national obsession and Australians appear to be addicted. This addiction is not limited to Australia but spans the globe.

If you are unsure whether your social media usage has turned into an addiction, take the Bergen's Facebook Addiction Scale quiz to find out (<http://psychcentral.com/quizzes/facebook-addict.htm>).

What's the expense of this addiction? Poor social relationships and isolation, compulsivity, victimisation, stress, depression and anxiety, exhibitionism and preference for online interactions over real world interactions.

With the growing use of social media, these problems will not disappear in the near future. Already, people are talking about how we can unshackle ourselves from social media.

A couple of years ago a video by Coca-Cola made fun of our social media addiction and offered a novel solution (with the Social Media Guard clip). The collar may not be that practical, but understanding your social media usage will help you to control your addiction and regain control of your time.

There are also paid options to help you recover your time. There is even an online company offering a 12-week social media dependency therapy package, which helps to manage any excessive social media usage to improve mental health.

Better though – and cheaper – to take action yourself. Social media may be becoming more pervasive in our lives and habit-forming, but rather than seeking solace through social media our time can be utilised more effectively in more gratifying activities of life.

So some rehabilitative action may be warranted. Perhaps even 'e-fasting'.

## How to unplug from social media

Fasting is defined as the practice of abstaining from

Spending excessive time, often repeatedly and aimlessly, on social media can be called an addiction. In fact, social media could even be seen to have become a national obsession and Australians appear to be addicted.

food. Electronic fasting (e-fasting) can be seen as abstinence from electronic devices and services, such as smartphones and social media.

In order to put an end to the obsessive behaviour towards social media, it is important to try to abstain from it or at least regulate usage occasionally.

Total abstinence from social media may not be possible, but the following five tips (in no particular order) could help to alleviate social media addiction, in the form of e-fasting.

### 1. *Abstain from social media*

Decide on a specific day when you will stay clear of social media. This might increase your anxiety in the short term, but the time away will enable you to perform other activities.

If you can do it for one day, then next time try two days or a weekend. When you get back to your social media, you can establish a better disciplined access routine.

### 2. *Self-regulate*

Set some rules that only allow you to connect to social





With the growing use of social media, these problems will not disappear in the near future. Already, people are talking about how we can unshackle ourselves from social media.

media at specific times of the day. For example, browsing for a limited time in the evening or not browsing when in bed.

### 3. **Limit checks on social media**

It is not a good idea to keep checking social media pages without a specific aim. The algorithms of social media feeds are designed to keep users hooked by projecting information higher in feeds, based on users' past interactions. Think of the urge to check incessantly and consider whether it is important or can wait for another time.

### 4. **Disable alerts and notification**

This will mean that you are not constantly reminded of messages by your social media platform. Adopting a pull-based approach of your notifications over a push-based approach will lead to fewer interruptions too. This should reduce the desire to check social media constantly.

### 5. **Remove social media apps from your smartphone**

If disabling alerts and notifications does not do the trick, consider deleting social media apps completely from your smartphone. As most people access social media platforms from their smartphone, removing these apps would mean less ease of access. You will then only have access to social media from a personal computer.

## Balance

The aim of e-fasting is to enable you to reclaim your life, achieve a balance of life and not become hostage to social media.

As with any diet or fasting regime, there's no one-size-fits-all formula, but the self-control and discipline tips I've listed should go some way to reducing your social media addiction. E-fasting has the potential to become a new fad to treat social media addiction and detox your life.

**Ritesh Chugh** is Senior Lecturer (Information Systems Management), Central Queensland University.

## THE CONVERSATION

Chugh, R (4 April 2016). *Addicted to social media? Try an e-fasting plan*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com> on 17 August 2016.

# How to be a healthy user of social media

Social media offers a great way to connect with others, but can also exacerbate anxieties that exist in the offline world, according to findings by [Peggy Kern](#)

**W**e can learn a lot about people through how they use social media. For example, Twitter language can be used to predict the risk of dying from heart disease.

Analyses of Facebook updates show women tend to be warmer than men, but just as assertive, and people high in extraversion tend to express positive emotions, whereas those with neurotic tendencies are more likely to write about being lonely and depressed.

Concerns exist about the negative effects social media can have on mental health, especially for young people. The incidence of cyberbullying, sexting and victimisation has risen. People manage their profiles, presenting an image of a perfect life, while hiding real struggles they might have. Despite having thousands of 'friends', some people still feel completely alone.

The potential for social media to be used to detect signs of mental illness is reflected in Facebook's implementation of a suicide watch program.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN YOUR USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Is there a way to tell if your use of social media is healthy or reflective of underlying mental health conditions?

With my colleagues, PhD student Liz Seabrook and Dr Nikki Rickard, we recently conducted a systematic review of 70 different studies that linked social media use to depression, anxiety and mental wellbeing. Turns

out, social media is not all good, nor all bad. It's more about how you use it.

If you are concerned about your own social media use or that of a family member, here are some aspects to look out for.

### 1. *Content and tone*

One of the main things that distinguished users who reported high wellbeing versus those with depression or anxiety was what they wrote about and how they wrote it. Depressed people used a lot more negative language, reflecting on things that were going wrong, or complaining about life or other people. They posted angry thoughts and emotions.

After writing a post, take a moment to read through it. What is the tone? Consider ways you can focus on some of the good things that happen in your life, not just the negative.

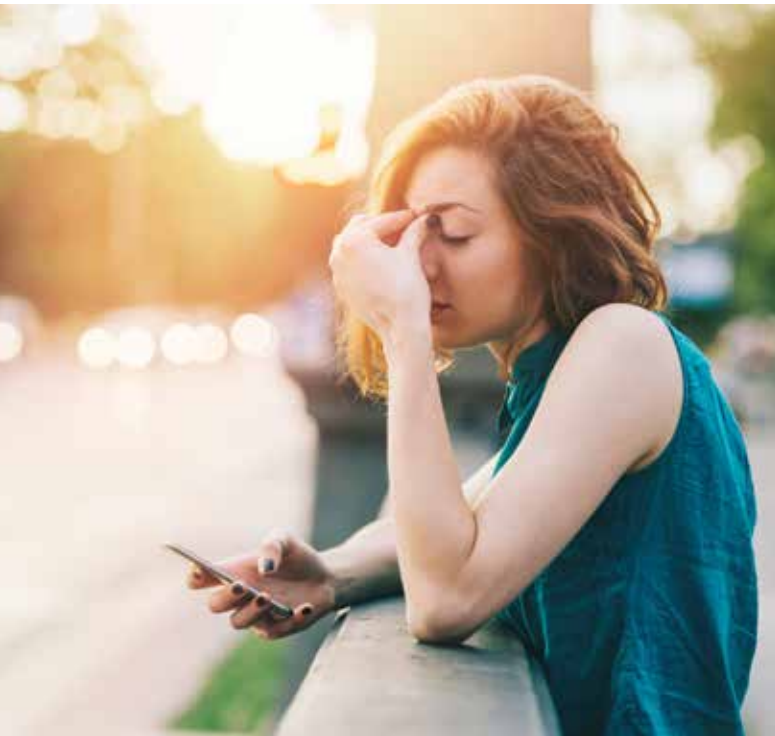
### 2. *Quality*

After a conversation with a friend, sometimes I feel really good about the conversation. Other times I don't.

Similarly, we found the quality of interactions on social media made a big difference. Depression related to negative interactions with other people, being more critical, cutting others down or feeling criticised by others, and hostility.

In contrast, by supporting and encouraging others and feeling supported by them, it can help you feel good.





Take a few minutes to think about how social media makes you or your family and friends feel. Is it a positive addition to your life, or does it make you feel bad, consuming time and energy you could use in other ways?

### 3. Time online

A recent Australian survey found adults spend over two hours a day using social media. It also found more than 50% of young people are heavy social media users, with one quarter reporting being constantly connected. In our review, some studies found depressed users spent more time online while other studies were inconclusive.

Notably, no study found spending more time online was a good thing. This is something to keep on the radar as people spend more and more time connected to their devices. Many young people have a fear of missing out (FOMO), and thus stay constantly connected. Indeed, in our review we found feeling addicted to social media was associated with higher levels of depression.

We see growing evidence that simplifying life, including spending time offline, has health and wellbeing benefits.

If you feel concerned about how much time passes by while you are online, consider stepping away from social media for a few days.

### 4. Passive versus active use

Some people post many updates, providing blow-by-blow descriptions of their lives. Others read through news feeds, liking posts and passing interesting tidbits on to others.

In our review, simply reading posts and browsing news feeds did not positively or negatively impact wellbeing. The difference was for active users: those who posted their thoughts and feelings and responded to others. People who were depressed posted a lot of negative content. Those who were happy actively engaged with other users, sharing their lives.

### 5. Social comparisons

Social media provides opportunities to compare ourselves with others, for better or for worse.

Social media can provide support groups that can help spur you on towards reaching a specific goal. For example, the Strengths Challenge used social networks to encourage people to look for good things about themselves and their co-workers, resulting in higher levels of wellbeing.

But comparing yourselves with others can also be quite destructive. Depressed individuals were more likely to see others as better than them. Envy plays a particularly destructive role.

If you find yourself jealous of friends and others in your network, it might be a good time to disconnect and find other sources to build up your self-esteem.

### 6. Motivation

Why do you use social media? People who used social media to connect with friends felt it contributed to their wellbeing.

In contrast, those who were depressed sought out social support on social media, but felt like their friends were letting them down.

If you are feeling lonely and trying to fill a void through social media, it could be doing more harm than good.

## TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT YOURSELF

Social media is here to stay. It offers a great way to connect with others, but can also exacerbate social anxieties that exist in the offline world.

So how do you best use social media? Take a few minutes to think about how social media makes you or your family and friends feel. Is it a positive addition to your life, or does it make you feel bad, consuming time and energy you could use in other ways?

By taking stock of your social media habits, it can help you choose ways – and encourage others – to use it in a manner that keeps you healthy.

**Peggy Kern** is Senior Lecturer in Positive Psychology, University of Melbourne.

## THE CONVERSATION

Kern, P (16 December 2016). *How to be a healthy user of social media*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com> on 16 December 2016.

## ENJOYING SOCIAL NETWORKING SAFELY

This hot topic from [Kids Helpline](#) is a brief overview of social networking safety, written to help parents and carers promote online safety to their children

### Let's get started ...

The use of online social networking sites (SNSs) has exploded in the past decade, and is a natural part of life for most children and young people. Social networking is a great way to keep up with friends and family however, there are risks associated with SNSs and children need support to navigate their online world safely.

### What is social networking?

Social networking refers to using online services, like websites or apps (social media), to connect with other people. Children and young people use social media to chat to people they already know, find others with similar interests and experiences, share information and opinions, share photos and videos, and plan social events.

Most SNSs require users to set up a profile of basic personal information, which forms their identity on the site. Some sites, such as Facebook, link users

through two-way friend requests that both people have to accept. Others, like Twitter, are a system of one-way communication and people become followers of others, rather than friends.

The social media most often used by children fall into five broad categories (although many services include aspects of more than one category):

- **Social networks** – services that enable people to interact with others (e.g. Facebook)
- **Microblogging** – services that enable users to broadcast short messages to others (e.g. Twitter, Tumblr)
- **Media sharing** – services that enable people to share photos and videos (e.g. YouTube, Instagram)
- **Messaging apps** – like an alternative to SMS/texting, with extra options (e.g. Kik Messenger, Snapchat)
- **Multi-player online games** (e.g. Moshi Monsters, Club Penguin, Minecraft, World of Warcraft).





## How many children and young people use SNSs?

Facebook is by far the most commonly used SNS, with 13.6 million users in Australia in December 2014.<sup>1</sup> There are no official figures about young people's use of social networking, but we know that children as young as 6 access social media<sup>2</sup> and that use increases with age. An Australian study in 2013 found that social networking was used by:

- 23% of 8-9 year olds
- 45% of 10-11 year olds
- 69% of 12-13 year olds
- 86% of 14-15 year olds
- 92% of 16-17 year olds.<sup>3</sup>

Many sites have age restrictions for use – typically users must be at least 13 years old – but these rules are impossible to police. Most social media usage by young children is online games but 29% of 9 to 10 year olds and 59% of 11 to 12 year olds have a profile on at least one SNS.<sup>4</sup>

*Let your kids know you care and remain approachable.*

## What are the benefits of social networking?

Social networking offers many benefits for children including the opportunity to:

- Stay connected to family and friends
- Connect with new people, locally and around the world, who share their interests and experiences
- Enhance their creativity by sharing music and artistic work
- Connect with people from different backgrounds and explore diverse ideas
- Develop and express their individual identity
- Take part in enhanced learning opportunities (e.g. collaborate on school projects).<sup>5</sup>

## What are the risks of social networking?

Before reading this section, note that risk does not equal harm. For example, the *AU Kids Online* survey found that 28% of Australian 11 to 16 year olds had seen sexual images online, but most said they weren't bothered by the experience.<sup>4</sup> Many children will never experience any of the issues described below.

- Cyberbullying refers to people embarrassing, harassing or attacking others online. It can occur together with face to face bullying or on its own. Cyberbullying can have serious consequences for children and is covered in detail in a separate 'Cyberbullying' Hot Topic.
- Sexting is using the internet or mobile phone to create and share sexually explicit messages or images.<sup>6</sup> Sexting can be a serious issue, with both legal and emotional consequences. Please read the separate 'Sexting' Hot Topic for more information.
- Sexual predators are exceptionally skilled at using social media to identify and groom children for later sexual contact. Predators use social media to:
  - Obtain a child's contact details (from profiles or online chats)
  - Build rapport with a child (e.g. pretend to be a child in an online game)
  - Lower a child's inhibitions by slowly introducing sexual content into their conversations
  - Engage in sexting (often pretending to be the same age as the child)
  - Seek a face-to-face meeting with a child.<sup>7</sup>

Note that grooming children is a crime. If you suspect that your child is in contact with someone engaging in these behaviours, contact the police immediately.

- Loss of privacy and harm to your reputation – When young people make online friends with people they don't know in real life, their information can end up being shared far beyond their circle (e.g. with bullies or future employers) and can be almost impossible to remove. About 3 in 10 children aged 11-16 years have online friends who they first met online and with whom they have no offline connection.<sup>4</sup>
- Personal information posted on SNSs (e.g. birthday, full name, even hobbies and pets' names) can be used by bullies or stalkers, can help criminals guess passwords or target you for scams, help sexual predators build rapport and possibly lead to identity theft (when someone gets enough information to use your identity to borrow or steal money or commit other crimes using your name).
- Geotagging refers to location data being embedded in images taken on smart phones and some digital cameras. Location information can also be shared by some apps and by 'checking in' on Facebook. When images are shared online, the location data can be accessed by others, potentially revealing a home address to strangers or telling thieves you're away on holiday.
- Viruses and other malware – Malicious software designed to damage, disrupt or take control of your computer can be accidentally downloaded from SNSs, typically by clicking on a link posted by someone else.
- Access to inappropriate content – SNSs can provide opportunities for children to access materials such as sexual or violent images, information about weapons or drugs, and sites that promote behaviours such as self-harm or extreme dieting.

*Calm conversations with your kids will always be more productive.*

## How can my young person use social networking safely?

### Practical tips to tell children and young people

- Set your profile to friends only – The default setting for many SNSs is to share all information publicly. You need to change the setting to share only with friends.
- Use strong passwords that are easy to remember, but hard for others to guess. Learn how to make a strong password at: [www.staysmartonline.gov.au/computers/set\\_and\\_use\\_strong\\_passwords](http://www.staysmartonline.gov.au/computers/set_and_use_strong_passwords)
- Don't share passwords with friends. Children do this a lot as a sign of trust between friends, but problems can occur when friends fall out.
- Think before you post – Would I want the whole world to see this? Even when I'm an adult? Once something is online, it can't ever be completely removed.
- Think before you click – How do I know this is safe? Never click on links in emails or on SNSs. They may download malware to your computer or be an attempt to get your personal information.
- Don't connect with people you don't know in real life. People aren't always who they say they are. If you do connect with someone new online, NEVER agree to meet them face-to-face without a trusted adult present.
- Don't put personal information that identifies you on SNSs and don't post information about other people without their permission. This includes photos that reveal identifying information (e.g. a school uniform).
- Disable geotagging and avoid behaviours that reveal your location (e.g. 'checking in' on Facebook).
- Tell a trusted adult straight away if you see something online that bothers you, or if someone is bullying or harassing you.

### Practical tips for parents<sup>8,9,10</sup>

- Get involved – Be aware of what your child is doing online. Become familiar with SNSs – explore them with your child or join up yourself to see how they work. Be Facebook friends with your children.
- Agree on clear expectations and rules – Agree on acceptable online behaviour, which sites are okay, and the amount of time they can spend online. Be aware that having lots of restrictions minimises risk, but also minimises opportunity to develop skills and become resilient.<sup>4</sup>
- Actively talk to your child about things they may find problematic online. Help them develop proactive coping strategies such as blocking unwanted contacts, telling a trusted adult, or making an official report of the problem.
- Be aware that saying 'No' may not work – As children get older, rules become less effective, so discuss safety strategies for things like meeting new people, in case it happens anyway.
- Explain the implications – Ensure children under-

stand that things they post can be copied and shared elsewhere, and that it's almost impossible to remove them after that happens. Young people may not think about the future and need help to realise that something which seems harmless now could be very embarrassing or damaging in the future (e.g. when a potential employer sees it).

- Keep lines of communication open – Reassure children that they won't get in trouble for telling you when something goes wrong (e.g. if they accessed inappropriate content or contacted a stranger).
- Learn about the privacy and protection features of the SNSs your child uses. Help children review their privacy settings.
- Use safety tools – All major internet service providers offer tools to help manage children's online access (e.g. filtering inappropriate websites). Keep in mind that a lot of children's access to the internet takes place away from home on smart phones or other hand held devices.
- Never ignore or minimise cyberbullying – If your child shows signs of being cyberbullied, listen to their concerns, work with them to take control of the situation and seek professional help if needed.
- Encourage your child to engage in outside activities and value face-to-face time with friends.

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### Kids Helpline

1800 55 1800 | [kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)

**Kids Helpline is Australia's only free, 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25.**

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# STAYING SAFE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

## PROTECTION AND PREVENTION ADVICE FROM ACORN – THE AUSTRALIAN CYBERCRIME ONLINE REPORTING NETWORK

**Y**ou need to think carefully about how much information you share on social media sites, and who is able to see it. While most people who use social networking sites are well intentioned, there are others out there who may copy, forward or save your information to embarrass you, damage your reputation, or steal your identity. Once something goes online, you have very little chance of deleting it.

You should consider the following practical tips for staying safe while using social media:

- Always type your social media website address into your browser
- Never use the same password that you use for your bank or email accounts
- Have a different password for each social media site
- Only accept friend requests from people you know
- Avoid clicking on links in 'friend request' emails
- Be careful about how much information you share online and with whom, and
- Think before you post – how could your post affect you and others, now and into the future.



If you are being bullied or harassed or have seen abusive or inappropriate content on social media, you can report this to the relevant social media provider.

The process for doing this is slightly different for each site:

- Facebook – You can report abusive content on Facebook by using the Report link that appears near the content itself.

While most people who use social networking sites are well intentioned, there are others out there who may copy, forward or save your information to embarrass you, damage your reputation, or steal your identity. Once something goes online, you have very little chance of deleting it.



Facebook's 'How to Report Things' page has instructions on how to report abusive content for the different features.

- **Twitter** – You can file a report that someone is posting abusive messages by going to Twitter's 'Forms' page. More information on Twitter's policy on abusive behaviour is available at the 'How to Report Abusive Behaviour' page.
- **LinkedIn** – You can report inappropriate content that violates LinkedIn's 'Community Guidelines' or 'User Agreement' by flagging it directly from the site. Your identity will not be shared if you flag an item. You can also report spam, phishing and other suspicious messages. After reviewing reported items, LinkedIn will take them down if necessary.
- **YouTube** – You can report content that violates YouTube's 'Community Guidelines' by flagging it. Flagging videos does not take them down straight away, but sends a report back to YouTube staff to review the flagged video. More information on flagging videos is available at YouTube's 'Community Guidelines Violations' page. To report a case of harassment, privacy or bullying, you can visit YouTube's 'Help and Safety Tool' page.
- **Instagram** – You can report inappropriate photos, comments, or users that are in violation of Instagram's 'Community Guidelines' or directly to Instagram with the built-in flagging feature.

You can also report serious cyberbullying or stalking behaviour to the ACORN if the conduct is intended to make you (or the victim you are reporting on behalf of) feel fearful, uncomfortable, offended or harassed.

There are a number of other sites which provide more information about staying safe on social media:

- The Easy Guide to Social

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If you are being bullied or harassed or have seen abusive or inappropriate content on social media, you can report this to the relevant social media provider.

Networking ([www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/games-apps-and-social-networking](http://www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/games-apps-and-social-networking)) provides information about the cyber safety features of different social networking sites, search engines and online games. It provides instructions on how to adjust privacy settings as well as site specific advice on how to report cyberbullying, abuse and inappropriate content to social media providers.

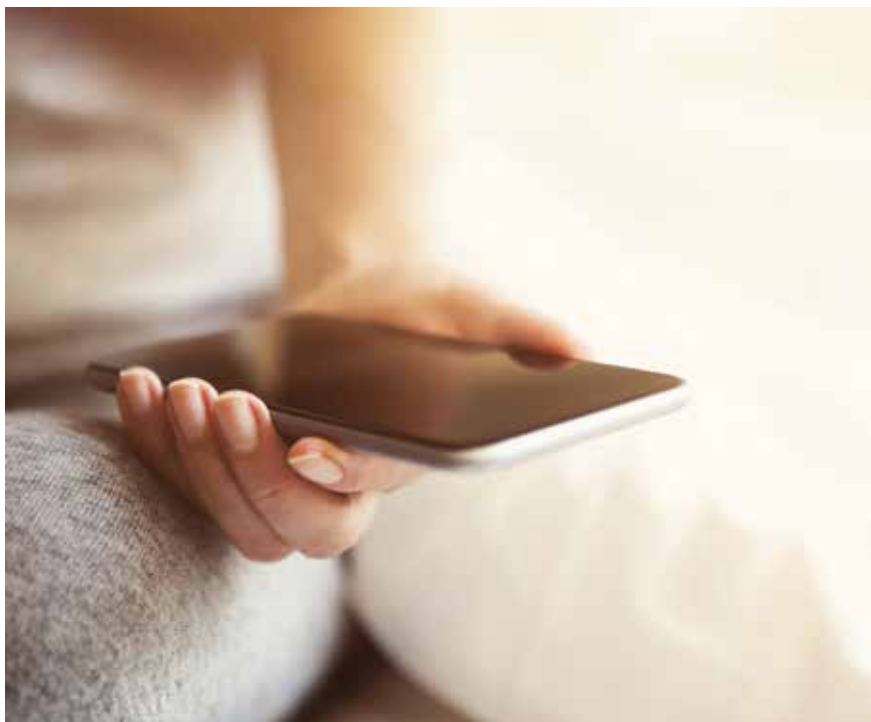
- ThinkUKnow ([www.thinkuknow.org.au/site/social-media](http://www.thinkuknow.org.au/site/social-media)) provides a step-by-step guide to blocking users on social media, as well as other useful tips for staying safe on social media.
- The Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner ([www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)) leads online safety education for the Federal Government and protects Australian children when they experience cyberbullying by administering a complaints scheme. The Office also deals with complaints

about prohibited online content. Read more about the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner, and how children and young people under 18 can report cyberbullying at [www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au).

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# PHOTOS, VIDEOS AND SOCIAL MEDIA



Uploading photos and videos onto social media services and websites can be a great way to share memorable moments with friends and family, or to boost engagement with your community. But there can be risks associated with posting photos and videos of children online. There are some things you can do to reduce the risk of photos and videos being shared more widely than you intended, explains the [Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner](#)

## Public and private places

**T**he law treats taking photos or videos in private places and public places differently. In public places you have the right to take a photo unless you do so in a way that is offensive or makes a nuisance to those around you. When an event is taking place at a private place people can enforce rules about photography, so you should consider gaining consent before taking photos and videos.

## Think before you post

Once posted online any photo or video can be shared, copied and/or manipulated. You may not be able to control how a photo or video is used by others.

- Think about:
- Who might be able to see these photos?
  - Is there anyone else in this photo? (Be mindful that some people may not want their

- image to be published)
- Will this photo offend anyone?

## Privacy settings

When uploading photos and videos check your privacy settings on the social media services you use as well as on the device. You can change privacy settings to control who sees your photos.

See our 'Games, apps and social networking' page for further information on privacy settings: [www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/games-apps-and-social-networking](http://www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/games-apps-and-social-networking)

*Once posted online any photo or video can be shared, copied and/or manipulated.*

## Alternate ways to share photos and videos

Other ways that may give you more control when sharing photos and videos include:

- Sharing photos by email

- Using a secure online portal (secure online facility enabling organisations to authorise access through secure passwords)
- Multimedia messaging service (a standard way to send messages that include photos and videos over a cellular network).

## Storing photos and videos taken by teachers or coaches

Ideally organisations and schools should have protocols on the storing of videos and photos which require:

- Secure passcodes/passwords for all devices to stop unauthorised access
- Use of devices that are owned by the organisation and/or school to take photos and videos
- Secure storage of photos and videos (e.g. secure school server) and their deletion from the devices within a reasonable time.

## Geolocation

Sharing photos online can sometimes identify your location.

If you do not want to share your location through your photos:

- Check the location settings on your device to know what apps are using geolocation and turn them off or limit the function
- Ensure that GPS locations and schedules of children's activities are not shared online.

Find out more about location-based services at: [www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/esafety-issues/social-networking](http://www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/esafety-issues/social-networking)

## INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Parents, families and children enjoy seeing photos of their achievements but this should always be done safely.

## Can I take photos and videos of my child at school or club events?

Check with the school or organisation that arranged the event. Your child's school and/or organisation should be able to provide details of their social media policy or photography/recording policy.

**What can I do if I have concerns about current photography practices at my child's school/ club/organisation?**

Contact the school or organisation directly to raise your concerns. Schools and organisations should be able to refer you to their social media policy. This should provide details about the type of photos that can be posted, the way they will be used and how they obtain consent from parents or carers.

**Do photos and videos once posted on social media sites, become the property of the site owners?**

Some social media sites give themselves the rights to copy and use your photos and videos. Social media services may have Terms and Conditions or a Statement of Rights and Responsibilities which outlines how they manage sharing your photos, videos and information – these should be reviewed carefully before making any decisions on whether you consent to photos of your child being posted.

**A photo or video of my child has been posted online without my permission. How can I get it removed?**

In the first instance you should ask the person who posted the photo or video to remove it. If the person refuses or you don't know who posted it, you may wish to contact or report your concern to the specific social media site.

Visit our 'Games, apps and social networking' pages for more information about contacting or reporting material to social media services: [www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/games-apps-and-social-networking](http://www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/games-apps-and-social-networking)

**INFORMATION FOR SCHOOLS AND ORGANISATIONS**

Schools, community organisations and sporting clubs may take and share photographs and videos to record events and celebrate achievements. To ensure that everyone can enjoy sharing photos and videos, you should consider having a social media policy and consent arrangements in place.

**Does my organisation need a social media policy?**

It is good practice for all organisations to have a current social media policy.

*When uploading photos and videos check your privacy settings on the social media services you use as well as on the device. You can change privacy settings to control who sees your photos.*

The policy should provide information on:

- Defining and setting out how your organisation will approach and manage social media
- What constitutes acceptable and non-acceptable use of social media
- The unacceptability of cyberbullying/harassment and the steps the organisation will take in response to incidents
- Procedures for monitoring social media accounts





- Use of organisation or school logos/IP or reference to a brand
- How the organisation trains staff in social media
- Consequences of non-compliance
- How the organisation will manage the sharing of photos and videos of children.

Social media policies should also include a mechanism to acknowledge and accept the terms of the policy. Further information on social media and sport can be found at the Clearinghouse for Sport website: [www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au](http://www.clearinghouseforsport.gov.au)

### **What is best practice for photographing and filming children?**

Best practice around photographing and filming children includes:

- Seeking parental consent for photos and videos on a child's enrolment or registration
- Stating whether the organisation permits parents/carers to record events.

For schools please refer to the body representing your school sector for more information on their social media policies.

Further information on policies, images and storage can also be found within the Digital Business Kit at the Early Childhood Australia website: [www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au)

### **Do I need to get consent from parents when publishing photos and videos on social media?**

Organisations and schools need written consent from the parents/carers of a child or young person for any photos or videos before they are published on any media including social media sites, websites or newsletters.

*Photos and videos on social media sites may be easily copied and uploaded to many other websites. Before posting a photo or video consider your intended audience.*

### **How do we manage information, photos and videos posted on our social media sites?**

Schools and organisations should appoint a moderator for their social media pages who will be responsible for reviewing and monitoring the content regularly. A moderation policy should also be developed, and should be accessible in the school or organisation's social media policy.

The moderator should:

- Be aware of privacy settings on social media services
- Understand the websites/apps that they are using when uploading photos and videos

- Proactively monitor the social media page
- Remove potentially defamatory material as soon as possible.

Information and safety guides for the most popular social media sites and apps can be found on our 'Games, apps and social networking' pages: [www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/games-apps-and-social-networking](http://www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/games-apps-and-social-networking)

### **What should we be aware of when posting photos and videos?**

Photos and videos on social media sites may be easily copied and uploaded to many other websites. Before posting a photo or video consider your intended audience.

Avoid photos and videos that:

- Are indecent, offensive or demeaning to any person
- Harm or injure someone's reputation and/or open them to public ridicule and embarrassment
- Contain personal details for example full names, personal contact information or uniforms that identify location
- Show a child who is clearly upset or distressed.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies website ([www.aifs.gov.au](http://www.aifs.gov.au)) provides further information on the protection and privacy and the safety of children together with guidance on the publishing images

# Sexting and young people

- Sexting is a mix of the words 'sex' and 'texting' and refers to the sending and receiving of sexually explicit messages or images between mobile phones.
- Young people can feel socially pressured to send provocative or sexual photos, messages or videos. They can also feel uncomfortable about potentially compromising themselves or other people involved.
- Although sharing provocative text messages and images may be considered innocent, or harmless fun, sexting can have serious social and legal consequences.
- Aside from humiliating the person involved in the image, sexting to anyone under 18 years of age is a crime in Australia. It is also a crime when involving the sexual harassment of people regardless of age.
- Existing national laws in Australia treat consensual sexting between teenagers as a child pornography offence. Penalties can include prison sentences and sex offender registration.
- Everything you send via text may become public; once you have sent something you cannot get it back. If you are worried about the consequences of having sent a sexual or naked image or text, you can consider the following options:

## If you sent a sext

- If you sent it to a boyfriend or girlfriend, consider asking them to delete the message from their phone or inbox.
- If you have sent an image or text that you feel is now out of your control, talk to a trusted adult or contact a counsellor at Kids Helpline ([www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)) to work out what you can do.

## If someone sends you a sext

- Do not forward the image to anyone else; consider the feelings of the person involved.
- Tell the sender that you do not want to receive any more of those types of texts from them; if they persist, block the sender, unfriend them on your social network account, and block them from your mobile phone.
- You may even need to change your mobile phone number; if so, ensure only your trusted friends have your new number.
- Tell someone you trust – a parent, friend, school counsellor or teacher.
- If a sext image has been posted onto a social networking site, you may be able to report the picture and have it taken off the site.
- You can also make a report to your mobile phone company if you are receiving unwanted pictures or requests for pictures.
- If you are concerned about an image that you have sent or received, or someone else has posted sexual photos or videos of you online, you can visit the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner website ([www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)) for advice.
- You can also speak to a counsellor at the Kids Helpline (Tel: 1800 55 1800), or send a message to Lawmail ([www.lawmail.org.au](http://www.lawmail.org.au)) a legal service for Australian children and young people which provides legal information, advice and referrals by email.
- If you are harassed, you may wish to apply for a Protection Order to stop a person from contacting you or sending out images to harass you.
- If sexual images are being spread without your consent, or if you feel threatened or unsafe, you can report it to the police – but, you need to be aware you may be charged if you took and/or posted the offending image. The police do however have discretion not to charge victims of unwanted sexting.

## SOURCES:

Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner, [www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)  
Kids Helpline, [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)  
Lawstuff, [www.lawstuff.org.au](http://www.lawstuff.org.au)



of children and young people online.

For further information on taking photos and videos of children in sporting clubs see the Play by the Rules website: [www.playbytherules.net.au](http://www.playbytherules.net.au)

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Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner. *Photos, videos and social media*. Retrieved from [www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au) on 18 July 2016.

# SOCIAL MEDIA AND PRIVACY FAQs

Some frequently asked questions about privacy on social media answered by the [Office of the Australian Information Commissioner](#)

## **What are social networking sites?**

**S**ocial networking sites are websites that allow people to socialise and communicate online. This often involves the sharing of personal information, through comments, the sending of messages and the posting of photos and videos.

While there are some privacy risks associated with social networking, these can be lessened by taking steps to protect your personal information online.

## **What happens to the information I post on social networking sites?**

The information you share online may be permanently recorded. Even when you deactivate your account, the information you shared may remain in archived or old versions of websites, or in comments you've made on other people's pages.

You may not have control over who sees or accesses the personal information you share on social media. The results of over-sharing, or having your posts shared without your consent, can be as varied as personal and professional reputational damage and identity theft. You should always think carefully about the information and content you post about yourself.

Read the privacy policies of the social networking sites you use and choose the privacy settings that best suit your needs.

## **Who is allowed to use the personal information I post on social networking sites?**

If the information on your social networking page is publicly available, then anyone can look at it. This means potential employers could look at your page and perhaps

base their decisions on what they see there.

Even if you use privacy settings to limit who can see your information, you may not be able to control how people you have permitted to see your information use it. For example, your friends may republish your information to a wider audience than you did.

If an entity covered by the *Privacy Act 1988* (Privacy Act) collects and uses the information you share on social media, then it must comply with its obligations outlined in the *Privacy Act*. For example, the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) are a set of rules in the *Privacy Act* that set out how an entity must handle your personal information and what it is allowed to use it for. To find out more about APPs, and what they mean for you, read our APP quick reference tool.

## **Do I have rights under the Privacy Act when I use social networking sites?**

Whether you have rights under the *Privacy Act* will depend upon whether the social networking site is covered by the *Privacy Act*.

To be covered by the *Privacy Act*, an organisation must have an Australian link. A number of factors will determine whether an organisation has an Australian link, including whether it has a presence in Australia and whether it carries on business in Australia. If the social networking site is based in another country and does not have a presence in Australia, then you may not have privacy rights under Australian law when you use the site.

The *Privacy Act* also doesn't cover organisations with an annual turnover of \$3 million or less, unless an exception applies.

The *Privacy Act* doesn't cover individuals acting in a personal capacity. This means you generally can't enforce a privacy right

While there are some privacy risks associated with social networking, these can be lessened by taking steps to protect your personal information online.



against an individual, though you may have actions against them under other laws. For example, while you may not be able to make a complaint under the *Privacy Act* about an individual who posts your personal information on a social networking site, you may have an action against them under copyright or defamation law.

If you need more information about this point, you can contact our Enquiries Line.

### **What can I do if someone posts information about me on a social networking site that I want removed?**

While the *Privacy Act* doesn't cover individuals acting in a personal capacity, if someone has posted information about you that you want removed, first ask the person to take it down. If they refuse, there are other steps you can take.

You can contact the social networking site and ask them to remove the information. Most social networking sites have procedures in place for you to request the removal of your personal information for privacy reasons.

If you are a school student and the other person is a student at your school, you can report it to a teacher you trust or your school counsellor. Schools generally take bullying very seriously and may be able to speak to the person on your behalf. The Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner leads online safety education for the Australian Government and administers a complaint scheme for Australian children when they experience cyberbullying.

Also remember, you should treat others the way you wish to be treated. If someone asks you to take down a photograph of them that you have posted on your social media page, take it down. It might not seem like a bad photo to you, but people have different comfort zones when it comes to their privacy.

### **How can I make a privacy complaint about a social networking site?**

You have several options for complaining about how your personal



information has been used on a social networking site.

#### **Contact the social networking site**

You can raise your complaint with the social networking site. This is often a good first step. Details about how to make a complaint are usually found in the 'help' or 'privacy' sections of social networking websites. It is not necessary to join a social networking site in order to make a complaint about one.

#### **Contact the organisation that used your information**

If your complaint relates to how another organisation has misused information about you that they collected from your social media page, you should complain to that organisation.

#### **Call our Enquiries Line – we may be able to help**

If an organisation doesn't adequately resolve your complaint and it's covered by the *Privacy Act*, you can make a complaint to our office. Contact our Enquiries Line for more information (Tel: 1300 363 992).

### **What can I do if I'm being threatened, harassed or defamed online?**

If you have been threatened, harassed or defamed online, there are a number of organisations that may be able to help you.

- The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

can help you if your complaint relates to how an entity covered by the *Privacy Act* has handled your personal information.

- The Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner can help with complaints that relate to the cyberbullying of an Australian child.
- ThinkUKnow is an internet safety program for young people, parents, carers and teachers that includes information on bullying and harassment.

If the harassment you've experienced is serious, you should consider contacting your local police for more information.

If you think you have been defamed online, consider seeking legal advice.

### **Where can I get more information about keeping safe on social media?**

In addition to the OAIC, the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner, ThinkUKnow, and StaySmart Online have information on how you can protect your personal information when socialising online.

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Office of the Australian Information Commissioner. *Social media*. Retrieved from [www.oaic.gov.au](http://www.oaic.gov.au) on 19 July 2016.



# CYBERBULLYING

## FACT SHEET ADVICE AIMED AT PARENTS FROM RAISING CHILDREN NETWORK

### ABOUT CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying is using digital technology to deliberately hurt someone. It can happen in lots of different ways. You can help your child avoid cyberbullying by agreeing on rules about smartphone and computer use. Talking with your child about staying safe online is important too.

#### Cyberbullying: what you need to know

Cyberbullying is when a person uses digital technology to deliberately and repeatedly harass, humiliate, embarrass, torment, threaten, pick on or intimidate another person.

Cyberbullying happens in lots of different ways – by mobile phone, text messages and email, in online games, and through social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, Tumblr, Snapchat and Instagram.

Examples of cyberbullying include deliberately:

- Posting or sending messages that threaten people or put people down
- Leaving people out of online games or social forums
- Spreading nasty rumours online about people
- Setting up unkind or unpleasant fake social media accounts using real photos and contact details
- Trolling or stalking people online
- Sharing or forwarding people's personal information
- Posting insulting or embarrassing photos or videos of people
- Harassing other people in virtual environments or online games.

Cyberbullying can happen at any time of the day or night, anywhere there's internet or mobile access.

If your child has a disability, or is experiencing a mental health

#### Did you know

- About 20% of young Australians aged 8-17 years experience cyberbullying each year.
- Cyberbullying doesn't happen much under 10 years. It peaks at 11-15 years and slowly decreases over 15 years.
- Most victims and those who bully them know each other in real life. They often go to the same school, are the same gender and describe themselves as friends.

issue like depression or anxiety, this can make him more vulnerable to cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying can become offline bullying – for example, bullying at school. And face-to-face bullying can become cyberbullying.

*Cyberbullying is harmful. It's never cool, funny or OK. But only about 20% of teenagers have engaged in bullying or been bullied. This means that most teenagers are using the internet happily and responsibly.*

Cyberbullying happens in lots of different ways – by mobile phone, text messages and email, in online games, and through social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, Tumblr, Snapchat and Instagram.

#### Effects of cyberbullying

Children and teenagers who experience cyberbullying can end up being bullied at school. Cyberbullying often leaves teenagers with lowered self-esteem, less interest in school and low academic achievement.

Children and teenagers might feel confused by changes in their friendships groups. They might also feel alone, lonely and isolated. Cyberbullying can lead to mental health issues like depression, anxiety, stress and, in extreme cases, suicidal thoughts.

Some victims of cyberbullying feel they have no safe place.

#### Helping your child avoid cyberbullying

Here are some things you can do to help make cyberbullying less likely to happen to your child:



## Agree on rules

Agreeing on clear rules about when your child can use her mobile phone, computer or tablet can help her avoid cyberbullying. For example, cyberbullying often happens at night through text messages and shared images. It's best if you agree to switch off all devices at night and leave them in a family area.

## Talk about cyberbullying with your child

It's a good idea to start talking about cyberbullying when your child first starts to use social media sites, or when he gets a mobile phone.

You can talk about:

- What cyberbullying looks like – for example, 'Cyberbullying is sending mean text messages, spreading rumours on social media, ganging up on a player in an online game, or sharing an embarrassing photo with other people'
- How it might feel to be cyberbullied – for example, 'Being cyberbullied can make you feel very upset and lonely. It can make you not want to join in activities where the cyberbully might be'
- The consequences of cyberbullying – for example, 'People who get cyberbullied can stop doing well at school and feel depressed or anxious.'

## Talk about being safe online

This might involve talking about things like:

- Online friends and messaging friend lists – if your child adds someone she doesn't really know as a 'buddy' or 'friend', it gives that person access to information about her that could be used for bullying
- Not giving out passwords to friends. Some teenagers do this as a sign of trust, but a password gives other people the power to pose as your child online
- Thinking before posting – if your child posts personal comments, photos or videos she might get unwanted attention or negative comments. The comments and photos can also be available online for a long time

- Telling you, a teacher or another trusted adult if she's worried about anything that's happening online.

*If you're concerned that your child is being cyberbullied, you can look for signs like changes in your child's school and social life, technology use, and emotions and behaviour. It's important to know how to spot cyberbullying signs and help your child.*

## How cyberbullying is different from other bullying

Cyberbullying is different from other kinds of bullying, for both the person engaging in bullying and the victim.

People using bullying behaviour often act more boldly online than if they were facing their victim in person. Sending taunts remotely and anonymously makes people doing the bullying feel safer and more powerful. They can't see their victims' physical or emotional responses, which might otherwise have an impact on the bullying behaviour.

For people being bullied, cyberbullying is tough to deal with. Because teenagers use mobiles and the internet a lot of the time, bullying can happen 24 hours a day, not just when they're at school. Victims of cyberbullying might not know who's doing the bullying or when the bully will strike next. This can make teenagers feel persecuted and unsafe, even when they're at home.

Bullying messages posted online are very hard to get rid of. These messages can be forwarded instantly and be seen by many people, instead of only the few people present in face-to-face bullying situations.

## CYBERBULLYING: SPOTTING THE SIGNS AND HELPING YOUR CHILD

Cyberbullying can be hard to spot, so it's important to know what signs to look for and how to help your child handle cyberbullying.

### Cyberbullying: how to spot the signs

Cyberbullying can be tough to spot.



This is because many young people who are being bullied might not realise what's happening at first. Also, they sometimes don't want to tell teachers or parents, perhaps because they feel embarrassed. They might be scared that it'll get worse if an adult tries to do something about it, or they might be worried about losing their computer or mobile phone privileges.

If you're concerned that your child is being cyberbullied, you can watch for changes in your child's school and social life, technology use, and emotions and behaviour. Remember that you know your child and how he usually behaves, even if you find it hard to keep up with the technologies he uses and the different ways that cyberbullying can happen.

Here are some cyberbullying warning signs to watch for.

### School and social life

Your child:

- Refuses to go to school
- Starts getting lower marks than usual
- Doesn't want to see friends
- Doesn't want to take part in her usual sports and other activities
- Avoids group gatherings.

### Technology use

Your child:

- Is upset during or after using the internet
- Spends much longer than usual online, or refuses to use the computer or mobile phone at all
- Stops what he's doing on the computer if you go past.

### Emotions and behaviour

Your child:

- Is more moody than usual
- Shows obvious changes in behaviour, sleep or appetite



- Gets unusually angry at home
- Feels sick or complains of frequent headaches or stomach aches.

*If you're worried your child might be the one doing the bullying, you could start by talking with your child about being a responsible digital citizen and treating other people with respect online. Acknowledging that your child might be the one behaving this way is hard, but taking action is an important step towards getting it to stop.*

### Helping children and teenagers handle cyberbullying

If children and teenagers are being bullied online, it's great for them to feel they have some power to resolve the problem themselves. These six steps are a good way for your child to G.E.T.R.I.D. of a cyberbully.

You might need to help your child work through these steps and report a cyberbullying incident. Your support might make the difference, because some teenagers feel too emotionally exhausted to report incidents themselves.

#### 1. G – go block or delete the person engaging in cyberbullying

Blocking someone from friend lists helps stop the person engaging in cyberbullying from posting or uploading offensive content about your child.

If the cyberbullying is happening through text messages or phone calls, you can ask the service provider to monitor the calls or texts. If necessary, the service provider can contact the sender, because mobile phone holders breach their contracts if they use their phones to bully. If necessary, you can change the phone number.

#### 2. E – ensure you keep evidence of bullying

Save and print out any bullying messages. Use the print screen key or command on your computer keyboard. You can also take a screenshot of a mobile phone screen.

#### 3. T – tell someone

If your child shares feelings with a parent, older sibling, relative, teacher or close friend as soon as possible, it'll help her feel less isolated.

#### 4. R – report abuse

Reporting bullying to web administrators is usually as easy as clicking on a 'report abuse' link on a website. The website will remove the offensive content, but this can take time. If the material isn't removed in 48 hours, you can lodge a complaint through the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner.

If your child has been threatened, he should also report it to the local police. If your child is in immediate danger, he should call 000.

There could be consequences for the person engaging in bullying if you report the abuse.

It's a good idea for you and your child to look together at the social media sites she uses to make sure she knows how to report abuse.

#### 5. I – initiate control

If your child takes control of the cyberbullying situation, she can feel safer and break the cycle. A big part of taking control is reporting the abuse, but not retaliating or responding aggressively to the cyberbully. In fact, it's best for your child not to engage with the cyberbully at all. Retaliating or even telling the bully to stop can make the bullying worse.

#### 6. D – delete the bullying message

After you've saved evidence of the bullying, delete the message or post. Don't forward it, repost it, retweet it or send it to other people in any way because they might forward it too.

### Helping teenagers who have been cyberbullied

Your child won't always be able to solve cyberbullying problems on his own. It's important to step in if you're concerned. Your loving support is vital to your child's wellbeing.

Here are some ways you can offer immediate practical and emotional help and support:

- Just listen to your child to start with. Jumping in too quickly to fix the problem can sometimes make it worse, so be sensitive to your child's needs.
- Let your child know that you'll help if she wants you to, and that things will get better if the problem is brought out in the open.
- If you need to get your child's school involved, make sure your child knows and that he has a say in the process. It might help him to know that telling a teacher is a good idea if he thinks someone from the school is involved.
- Stay calm and resist the temptation to ban your child from using the internet or her mobile phone. Banning online access could make your child less likely to share her online problems.
- Get professional help if your child seems distressed or withdrawn. Your child can contact Kids Helpline – Teens by phoning 1800 551 800, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

#### Acknowledgements

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Raising Children Network (Australia) Limited. *About cyberbullying; Cyberbullying: spotting the signs and helping your child* (Last updated 24 November 2016). Retrieved from <http://raisingchildren.net.au> on 28 November 2016.

# Blocking kids from social media won't solve the problem of cyberbullying

ONE IN FIVE 14- TO 15-YEAR-OLDS HAVE BEEN CYBERBULLIED, BUT THERE ARE WAYS TO HELP KIDS, WRITES **KARYN HEALY**

**B**ullying is among parents' greatest concerns. And little wonder. It's the biggest modifiable risk factor for children and adolescents developing mental illnesses. Every few weeks there are reports of children and teens who have taken their lives, allegedly due to bullying and cyberbullying.

One in five (21% of) 14- to 15-year-olds report having been cyberbullied, up from 4% in 8- to 9-year-olds. Bullies post threatening messages, spread rumours and share humiliating images via sites such as Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat and Instagram for teenagers, and Moshi Monsters and Club Penguin for pre-teens.

But contrary to public perception, bullying via social media is not as common as traditional forms of face-to-face bullying.

It's natural for parents to want to protect their children and teens from bullying on social media, but simply taking their devices away is not the solution.

## WHO IS CYBER BULLIED?

Students who are bullied online are also likely to be victims of traditional bullying and most know the perpetrator in real life.

Like traditional bullying, the highest risk time for cyberbullying is at transition to high school.

Children and teens are also more likely to be bullied on social media if they:

- Spend a lot of time online
- Engage in risky online behaviours such as sharing passwords
- Use social media sites to bully others.

Victims of cyberbullying report high rates of anxiety and depression.

But the evidence is mixed about whether cyber or traditional bullying impacts more on mental health. It's likely that both have a serious impact.

There is also a cumulative effect: the more experiences of bullying (whether cyber or traditional), the worse the mental health risk.

## SOCIAL MEDIA CAN BE GOOD AND BAD

Most Australian children (78%) have used social media by the ages of eight or nine. Usage increases during teenage years, with most 16-17 year olds (92%) accessing it at least once a month, and around half with daily access.

When parents see a problem, it's sometimes tempting to try to ban children from using social media. But a ban is difficult to enforce, given the reliance on the internet for education.

It may also be counter-productive. Most 14- to 17-year-olds report that the internet is very important to them, saying it improves their wellbeing and relationships.

A recent review of international research confirms that participation in social media can increase teenagers' feelings of self-esteem, support, and fitting in with a group. Children relate to each other through social media, for good and for bad.

## SETTING UP SAFE PROCESSES

You can help your child from being targeted by adequately supervising them when they're online, only

Participation in social media can increase teenagers' feelings of self-esteem, support, and fitting in with a group. Children relate to each other through social media, for good and for bad.



providing access to social media sites that are appropriate for their level of maturity, and maintaining good lines of communication.

To help decide whether social media sites are appropriate for your child's age, read the 'terms of use' and check the minimum age. You can then help your child to set an appropriate privacy setting.

It's important to educate you child about about internet safety. This includes ensuring they only 'friend' people they know in real life, and that they consider the possible impacts of information before posting.

Good cybersafety resources include the Office of the eSafety Commissioner's downloadable brochures and the Alannah and Madeline Foundation's eLicence. School-based education programs have also been shown to reduce cyberbullying.

Try keeping computers only in the common area of the house, friending or following your child online, and occasionally checking their online profile.

Over time, you can give your child more independence as they develop their skills to manage more complicated situations online. But try to maintain good communication so they can come to you with any problems – this includes listening without overreacting.

Look out for signs of distress, such as greater emotional reactivity, avoiding school or social situations, sleep disturbance, or a drop in school marks.

If your child is unwilling to speak with you, they may be willing to call a support service such as the Kids Helpline.

### WHAT IF YOUR CHILD HAS A PROBLEM?

If the problem involves someone he or she knows in real life, your child might be able to sort out the problem directly. Or you can ask the school for help.

You can help your child decide whether to block or unfriend online users who are causing distress. It's wise to keep a record of problems, by taking screen shots. Offensive content can be reported to the website or carrier, and if not addressed, can be reported to the Children's eSafety Commissioner.

If you think your child is in danger, contact the police or Crimestoppers.

Finally, if your child suffers ongoing distress, consider getting professional help from a psychologist, psychiatrist or your GP.

**Karyn Healy** is Program Coordinator (Psychologist), Resilience Triple P program, Parenting and Family Support Centre, The University of Queensland.

## THE CONVERSATION

Healy, K (14 October 2016). *Blocking kids from social media won't solve the problem of cyberbullying*. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com> on 17 October 2016.



# HOW TO REPORT INAPPROPRIATE, HARMFUL OR CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES

Information courtesy of [ThinkUKnow](#), a cyber safety program that provides accessible cyber safety education to parents, carers and teachers through schools and organisations across Australia

*If you think a child is in immediate danger, call Triple Zero (000).*

This section provides information and facilities to help you report inappropriate, harmful or criminal activities that occur online or via a mobile device.

This information is for people who live in Australia only. For advice on reporting these issues from another country, please visit the Virtual Global Taskforce.

## ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

### What is online child sexual exploitation?

The deliberate actions taken by an adult to form a trusting relationship with a child with the intent of later facilitating sexual contact is known as online grooming.

This can take place in chat rooms, instant messaging, social networking sites and email. Once contact has been made, child sex offenders then move towards more traditional means of communication such as over the phone.

### Advice

It is important to educate young people on the ways in which to recognise inappropriate or suspicious behaviour online. They need to be careful who they communicate with and should never agree to meet in person someone that they have only met online.

It needs to be reinforced that personal information should not be posted or shared over the internet. Young people need to be aware of what messages they are sending about themselves which may appeal to online child sex offenders.

### What to do next

Report: If you believe that someone has behaved inappropriately or in a sexual manner towards a young person, you should report it.

You can report this to the Australian Federal Police (AFP) via their online form.

*If you believe a child is in immediate danger or risk, call 000 or contact your local police.*

### Further support

If you have been groomed online, or had an uncomfortable experience, there are a number of people you can talk to:

- Reach Out
- LifeLine 13 11 14
- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800

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## INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

### What is inappropriate content?

Under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*, certain types of online content are prohibited. These include, but are not limited to: child abuse images, unrestricted access to pornography, illegal activities, and terrorist-related material.

### Advice

It is important to prevent young people from accessing this type of material as it may be psychologically harmful. It may be worthwhile discussing appropriate safety guidelines for using the internet with young people and an internet content filter may be useful for young children.

### What to do next

If you have come across content which you believe to be illegal or prohibited, you can report it to the eSafety Hotline. Reports made to the eSafety Hotline may be referred to the police for consideration and possible investigation.

### Further support

If you have been exposed to inappropriate content and want to speak to someone about it you can talk to:

- Reach Out
- LifeLine 13 11 14
- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800

## CYBERCRIME

### Report a cybercrime

The Australian Cybercrime Online Reporting Network (ACORN) is a secure reporting and referral service for cybercrime and online incidents which may be in breach of Australian law. Certain reports will be directed to Australian law enforcement and government agencies for further investigation.

### What can I report on the ACORN?

Common types of cybercrime include hacking, scams, fraud, identity theft, attacks on computer systems and illegal or prohibited online content. Click here to learn more about cybercrime: [www.acorn.gov.au/learn-about-cybercrime](http://www.acorn.gov.au/learn-about-cybercrime)

### How do I make a report?

The following screens will guide you to make a report. Provide as much detail as possible so we can best process

your report. You should keep any relevant information about the incident in case police contact you. This could include emails, screenshots or any other evidence kept.

You should not provide any personal financial details when reporting. You should not report on a device which you think might be infected by a virus.

The report must be completed in one session and will automatically close after 5 hours of inactivity.

### What happens next?

Shortly after you submit your report, you will receive a confirmation email with a unique ACORN reference number if you provide your email address.

Please be aware that not all reports to the ACORN will be referred or investigated. However, your report will be treated seriously and will help our law enforcement and government agencies to develop a clearer picture of cybercrime trends which affect Australians.

### We need to check that the ACORN can take your report

- What country do you reside in?
- What country do you believe the suspect resides in?

### Privacy

While the ACORN accepts anonymous reports, the site logs IP addresses of all reports received. This is to ensure that malicious reporting can be detected and acted on.

Please view our Privacy Policy for more details, at: [www.acorn.gov.au/privacy](http://www.acorn.gov.au/privacy)

## CYBERBULLYING

### Reporting cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is the use of information and communication technologies to support the deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour, by an individual or group, which is intended to harm another person.

If you are concerned for your safety, or another

person's safety you should immediately report this to your local Police.

If you believe someone is in immediate danger call Triple Zero (000).

### What to include in a cyberbullying report

You should try and collect evidence of cyberbullying and include it when submitting a report. Examples of evidence you could collect include screenshots, videos, chat logs, and web addresses (URLs).

### Child cyberbullying

In the first instance cyberbullying should be reported to the website, app or social media platform on which the cyberbullying has occurred. You should keep a record of this report and the date and time that it was submitted.

You may also wish to consider reporting the incident to your child's school if it involves other students from the same school.

If the victim is under 18 years of age the incident can be reported to the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner: [www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)

### Adult cyberbullying

In the first instance cyberbullying should be reported to the website, app or social media platform on which the cyberbullying has occurred. You should keep a record of this report and the date and time that it was submitted.

If the victim is aged 18 or older then the incident can then be reported to the Australian Cybercrime Online Reporting Network (ACORN): [www.report.acorn.gov.au](http://www.report.acorn.gov.au)

If you are concerned for your safety, or another person's safety you should immediately report this to your local Police.

If you believe someone is in immediate danger call Triple Zero (000).

### Further information

For further information, visit the:

- ThinkUKnow cyberbullying page: [www.thinkuknow.org.au/site/cyberbullying](http://www.thinkuknow.org.au/site/cyberbullying)
- ACORN cyberbullying page: [www.acorn.gov.au/learn-about-cybercrime/cyber-bullying](http://www.acorn.gov.au/learn-about-cybercrime/cyber-bullying)
- Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner cyberbullying page: [www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/esafety-issues/cyberbullying](http://www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/esafety-issues/cyberbullying)

### Further support

If you have been a victim of cyberbullying and need support, you can contact:

- Reach Out: [www.reachout.com/tough-times/bullying-abuse-and-violence](http://www.reachout.com/tough-times/bullying-abuse-and-violence)
- LifeLine 13 11 14, [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)
- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800, [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)



ThinkUKnow. *How to report*. Retrieved from [www.thinkuknow.org.au](http://www.thinkuknow.org.au) on 16 August 2016.

# EXPLORING ISSUES

## WORKSHEETS AND ACTIVITIES

The Exploring Issues section comprises a range of ready-to-use worksheets featuring activities which relate to facts and views raised in this book.

The exercises presented in these worksheets are suitable for use by students at middle secondary school level and beyond. Some of the activities may be explored either individually or as a group.

As the information in this book is compiled from a number of different sources, readers are prompted to consider the origin of the text and to critically evaluate the questions presented.

Is the information cited from a primary or secondary source? Are you being presented with facts or opinions?

Is there any evidence of a particular bias or agenda? What are your own views after having explored the issues?

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Brainstorm, individually or as a group, to find out what you know about social media.

**1. What does the term 'social media' mean, and what are some examples?**

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**2. Explain what 'screen time' refers to, and why monitoring screen time is recommended.**

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**3. What is 'sexting', and why is it a problem?**

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**4. What do the letters 'FOMO' stand for in relation to social media, and who can it affect?**

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## WRITTEN ACTIVITIES

Complete the following activity on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

*“Social networking is a great way to keep up with friends and family however, there are risks associated with social networking sites and children need support to navigate their online world safely.”*

Kids Helpline, *Enjoying Social Networking Safely.*

Consider the above statement, and in the spaces below address both the benefits and risks associated with social networking. Provide examples of these benefits and risks and explain how they may affect young people in both the online and offline world.

### BENEFITS

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## MULTIPLE CHOICE

Complete the following multiple choice questionnaire by circling or matching your preferred responses. The answers are at the end of the next page.

- 1. Which of the following are considered social networking services? (select all that apply)?**
  - a. Facebook
  - b. Twitter
  - c. Google
  - d. Instagram
  - e. Wikipedia
  - f. Snapchat
  - g. YouTube
  - h. WhatsApp
  - i. Tinder
  
- 2. What is the minimum age that most social media services and apps require users to be before they can join?**
  - a. No age restrictions
  - b. 8 years old
  - c. 10 years old
  - d. 13 years old
  - e. 16 years old
  - f. 18 years old
  - g. 21 years old
  
- 3. Which of the following are potential signs you could be spending too much time online? (select any that apply)**
  - a. Recurring headaches
  - b. Constant discussion about online games
  - c. Decline in school results
  - d. Prioritising online activities over everything else
  - e. Persistent eye strain
  - f. Spending increasing amounts of time outdoors
  - g. Withdrawing from 'real world' friends
  - h. Increased achievement in team sporting activities
  
- 4. Which of the following are considered the five (5) social media categories most often used by children?**
  - a. Educational games
  - b. Microblogging
  - c. News sites
  - d. Media sharing
  - e. Messaging apps
  - f. Research sharing
  - g. Multi-player online games
  - h. Educational apps
  - i. Social networks



## MULTIPLE CHOICE

### 5. Respond to the following statements by circling either 'True' or 'False':

- a. Abstaining from using electronic devices and services, such as smartphones and social media is known as e-fasting. **True / False**
- b. Online grooming is when an adult deliberately sets out to form a relationship of trust with a child online with the intention of future sexual abuse. **True / False**
- c. Once you've posted a photo or video online it's easy to remove completely from the internet in the future. **True / False**
- d. If you are being bullied or harassed, or have seen abusive or inappropriate content on social media, there is nothing you can do. **True / False**
- e. Sharing photos online can sometimes identify your location. **True / False**
- f. Nomophobia is the fear of being without a mobile phone. **True / False**
- g. The Australian Government recommends that children should spend no more than 2 hours daily on screen activities for entertainment. **True / False**

### MULTIPLE CHOICE ANSWERS

1 - a, b, d, f, g, h, i; 2 - d; 3 - a, b, c, d, e, g; 4 - b, d, e, g, i; 5 - a = T, b = T, c = F (once posted online any photo or video may be shared, copied and/or manipulated without your control by others), d = F (you can always report any bullying, harassment, abuse or inappropriate content to the relevant social media provider), e = T, f = T, g = T.

- In Australia, there were 1.49 million children and young people online during April 2015 and 1.04 million or 70% of them accessed social media or game sites (Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner, *Social media and kids: It's social – how kids are connecting online*). (p.1)
- A recent literature review found that social networking services play a vital role in young people's lives – delivering educational outcomes; facilitating supportive relationships; identity formation; and, promoting a sense of belonging and self-esteem (ReachOut.com, *Benefits of internet and social media*). (p.3)
- A study has found that by the age of 12-13 years old, Australian children spent an average of 3 hours per weekday and almost 4 hours per weekend day using screens (AIFS, *Australian children spending more time on screens*). (p.7)
- A majority of Australian children are spending more than the recommended 2-hour daily limit for screen time (watching television, on computers and playing electronic games) (AIFS, *Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, 2015 report*). (p.8)
- TV is children's main form of screen time, accounting for about 60% of total screen time (*ibid*). (p.8)
- Children spend more time on computers and games on the weekend. Boys play more games than girls, with 85% of 12-13 year boys gaming for at least an hour per weekend day, compared to 58% of girls (*ibid*). (p.8)
- The screen time guidelines we currently use were developed by The American Academy of Pediatrics in the 1990s to direct children's television viewing. In particular, they were a response to kids watching violent content (Orlando, J, *Is two hours of screen time really too much for kids?*). (p.9)
- In a 2015 study, it was reported that 49% of smartphone owners between 18 and 29 use messaging apps like Kik, Whatsapp or iMessage, and 41% use apps that automatically delete sent messages, like Snapchat (Duncan, F, *So long social media: the kids are opting out of the online public square*). (p.13)
- Australian children have more social network contacts than their EU counterparts, with 16% (compared to 9% of European children) (Swist, T, Third, A, & Collin, P, *Scare-mongering about kids and social media helps no one*). (p.17)
- From the age of five nearly all Australian children regularly access the internet and by the time they become teenagers are avid users of social network services (SNS), online games and chat rooms, forums and instant messaging (Swist, T, Collin, P, McCormack, J and Third, A, *Social media and the wellbeing of children and young people: A literature review*). (p.19)
- A report has found adults were spending 2.1 hours per day and teens 2.7 hours per day connected to social media. It also found 56% of teens were heavy social media users, connecting more than 5 times per day, with 24% being constantly connected (Merrillees, L, *Psychologists scramble to keep up with growing social media addiction*). (p.21)
- More than 1 in 10 Australians (12%) report “issues with keeping up with social media networks” as a source of stress (Australian Psychological Society, *Fear of Missing Out survey results 2015*). (p.24)
- Almost 1 in 4 Australian teens (24%) reported using social media when they were eating breakfast and lunch 7 days a week (*ibid*). (p.24)
- Both Australian adults and teens experience Fear of Missing Out (FoMO): 1 in 2 teens and 1 in 4 adults experience FoMO (*ibid*). (p.24)
- It is possible that people who are already depressed might be more inclined to rely on social media instead of face-to-face interactions, so greater social media use may be a symptom rather than a cause of depression (Widdowson, M, *Is social media making people depressed?*). (p.25)
- While most young people aged 11-17 use the internet or play electronic games, around 78,000 or 4% of children and adolescents experience problematic internet or games use behaviour which causes negative impacts on their life (Telethon Kids Institute, *Internet and gaming use linked to serious mental health disorders in young people*). (p.25)
- About 1 in 4 (25%) young people with problematic internet use also suffered from major depressive disorder based on self-reported information (*ibid*). (p.25)
- The social media environment is incredibly noisy. At any given time, millions of people are posting every element of their waking life to their social media accounts (Huntsdale, J, *Unliking Facebook – the social media addiction that has you by the throat*). (p.27)
- Spending excessive time, often repeatedly and aimlessly, on social media can be called an addiction. In fact, social media could even be seen to have become a national obsession and Australians appear to be addicted. This addiction is not limited to Australia but spans the globe (Chugh, R, *Addicted to social media? Try an e-fasting plan*). (p.29)
- The incidence of cyberbullying, sexting and victimisation has risen. People manage their profiles, presenting an image of a perfect life, while hiding real struggles they might have. Despite having thousands of ‘friends’, some people still feel completely alone (Kern, P, *How to be a healthy user of social media*). (p.31)
- Most social media usage by young children is online games but 29% of 9-10 year olds and 59% of 11-12 year olds have a profile on at least one SNS (*ibid*). (p.34)
- About 3 in 10 children aged 11-16 years have online friends who they first met online and with whom they have no offline connection (*ibid*). (p.34)
- Existing national laws in Australia treat consensual sexting between teenagers as a child pornography offence. Penalties can include prison sentences and sex offender registration. (p.41)

## **App/application**

A software program which is downloadable on a mobile device, or computer (e.g. web-based apps).

## **Avatar**

An online character, or representation, of the user.

## **Blog**

An online site which has content posted by an individual, or organisation.

## **Cloud computing**

Digital platforms and infrastructures operated by distant computing ('in the cloud').

## **Cyberbullying**

When a person uses digital technology to deliberately and repeatedly harass, humiliate, embarrass, torment, threaten, pick on or intimidate another person.

## **Cybercrime**

Crimes directed at computers or other devices (e.g. hacking), and where computers or other devices are integral to the offence (e.g. online fraud, identity theft and the distribution of child exploitation material). Common types of cybercrime include hacking, online scams and fraud, identity theft, attacks on computer systems and illegal or prohibited online content. The effect of cybercrime can be extremely upsetting; victims may feel that their privacy has been violated, and that they are powerless.

## **Cybersafety**

The safe and responsible use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

## **Digital reputation**

Your digital reputation is defined by your behaviours online and by the content you post about yourself and others. Tagged photos, blog posts and social networking interactions will all shape how you are perceived by others online and offline, both now and in the future.

## **e-fasting**

Electronic fasting (e-fasting) is abstention from electronic devices and services, such as smartphones and social media.

## **FOMO**

Acronym meaning 'fear of missing out'. Other related acronyms include FOBO ('fear of being offline') and NoMo ('no mobile').

## **Like**

An online expression of enjoyment, recommendation or support (e.g. the 'like' button on Facebook).

## **Profile**

An online identity created for a social networking site.

## **Screen time**

Time spent watching television, using computers, playing video or hand-held computer games, or using tablets or smartphones. There are benefits and risks to using these devices; setting daily limits on screen time is recommended.

## **Sexting**

Sexting is a mix of the words 'sex' and 'texting' and refers to the sending and receiving of sexually explicit messages or images between mobile phones. Young people can feel socially pressured to send provocative or sexual photos, messages or videos. They may feel uncomfortable about potentially compromising themselves or other people involved. Sexting can have serious social and legal consequences.

## **Social media**

Forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos). The social media most often used by children and young people fall into five broad categories: *social networks* – services that enable people to interact with others (e.g. Facebook); *microblogging* – services that enable users to broadcast short messages to others (e.g. Twitter, Tumblr); *media sharing* – services that enable people to share photos and videos (e.g. YouTube, Instagram); *messaging apps* – like an alternative to SMS/texting, with extra options (e.g. Kik Messenger, Snapchat); and *multi-player online games* (e.g. Moshi Monsters, Club Penguin, Minecraft, World of Warcraft).

## **Social networking**

Refers to the use of online services, like websites or apps (social media), to connect with other people. Via social media, users are able to chat to people they already know, find others with similar interests and experiences, share information and opinions, share photos and videos and plan social events.

## **Social networking site**

Digital platform which enables people to create profiles to communicate and connect with others (e.g. Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat).

## **Trolling**

Trolling is when a person anonymously intimidates or abuses other users online for their own amusement by posting inflammatory or off-topic messages online. Trolling differs from cyberbullying, even though both are intended to upset people online. Whereas cyberbullies target and repeatedly attack specific people, trolls set out to annoy anyone they can in order to watch people's reactions. These attacks are rarely personal as trolls are not generally concerned about who they upset.

## **Unwanted contact**

Any type of online communication that you find unpleasant or confronting. This could be messages from someone you met online who starts asking personal questions or sends you photos that are upsetting or that you don't like. The contact can come from online and/or offline friends or people you don't know. Unwanted contact can include: being asked inappropriate or personal questions by someone you don't know; being sent offensive, confronting or obscene content; or being asked to send intimate pictures or do things online that make you feel uncomfortable.

## Websites with further information on the topic

Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) [www.acma.gov.au](http://www.acma.gov.au)  
 Australian Council on Children and the Media [www.childrenandmedia.org.au](http://www.childrenandmedia.org.au)  
 Australian Cybercrime Online Reporting Network (ACORN) [www.acorn.gov.au](http://www.acorn.gov.au)  
 Australian Federal Police [www.afp.gov.au](http://www.afp.gov.au)  
 Bullying. No Way! <http://bullyingnoway.gov.au>  
 Kids Helpline [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)  
 Lawstuff [www.lawstuff.org.au](http://www.lawstuff.org.au)  
 Office of the Australian Information Commissioner [www.oaic.gov.au](http://www.oaic.gov.au)  
 Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner [www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)  
 Raising Children Network <http://raisingchildren.net.au>  
 ReachOut.com [www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)  
 Stay Smart Online [www.staysmartonline.gov.au](http://www.staysmartonline.gov.au)  
 ThinkUKnow – Internet Safety Program [www.thinkuknow.org.au](http://www.thinkuknow.org.au)

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- ReachOut.com
- The Conversation
- Raising Children Network
- Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner.

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