

FACTS *for* FAMILIES

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Children and Social Networking

Social Networking Sites play an important role in the lives of many young people. Over 60% of 13-17 year olds have at least one profile on a social networking site, many spending more than 2 hours per day on social networking sites.

Social networking sites can present opportunities to youth who participate with them but like any activity there are also associated risks and it is important for parents to help their children use these sites wisely.

Some potential benefits are:

- Staying connected to friends
- Developing new social contacts with peers with similar interests
- Sharing content of self-expression such as art work, music and political views
- Developing and expressing your individual identity

Online social networking can involve new risks such as:

- Bullying online “cyber bullying”
- Sharing too much information
- Vulnerability to predatory adults
- Sharing photos or video that you later regret
- Exposure to large amounts of commercial advertisements which may not be age appropriate
- Risk of identity theft
- Reduced amount of time for physical activity

If your child is thinking about using social networking sites there are many ways to help them use them safely and appropriately. **Discuss freely with your child and guide them in their usage of social networking sites by suggesting they:**

- Keep control of their information by restricting access to their page
- Keep their full name, address, telephone number, social security number and bank or credit card number to themselves
- Post only information they are comfortable with everyone seeing
- Talk to their parents before considering meeting anyone face to face they have met on line and review the risks involved

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Young people need support and education to develop the skills needed to understand the risks and opportunities of social networking sites so talk to your child before they sign up for an account about:

- The rules in your household on social networking sites
- The monitoring you will do on their internet usage
- The limits on time allowed on these sites that may occur if their usage interferes with family time or external social activities.

Social networking sites are a widely accepted part of many teenagers’ lives and proactive parenting can help them be a fun part of their teenager’s social life. However if you feel your adolescent is spending too much time on social networking sites or is involved in inappropriate behaviors while using these sites please seek out the help of a professional who can help you and your child find balance and appropriateness in the usage of this medium.

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[Children and Watching TV #54](#)

[Children and Movies #90](#)

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