

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media use among adolescents continues to grow rapidly.

[According to recent reports](#), 51 per cent of teens visit social networking sites daily, and nearly a third of teens visit their favourite social networking site(s) several times per day.

Social media has a prominent role in sport - for athletes, parents, coaches, and fans. With athletes now exposed to social media at a young age, parents must take an active role in their children's social media use to reduce the risk of negative effects.

Social media has many positive effects and opportunities, so banning social media is not the answer, unless other measures to ensure proper use prove ineffective.

BENEFITS OF PROPER SOCIAL MEDIA USE:

- Stay connected with their friends, teammates and peers
- 'Build their own brand' with an online presence
- Stay in touch with current affairs
- Boost self esteem
- Communicate on a 'level playing field' for those with less developed social skills
- Act as a resume booster, as many jobs consider social media skills an asset, if not a requirement

POTENTIAL NEGATIVE IMPACTS:

- Exposure to cyberbullying and/or isolation
- Increased ability to cyberbully others
- Decrease in productivity
- Excessive use could lead to deteriorated social skills
- Risk of oversharing information, or saying/posting the wrong thing
- Creates a 'paper trail' – teams, schools, potential employers, etc all check social media feeds to get an idea of what type of person they are looking at. A poor social media presence can prove very costly down the road
- Illusion of privacy and free speech – No matter what, there is no such thing as complete privacy on social media, and 'free speech' only goes so far
- [Risk of legal issues](#)

There is no 'one size fits all' approach for parents when it comes to their children and social media, but there are a number of ways to help get ahead of any potential misuse and negative behavior.

TIPS FOR PARENTS TO PROMOTE PROPER SOCIAL MEDIA USE:

- **Set the example:** if you're not behaving properly on social media, it's hard to expect your children to follow proper social media etiquette.
- **Start the conversation:** create a safe and open dialogue between you and your children when it comes to social media. Building trust means they will be more likely to share what they're doing on social media with you, and they'll come to you first with any questions or issues.

- **Be assertive, but not over-bearing:** Be careful not to turn social media into a 'taboo', creating a temptation to break the rules.
- **Communicate:** Have a conversation with your children and agree upon an acceptable amount of screen time per day.
- Trust your children on social media until they give you a reason not to.
- If necessary, explore [measures for monitoring screen time and social media use](#).
- Check to make sure your children have their privacy settings set properly on each platform to reduce the risk of information falling into the wrong hands
- Do your homework and research. The more you know about each social media platform and the risk/reward involved, the more you can relate to your children and ensure they're using each platform properly and safely.
- Help them understand that what they say/do on social media has a ripple effect. Family, friends, teammates, etc could all be associated and negatively effected by any poor behavior on social media by an individual.
- Watch what you say/post: The same goes for parents - your family, your children's team, etc, will often be associated with what you say/do on social media.
- **Learn from your kids!** When it comes to social media, kids are often the experts.

Use it as a bonding experience and let them show you the ropes and have some fun with it. You'll not only learn more about social media, but you'll get a better idea of how your children use each platform for themselves.

RESOURCES:

- [Why it's Never Too Early to Teach Good Social Media Habits](#)
- [12 Ways for Athletes to Find Social Media Success](#)
- [Coaches: Youth Sports. Social Media. Parents Have Changed the Job](#)