

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3** Goal of this Guide
- 3** How Social Media Affects The Role of Parents
- 5** Social Media Defined
- 5** Sites Parents Should Learn First
- 9** Privacy Settings and Identity Protection
- 9** Additional Safety Tips for Parents
- 11** Social Networking: How Much “Screen Time” is Too Much?
- 12** Best Age for Cell Phone?
- 13** “Netiquette”
- 13** Texting and “Sexting”
- 15** Digital Cheating
- 15** Cyberbullying
- 16** Parents – The First Line of Defense
- 18** Digital Citizenship: Rules for Online Living
- 19** Sources and Resources

PRIVACY SETTINGS AND IDENTITY PROTECTION

Each social networking site offers its own set of privacy options; the trick for parents is to learn how to use them. Perhaps the most important safety precaution parents can take is to review the sites' privacy settings *before* their children open an account. On most sites, users can adjust settings to control who can see their posts and who can access their timeline, likes and comments. But as you read in the site summaries, some sites are always open to the public, and most are public by default – you have to actively change the settings on your account to make it private.

To further complicate matters for parents, many of these sites frequently update their look, settings and features. The only way to truly understand the details is to spend some time on each site and/or open your own account and explore the requirements and settings. Ironically, your teen just may be your best tour guide! That's okay; when your child is teaching you about an online site, you can teach your child life lessons in safety, privacy and responsibility.

ADDITIONAL SAFETY TIPS FOR PARENTS

Everyone should learn how to protect themselves online:

- Many experts suggest that parents require their children to accept them as friends and followers on social media sites.
- When your child first joins a social media site, insist on knowing his or her account password – make it a condition of opening an account.
- Experts suggest that parents monitor their child's online behavior, particularly when children are new to social media. If you see that your child has posted content that is inappropriate or could be dangerous (i.e. "My parents left me alone for the first time tonight – woo-hoo!") – immediately tell your child to delete the post and explain why. Adolescents and teens are often impulsive, and are not yet adept at thinking through the consequences of their actions.
- Teach your child the do's and don'ts of online behavior; see the chapter on Netiquette in this guide.



FACT: Teens ages 12 to 17 send and receive 1,500 text messages a month – per teen. **Teens and Mobile Phones, Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2010**



SOCIAL NETWORKING: HOW MUCH IS **TOO MUCH?**

Once upon a time, controlling childhood use of the media meant monitoring how much our kids were watching television. The American Academy of Pediatrics still recommends that children under age 2 should view no television at all and that parents should limit the viewing time of older children to no more than two hours a day. That begs the question, then: how can parents monitor and control recommended viewing time when screen time has evolved from television to smartphones, tablets, laptops and desktop computers?

Parenting in the digital age calls for balance, common sense and some conventional wisdom. Experts compare common-sense monitoring to a nutritional diet, where what you eat is just as important as how much you eat. As our digital diet continues to evolve, parents must stay informed and monitor how much time kids are spending in front of a screen, as well as the content their children are consuming. Studies reveal potential risks of overexposure to media – both in terms of time and content.

For example, an American Academy of Pediatrics study found that “teenagers ages 12 to 14 who are exposed to media with high sexual content are twice as likely to have sex by the time they are 16 than those exposed to less sexual material.” Additional research links television and computer viewing to an increased rate of obesity or aggressive behavior in children.

Parent Tips for Limiting Screen Time (adapted from The Mayo Clinic)

- **Keep TVs and computers out of the bedroom.** Monitor your child’s screen time and Internet activity by keeping computers in a common area in your home, such as the family room or kitchen.
- **Don’t make TV a habit.** Make television watching an event, not something to do while eating, reading, talking, etc. Watching TV as a habit can lead to weight gain.
- **Set rules.** Many parents limit television viewing and computer time during the week, and implement rules such as completing homework before or after a favorite television show. Avoid using television or computer time as a babysitter; encourage your children to engage in other activities or to simply play outside. Make sure your child’s caregivers follow your house rules.
- **Be a role model.** Limit your own screen time; put away the cell phone or tablet at meals, and when talking or playing with your child. And remember, no texting while driving – your children are watching.