

Name: _____

Date: _____

Homeroom: _____

Social Media Tips for Teens

Directions: Read this article¹, which covers tips for how teens can use social media safely, and then respond to the questions that follow.

1. **Don't post or send anything you would be embarrassed for others to see.** Think about what your family, friends, future employers, or college admission decision-makers might think if they see it. How would you feel if that statement or picture was forever tied to your name and your identity? Does it really represent who you are? Remember, your keyboard may have a "delete" button, but once online it is often impossible to remove.



2. **Do start early in building a positive online reputation.** Don't wait until you are getting ready for high school, college, or applying for a job to start developing a dynamite digital portfolio. From the very first post you make on a new social media platform, think about how others will perceive and interpret what you share. Also, actively involve yourself in many positive activities. Excel academically. Volunteer. Play a sport. Lead a social group. Give a speech. Do community service. Write positive, thought-provoking and creative blog posts or editorials for online news outlets. Get yourself featured in newsworthy projects. All of these things will look good on a resume, and they will reflect positively on you if someone stumbles upon them in an online search. Figure out the best ways to create and maintain an online identity that strongly demonstrates integrity and maturity.
3. **Don't compromise your identity.** Identity thieves are constantly looking for new ways to obtain your personal information, usually for the purpose of benefiting financially at your expense. Never post your address, date of birth, phone number, or other personal contact information anywhere on social media. Even with restrictions, access can be gained through fraudulent means such as by phishing, hacking, or malware.

¹ "Teaching Kids to Be Smart About Social Media" by KidsHealth. Accessed on 11/10/20 at <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/social-media-smarts.html>

Social Media Tips for Teens (Continued)

4. **Do be considerate of others when posting and interacting.** If you message someone and they do not respond, or if someone messages you and asks that you not post about them, take the hint and move on. Also don't post pictures of others without their permission. And if someone asks you to remove a picture, post, or to un-tag them, do so immediately. It's what you would want if you asked someone the same thing.
5. **Don't vent or complain, especially about specific people or groups, in public spaces online.** People will negatively judge you based on your attitude, even if your complaint has merit. Everyone has access to social media, and they are looking. Is that spiteful comment about your teammate, teacher, or coach really worth losing possible opportunities in the future? Be careful, too, about complaining in seemingly private environments or sending direct messages to others you think you can trust. You just never know who might eventually see your posts.
6. **Do be careful about oversharing.** Be careful about posting about your meals, trips to the gym, social life, and the latest viral YouTube video. Sometimes oversharing can create safety concerns (i.e. people knowing where to find you). It can also damage your online portfolio unintentionally (i.e. people thinking you aren't motivated or have a lot of time on your hands).
7. **Don't hang out with the wrong crowd online.** Resist accepting every friend and follower request that comes your way. Having a lot of followers isn't the status symbol some people make it out to be and can just increase your risk of victimization. Giving strangers access to your personal information opens you up to all sorts of potential problems. It's also true, though, that those who are most likely to take advantage of you won't be complete strangers but will be those you've let into your life just a little bit (like allowing them to friend or follow you) – and who use information they can now access against you. Be selective with who you allow to enter your world! Go through your friends and followers lists regularly and take the time to delete those you do not fully trust, those that you have superficial and largely meaningless friendships with, and those you probably aren't going to ever talk to again.
8. **Don't hang out with the wrong crowd offline.** You might not want others to record your legendary dance moves at last weekend's party, but cameras and phones are everywhere. If you are associating with people who don't really care about you or your reputation, they may seize the opportunity to record and post the video for others to see (and laugh at).



Social Media Tips for Teens (Continued)

9. **Do properly set up the privacy settings and preferences within the social media apps, sites, and software you use.** Use the features within each environment to delete problematic comments, wall posts, pictures, videos, notes, and tags. Don't feel obligated to respond to messages and friend/follower requests that are annoying or unwanted. Disallow certain people from communicating with you or reading certain pieces of content you share and allow access only to those you trust. Turn off location-sharing, and the ability to check-in to places. If you need to let your friends know where you are, just text them using your phone rather than sharing it with your entire social network.
10. **Don't post or respond to anything online when you are emotionally charged up.** Step away from your device. Close out of the site or app. Take a few hours, or even a day or two, and allow your brain some downtime to think through the best action or response. Responding quickly, based on emotion, almost never helps make a problem go away, and often makes it much worse. Pause before you post!
11. **Do secure your profile.** Use complex passwords that consist of alphanumeric and special characters. Avoid using recovery questions which have easy-to-guess or common answers such as a pet's name. Never reveal your passwords to friends or family or leave them written down somewhere. Avoid accessing your online profile from devices which are unsecure (like at a library computer), or do not have virus and malware protection.
12. **Don't tell the world where you are at all times.** You probably wouldn't hand a stranger your daily agenda, and you shouldn't post it all over social media. Burglars use social media to target victims by reading posts that clue them in as to where you are (and when you're not at home). Checking in while on vacation or posting an update such as "At the beach for the day" or "Be back in town on Tuesday" may be a fun way of letting your friends know what you are up to, but it also lets those with bad intentions know when your home is empty and vulnerable.
13. **Do regularly search for yourself online, just to see what is out there.** Start with Google, but also use site-specific search engines on social networking sites, as well as sites that index personal information about Internet users. Some examples are: peekyou.com, zabasearch.com, pipl.com, yoname.com, and spokeo.com. If you do find personal information about yourself, investigate how you can have it deleted. Many sites provide some type of "opt-out" form which allows you to request its removal.

Reflection Questions for *Social Media Tips for Teens*

Directions: In your neatest handwriting, and in complete sentences, answer the following questions.

1. Reread tip #1 and think about a photo, comment, or post you've written online. What are two assumptions a college admissions officer might make about you based on your post? Explain why.

2. Tips #7 and #8 talk about hanging with the wrong "crowd" online and offline. What does this mean? What are two negative outcomes listed in the article that might occur if we hang with the wrong crowd?

3. Which tip was the most surprising to you? Which tips are you going to use immediately, and why?
