



Social Media Safety



Social media has become an extension of our children's day to day lives. And despite the numerous benefits social media offers, it can also present challenges. The following general tips are important for parents, regardless of the specific site your child is using.



Maureen Griffin from MGMS Training talks about your child's safety when using Social Media.

- Tip 1: The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act
- Tip 2: Talk to your child about their Online Age
- Tip 3: Go through their privacy settings with them
- Tip 4: Make sure they have a good password
- Tip 5: Ask them about their Friends/Followers
- Tip 6: Online Content

Tip No.1

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act

- a. The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) requires that commercial web sites and online services (including Apps) must obtain parental consent prior to setting up an account for a child under 13 years of age.
- b. Social networking sites, designed for children aged 6-14 years such as *Moshie Monsters* are compliant with this act.
- c. However, many sites have chosen to avoid the Acts regulatory framework by adopting age-based bans. *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Instagram* are thus designed for those **aged 13 and over**.

Tip No.2

Talk to your child about their Online Age

- a. Research has shown that children lie about their age online to set up accounts.
- b. This can increase the risks that children face online.
For instance:
 - Exposure to age inappropriate content,
 - Their information being more publically accessible,
 - Friend recommendations from unknown and/or older individuals.

Tip No.3

Go through their privacy settings with them

Irish children's digital skills are considered at the lower end of the European spectrum, with just 58% of children able to change privacy settings on a social networking profile (O'Neill, Grehan, and Ólafsson, 2011).

Tip No.4

Make sure they have a good password

- a. The password/s used for online accounts also plays a significant role in protecting children online.
- b. Children often share passwords with their friends or significant others but difficulties can arise when friendships break down.
- c. It is important that children use a strong password for their online account/s, consisting of capital and lowercase letters, symbols and numbers (where allowed).
- d. Children should be encouraged to treat their password like their toothbrush –that is they should not share it with friends and should change it quite regularly.

Tip No.5

Ask them about their Friends/Followers

- a. Aside from **what** children post online, we also need to pay attention to **who** they share information with.
- b. The amount of friends or followers children have online is often seen as a status symbol or popularity contest.
- c. Talk to your child about their online friends –how do they know them? And remind them that once they accept someone as a friend online they are inviting that person into their life.

Tip No.6

Online Content

Set rules about what is okay and not okay to share online.

In terms of content your child may be exposed to online, let them know that they can come to you and you will deal with it together. This may involve blocking the person that sent it, reporting to the website or reporting to authority.

Finally...

The best protection when it comes to social media is parental involvement.

- a. Banning your child from a particular App or Site can just force them to find another way to use social media – be it a friend’s house, freely available Wi-Fi or a different device.
- b. Be involved, talk to your child about their social media usage, set rules and model good behaviour.
- c. Remember the good does outweigh the bad.

For more information, please visit www.layahealthcare.ie/onlinesafety