



# ONLINE & SOCIAL MEDIA SAFETY



## WHY ONLINE SAFETY MATTERS

- **Digital Presence:** Teens and children are spending a significant amount of their time online—on average, nearly nine hours daily. It is essential to teach them how to navigate these spaces responsibly.
- **Mental Health:** Social media use has been linked to increased risks of anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders, especially in young people.
- **Cyberbullying and Online Harassment:** 42% of teens on Instagram and 31% on Snapchat have experienced cyberbullying. It's crucial to understand and address these issues proactively.



## RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

- **Bark:** Monitor content, manage screen time, and get alerts for cyberbullying and online predators. [bark.us](https://www.bark.us)
- **Common Sense Media:** Guides and resources for media use and digital well-being. [commonsensemedia.org](https://www.commonsensemedia.org)
- **Family Media Agreement:** Create custom family rules for device use. Family Media Agreement
- **Life360:** Location-sharing and safety app for families. [life360.com](https://www.life360.com)

## KEY CONCEPTS OF DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

### Safety:

- Use strong, unique passwords and keep software up-to-date.
- Review privacy settings regularly.
- Avoid sharing personal information such as full name, address, and phone number.
- Remember the three C's: Avoid contact with strangers, be mindful of content, and conduct yourself respectfully.

### Literacy:

- Be informed and make good decisions about what you see online.
- Understand the credibility of sources and recognize misinformation.
- Encourage discussions around news and social media content to develop critical thinking skills.

### Responsibility:

- Practice good etiquette online and think before you post.
- Use technology in a way that's constructive for oneself and others.
- Understand that your digital footprint includes all your online interactions, not just what you post.



**ONE TEAM. ONE GOAL.  
STUDENT SUCCESS.**

## **HEALTHY HABITS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA USE**

- **Balanced Use:** Encourage a balance between screen time and other activities. Avoid using devices an hour before bed to ensure better sleep quality.
- **Positive Engagement:** Use social media to connect with others in meaningful ways, such as joining groups or causes that interest you.
- **Fact-Check:** Always verify the information before sharing and be aware of the sources you are using.

## **CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR PARENTS AND TEENS**

- What's your favorite social media app, and why?
- How do you know the people you interact with online?
- Have you ever seen or experienced something online that made you uncomfortable?
- What rules should we have for using social media at home?

## **CREATING A SAFE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT**

### **For Families:**

- **Family Media Plan:** Create a plan that includes guidelines for device use, app permissions, and time limits.
- **Screen Time:** Set daily limits and encourage digital breaks, especially before bedtime.
- **Device-Free Zones:** Establish areas or times at home where devices are not allowed, such as during meals or in bedrooms after a certain hour.

### **For Parents:**

- **Stay Involved:** Know what apps your child is using and be aware of who they are communicating with online.
- **Set Boundaries:** Teach your child about online safety and set clear expectations around technology use.
- **Monitor Usage:** Use parental controls and monitor screen time and content. Apps like Bark, Life360, and Circle offer tools to manage and track online activities.

### **For Teens & Tweens:**

- **Think Before You Post:** Ask yourself if the post is true, kind, and necessary. Remember that once something is online, it's often there forever.
- **Handle Cyberbullying:** If you or someone you know is being bullied online, don't respond or forward the messages. Keep records and report the behavior to a trusted adult, the platform, or law enforcement if necessary.
- **Digital Drama:** Be mindful that disagreements online can escalate quickly. Avoid participating in or spreading drama.

