

# Spotlight on social media

Social media platforms are digital spaces where users can connect, share photo, video or written content and discover new content tailored to their interests through algorithms. Many platforms also have features such as direct messaging and live streaming.

## Potential risks

### Inappropriate content

Social media platforms can expose users to violent, sexual or otherwise harmful content. Additionally, user-generated content can easily spread false or misleading information. Many platforms promote an idealised view of life, with filters, editing tools and curated influencer lifestyles contributing to body image issues and mental health challenges.

### Connecting with others

Many platforms enable interactions with unknown users, through features such as direct messaging and live streaming. Unless the relevant privacy settings are enabled, personal information can be exposed to a broader audience. Additionally, fake profiles are often created to deceive others or spread hate.

### Harmful online behaviour

Bullying and trolling are significant risks as users can post comments with little accountability. When live streaming, users share spontaneous content that they may later regret. Overexposure to harmful content or behaviours can desensitise users, normalising inappropriate actions or reducing empathy.

## Practical advice

### Talk about risks of online interactions

Speak to your child about the risks of communicating with strangers and encourage them to tell you if they are concerned about a social media encounter.

### Enable privacy settings

Ensure your child only signs up to age-appropriate social media apps. Help them to set their accounts to private, restrict who can contact them and disable location-sharing features.

### Teach critical thinking

Help your child understand what is and is not appropriate for them to share online and encourage them to think critically about information shared by others.

For more information

