

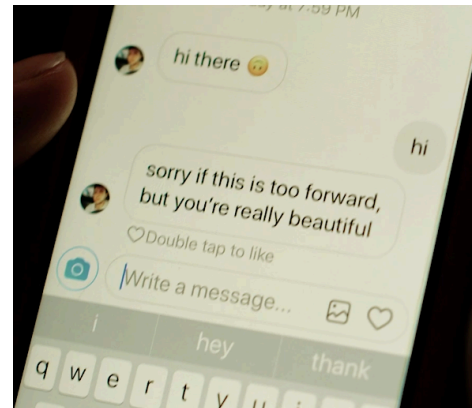
3 TIPS FOR HELPING YOUR KIDS STAY SAFE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a big part of the lives of children and teens in America. On any given day, teens spend about nine hours with digital technology, according to a report from Common Sense Media ([source](#)). Nine hours. Let that soak in. That means they are spending more time with technology than with their parents, friends, or at school. A CNN study revealed that some teens check their social media feeds more than 100 times a day ([source](#)). This is problematic for many reasons, and it also poses potential dangers to children and teens that you as a parent may not be aware of. We want to shine a light on the danger and provide practical tips for you to help your children stay safe on social media.

THE DANGER:

Traffickers and abusers use social media to find and lure in their targets.

Traffickers and abusers are smart. They know that kids spend a lot of time on social media, and they know it's an easy way to reach them. They can present themselves as someone a child/teen would talk to simply by creating a fake profile with a fake name and fake pictures. They will usually start by befriending the child to gain their trust and then begin to woo them romantically and seduce them sexually. Eventually, they might even ask to meet up with the child in person.



TIP 1: BE PROACTIVE

It's very important that you are proactive. We encourage you to have real and honest conversations with your child about social media and the potential dangers. Make sure you familiarize yourself with the social media platforms your child is on. Don't send your child into a territory you've never explored yourself. Teach your child to spot common tricks used by online offenders. In the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children [CyberTipline](#) reports, the most common tactics used to entice a child online are:

- Engaging the child in sexual conversation/roleplay as a grooming method.
- Directly asking the child for sexually explicit images of themselves, or offering to mutually exchange images.
- Developing a rapport with the child through compliments and other supportive behaviors such as "liking" their online posts.
- Sending unprompted sexually explicit images of themselves.
- Pretending to be younger.
- Offering incentives for explicit content.

Just reading these bullet points was probably uncomfortable for you. Even more so, you might not feel comfortable teaching them to your child. If you're not comfortable

teaching your child to spot the warning signs of enticement, then we encourage you to not allow them to use social media. They will be at a greater risk of being exploited or trafficked if they use social media and are unaware of the dangers.

Also, be sure to regularly tell them they can come to you with anything. Let them know you won't get mad, and that you'll be there to love them and help them through whatever challenges they may face or mistakes they may make. They need to know you are on their side and that you understand that they are facing very challenging things in their world.

If your child experiences online enticement, they might not realize they are being exploited - they might just think they are communicating with a guy or girl their age, and they will probably not want to tell you about it. Or, they could know they are being exploited and be under threat. Abusers will often keep their victims silent by threatening to hurt them or their family or to leak pictures of them on the internet. Talk to your child about both of these possible scenarios. Proactively create a "safe place" in your relationship with your child to help them know they can come to you no matter what.

TIP 2: LAY SOME GROUND RULES

Kids and teens don't like rules, so we encourage you to not call them "rules". After you teach your kids about how to spot common tricks of online offenders, try to approach laying the ground rules more conversationally, and even ask them - "what do you think are some practical ways you can protect yourself on social media?" If they don't have any ideas, these are some healthy habits you can help them implement in their social media use:



1. Don't post photos of yourself in revealing clothing, skimpy bathing suits, or with seductive poses and facial expressions. Also, don't post a picture or caption that communicates you are lonely or depressed. Traffickers are constantly looking for young people on social media who appear desperate for attention, lonely, and depressed. They will usually wait until later at night and send a message when it's more likely that you are alone and your guard is down. Delete any old posts you've made that might not be the best.
2. Don't respond to any messages from someone you don't follow and don't personally know. Block that person immediately. A random stranger should not be contacting you.
3. Set your social media accounts to private and do not accept friend requests or follows from people you don't know. If your social media account is public, pay close attention to who follows you, and be very careful how much information you post. You never know who is paying attention to your posts and watching your

stories. A trafficker could be gathering information on you to figure out places you frequently visit, where you live, where you go to school, where you hang out with friends, etc.

4. Never post where you're going or where you currently are, because if you do, you are basically giving a trafficker a road map to find you. It's better to not use location tags at all, especially if it's somewhere you go often. If you are going to post a picture of where you are, wait to post it after you've left.



TIP 3: SPOT THE RED FLAGS

How do you spot the red flags of your child being enticed online? [NCMEC](#) states that a child who is experiencing online enticement may be:

- Spending increasing time online.
- Getting upset when he or she is not allowed on their device.
- Taking extra steps to conceal what they are doing online.
- Receiving gifts from people you don't know.

If you are concerned that your child/teen is being enticed online, approach them with compassion and gentleness. They will likely assume they are in trouble and not want to talk, especially if they are engaging online with someone in a romantic or sexual manner. Be sure to let them know you are just concerned for their safety and that they can tell you anything. Remember that they could possibly be under threat.

REPORT IT

If your child is dealing with potential online enticement, report it immediately to law enforcement and [cybertipline.org](https://www.cybertipline.org).

We hope this resource is a helpful tool for you and your child to safely navigate the world of social media. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to email us at info@just1.org. To learn more about exploitation and sex trafficking and how we can stop it, visit our website at [just1.org](https://www.just1.org).

We want kids to have the chance to reach their full potential and live free of the fear of exploitation. Will you help us give them this chance by making a donation today?

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