



8 Social Media Rules Every Parent Needs to Know



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8 Social Media Rules Every Parent Needs to Know

Expert tips on etiquette, safety, and keeping the peace at home.

By Alicia Barney



From birth announcements to soccer game videos to Halloween photo shoots to honor roll brags—and an Instagram feed's worth of like-able, everyday pictures in between—you have plenty of reasons to post about your kids online. While hitting "share" is easy, what you post on social media could ultimately affect your children's safety, friendships, and relationship with you. We asked technology experts what parents should keep in mind before their next update.

1 Give Your Child Veto Rights

You're used to your kids asking you for ice cream, a ride to ballet, or the car keys, but you might consider asking for their consent before sharing their images, says Catherine Steiner-Adair, psychologist and author of The Big Disconnect: Protecting Childhood and Family Relationships in the Digital Age. "You always want to teach children that they're in charge of their bodies and that you'll work with them to keep their bodies safe and private," she says. "The conversation on pictures is a part of that." Get in the habit of asking for consent while your child is young (by age 4 to 6), she says. Giving kids a say in what gets posted also teaches them to respect others—and not to share humiliating photos of friends when they have their own phones.

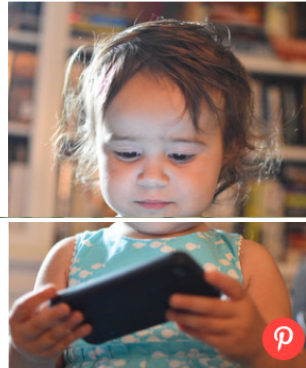


Photo by Fran Polito/Getty Images

2 Feelings Come First

Those birthday party snapshots could be hurtful to kids (and parents) who weren't invited. Email pictures directly to family and friends or create a private Facebook album to share only with partygoers, says Caroline Knorr, senior parenting editor at the family technology non-profit Common Sense Media. If you're pregnant, Knorr suggests limiting ultrasound posts—seeing them could be painful for friends struggling with infertility.

3 Keep Venting IRL

Sorry, but the Internet isn't always the venue to blow off steam about rough parenting days. While a cute tantrum photo here or there is probably fine, too many details of bad behavior can be embarrassing for kids. (They—or their friends—could find your overshare today or in the future.) "Don't post anything you wouldn't be comfortable saying [in front of them] now or having



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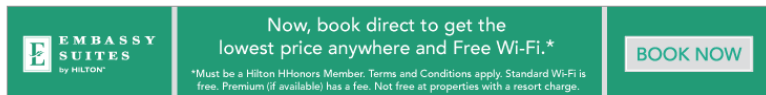
MOST SHARED



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your child read in a few years,” Steiner-Adair says. College admissions officers or potential employers could also see those unflattering posts down the road, says Lisa Strohmman, a psychologist and author of *Unplug: Raising Kids In a Technology Addicted World*. “Regardless of how good you are at privacy settings, you’re giving [the information] to certain people,” she says. “And if it gets forwarded, or if there is a picture shot of it, those are things you can’t control anymore.”



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4 Make Your Privacy Settings Airtight

As awful as it is to think about, photos of children are sometimes taken from social media and used on pornography sites, and location and other details posted online could be used by predators to target kids, according to Strohmman. “It’s a lot more insidious than people think,” she says. Choose strict privacy settings, and check them regularly, since privacy policies change often. And limit your audience further by using each program’s tools to direct your post to the right people, Knorr says. (For example, create a family subgroup on Facebook for sharing baby pictures.) “It doesn’t mean that post is never going to get out, but makes it more secure,” she says. Kids should have private accounts that can’t be found by searching for their names.

5 Live for the Moment (Not the Likes)

Put the iPhone down when experiencing special moments with your kids—constantly snapping pictures and videos to share can prevent both of you from being fully present. “Kids are getting the message ... that the picture is what matters,” Steiner-Adair says. “We’re ... going to events with the thought ‘I’ve got to get great pictures of this to post,’” she says. Take a couple of shots to preserve the memory, but then sit back and take it in.

6 Minimize the Bragging

Posting weekly photos of your daughter scoring the winning goal isn’t just obnoxious to your friends; it might send her a bad message, as well. “You have to be careful to not make kids feel tagged by what they do rather than who they are,” Steiner-Adair says. “Share when they do something that you’re proud of, and most of all that *they’re* proud of.”

7 Get a Parent’s Sign Off

Be cautious with photos of other people’s children, Strohmman says. If you’d like to post a picture of your child’s friend, ask for his or her parent’s permission to share it with the specific network, whether it’s your extended family, the school blog, or your Instagram followers.

8 Be a Role Model

Older kids often pay attention to what you’re posting online. Think twice before making that angry comment—definitely don’t get into tussles with parents of your child’s friends or classmates—and try to resolve conflicts in person, Knorr says. “Parents should really support kids using social media in a positive, constructive, productive way,” she says. “You can model that by showing them how you use it.”

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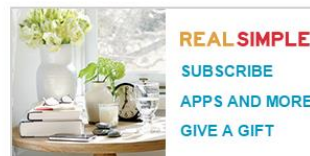
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