

# Keeping Children Safe on Social Media



Social Media has changed the way most of us go about our daily business - it accounts for 24% of all online media time spent online! But one of the scariest themes within the world of social media is the number of children and young teenagers that are making use of social media platforms, often without their parents/guardians knowledge. Would you know how to safeguard a child from the various types of social media dangers?

Different Social Media platforms seem to be cropping up weekly and it's very hard to keep tabs on them all, so in this short guide we'll be looking at the four main platforms:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Snapchat
- Instagram

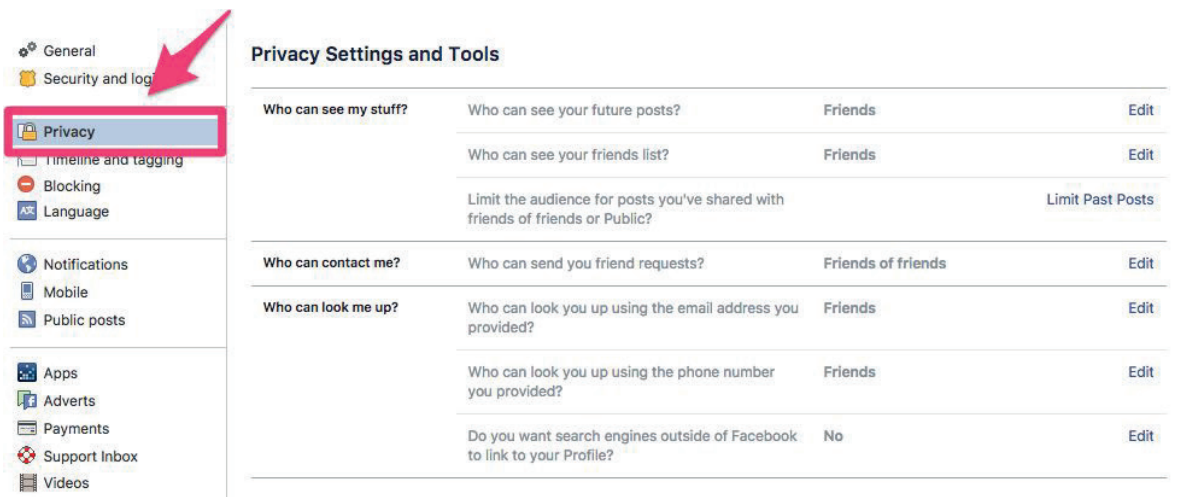
## Keeping Children Safe on Facebook



Facebook's guidelines state that you must be 13 and over to create an account with them - anyone younger than 13 who creates an account with them is actually violating their terms - and this also applies to anyone creating an account on behalf of a child under 13. Despite this, more than 50% of under 13's have an illegal Facebook account.

## Quick Facebook Privacy and Security Tips

**Understanding privacy settings.** The 'Settings' area on Facebook is the main Facebook feature when it comes to privacy and security. In the 'Privacy' section of the 'Settings' area, you can select who sees certain things, such as your posts and your friend lists. You can switch between 'Friends' and 'Everyone', see what we recommend below:



You'll also want to take a look at the 'Timeline and Tagging' section of the 'Settings' area, this allows you to change settings for Facebook's 'Tagging' feature and allows you to change who can see things on the child's timeline (page).

## Get Children Security Savvy

**Stranger danger!** If your child receives a friend request from someone they don't know, have them run it past you first. If you don't recognise them, then you can make the decision to reject their friend request.

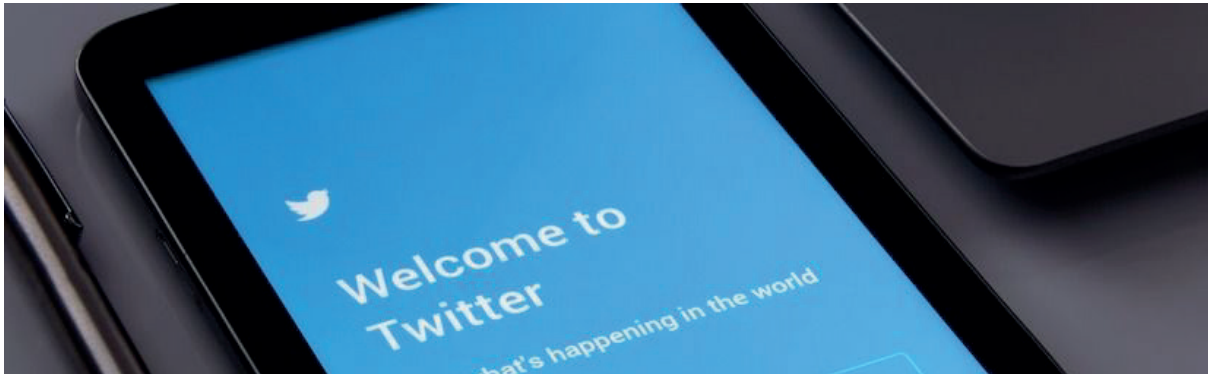
**Never share anything personal. Particularly their location!** Not everyone will have the same privacy settings on Facebook, so it's even more important that the child doesn't share personal things on friends' timelines as 'friends of friends' may be able to see the post.

Facebook has created a brilliant area dedicated to privacy, check out more about [Facebook privacy here](#).

Parents should talk to their children about people on Facebook and let them know that there are places to go for advice or to reporting anything.

— Mother of 11yr old girl

# Keeping Children Safe on Twitter



**Twitter has the same age requirements as Facebook - you need to be 13+ to register an account with them - yet Twitter is the third most popular social media site for under-13-year-olds.**

## Quick Twitter Privacy and Security Tips

Head over to the 'Privacy and Safety' section on Twitter's 'Settings' area. Again, this is your best friend when it comes to safeguarding the child on Twitter. Here's what we recommend:

- **Tweet Privacy** - tick that box! This makes the Twitter account private and anyone that wants to see your tweets needs to send you a request.
- **Tweet with a location** - leave unticked! Sharing a location with your audience when tweeting is very risky, we strongly recommend you don't activate this feature.
- **Photo tagging** - either "Only allow people I follow to tag me in photos" or "Do not allow anyone to tag me in photos". Depending on how strict you want to be!
- **Discoverability** - untick both boxes. This blocks people from finding any phone numbers/email addresses linked to the account.
- **Direct messages** - untick "Receive Direct Messages from anyone". This blocks anyone outside of your follow list from messaging you.
- **Safety search** - tick "Hide sensitive content". This blocks any content that Twitter deems 'sensitive' from appearing on your timeline.

If possible, do a weekly check of the child's Twitter account. Look at who they're following, who follows them, what they have posted etc...

## Things You Need to Know About Twitter

It can be risky. According to a survey carried out by Net Aware, 20% of children say that Twitter is 'risky'. The reasons were: People can tweet anything and some content is unsuitable. Fake profiles and scam bots. Some people are rude or mean.

Reporting difficulties. Many users have reported difficulties with reporting inappropriate content, one father said: "Easy to block, but difficult to report unwanted messages."

I have often found that when reporting inappropriate content such as hate speech or racism, the content is not removed and no action is taken by Twitter. Twitter needs to be much more proactive about protecting children online.

— Father of girls aged 4 and 13

## Keeping children safe on Instagram



Instagram is the second most popular social network for children and young teenagers. Generally speaking, it is one of the 'safer' networks but there are still a few things you need to watch out for.

### Instagram Security and Privacy Tips

Unlike Facebook and Twitter, Instagram doesn't have a dedicated privacy section in its settings, however, there are few features that you should consider turning on.

The first and arguably the most important privacy feature on Instagram is the 'Private account' feature. This allows you to make your account completely private which means people can't see your posts, they'll have to send a follow request which you can accept or ignore.

Keep your bio clean! Don't include things like where you live, your age, your phone number or other social media accounts. We'd recommend just leaving your username or first name.

### Other considerations with Instagram

**Check your linked accounts** - Instagram can be linked to Facebook, Twitter and other social networks; be careful with who you are broadcasting your photos to.

**Location on posts** - Instagram allows you to post your location along with your photos, a nifty feature but one that could be very dangerous for children and young teenagers using the app. Make sure your child doesn't post their location unless they have your consent.

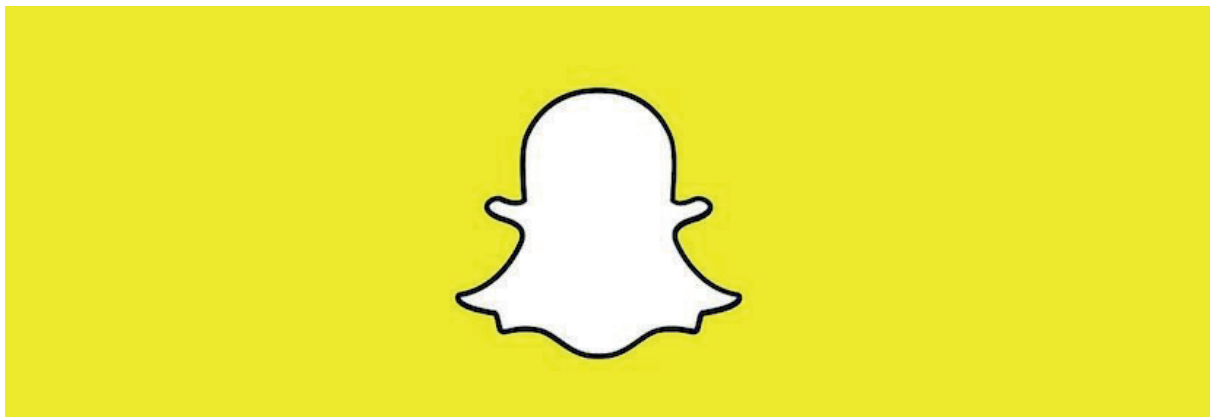
**Dodgy links** - Many spam accounts will have dodgy links in their bios which promise more followers or 'easy ways to make money'. Never click on these links, more often than not they'll be harmful.

**The 'Explore' tab** - The intentions behind this tab are great, the idea is that it supplies you with content similar to the things you have previously liked or followed. However, this tab often includes content that is unsuitable; one father quoted "When on the 'explore' page it is pretty much impossible to view without a pornographic image popping up for adult sites, usually they disappear within a few minutes". Generally speaking though, if your child is following safe profiles, then this section should be fine to view.

There are a lot of profiles on Instagram with people self-proclaiming their feed as 18+ but leave their profiles public where underage users can view without difficulty.

— Father of girls aged 10 and 11

## Keeping children safe on Snapchat



Snapchat is extremely popular with children and young teenagers because it's seen as a fun and different way of communicating with friends. Although Snapchat is probably the most private of the 4 platforms we have discussed, you still need to be vigilant.

## Snapchat security tips

**Friends only** - Make sure you set your Snapchat to 'Friends only'. I'm sure you've worked it out by the name, but this setting only allows for friends that have added you back to view your snapchat's and stories. This feature can be enabled in 'Settings'.

**Hide from quick add** - Hide your child from Snapchat's 'quick add' feature. This feature allows people to add others based on mutual friends and other connections. They can be disabled in 'Settings' under 'see me in quick add'.

**Snapchat scrutiny** - Snapchat recently added a new map feature which allows you to see all of your contacts exact, current locations. Whilst this might be handy for those looking to meet up with a friend, it's a big no no for younger users and the platform has come under a lot of scrutiny amid fears of bullying and stalking. It's very easy to hide the child from other people's maps - simply enter map mode, click the cog in the top right-hand corner and enable 'ghost mode'.

## Other considerations with Snapchat

**Snapchats are only temporary, or are they?** It's very easy for people to screenshot snapchats, so the idea that your Snap is ephemeral is kind of a lie...

**Sharing is caring, except for your username or snapcode** - Never share your username or snapcode to people you don't know, this also applies to broadcasting it on other social networks!

Always be as open as you can with your own child to avoid hiding behaviour. Be open and honest about what is out there and why some things are dangerous even if they don't appear to be at the time.

— Mother of 10yr old girl

## Other Security and Privacy Tips

**Two-Factor Authentication** - (TFA) Is an extra layer of security for applications; not only will you require your username or password to log-in but you'll also need something that only you, and only you, has to hand. A popular method of TFA is using a code that is sent to your mobile after you try to log-in, the application won't grant access until you've entered the code. Read this article on [Two-Factor Authentication](#) for more information.

**Strong and varying passwords** - It goes without saying, but passwords should be hard to crack and it's good practice to use different passwords for different social media accounts.

**Block and report** - If you think a scammer or someone potentially dangerous is trying to get in contact with the child, don't be afraid to use the block or/and report button, that's what it's there for!

**Net Aware** - Check out the [NetAware](#) website for information on more social media networks!

# iHasco Safeguarding Courses

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