

# FACEBOOK: A Parent's Guide



## What is Facebook?

Facebook is the most used social networking service worldwide with 2.07 billion monthly active users, although recent statistics have shown teenagers are using it less. The service, which enables users to connect with friends and family as well as make new connections, requires everyone to be at least 13 years old before they can create an account. Most young people will have a positive experience when they access Facebook but there are some potential issues to look out for.

## What does it look like?



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This is not a definitive guide. Please always check with any app's support information to see if your security and privacy concerns are addressed.

## Main Concerns for Parents

# facebook

### Risk of sexual predators

Children may be at risk of being contacted by internet predators if they do not take proper safety precautions or communicate with strangers online. Predators typically create a fake Facebook account and pose as other children to build up a trusting relationship, relying on the anonymity of the internet to portray themselves as someone they are not.

### Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is when hurtful or malicious comments are posted online about an individual or when they receive abusive messages or other upsetting content. Children may also be peer pressured by their Facebook 'friends' to do things they do not want to. This can leave people feeling vulnerable, worried, alone and can knock their self-esteem.

### Sharing too much information

Children often do not understand the risks involved in giving out too much personal information on the internet. They may also be less protective of personal details, such as their mobile phone number or address. There have been numerous headlines of teenagers broadcasting events, including birthday parties or parents being away, to their online friends where the event has been gate-crashed and got out of control.

### Inappropriate content

Although Facebook does ban adult content, there may be some content that your child is exposed to that is inappropriate for their age. Inappropriate content includes information or images that upset your child, material that's directed at adults, inaccurate information or content that encourages unlawful or dangerous behaviour. Parents are also particularly concerned that children may come across sexual content and extreme images.

### Fake news and propaganda

Young people get much of their news from social media feeds, where false, exaggerated or sponsored content can be prevalent. There are concerns that fake news can normalise prejudices, foster hatred and bias towards certain people and sway public opinion. Recent reports have outlined a growing concern that 'hate preachers' have shared content that commends terrorist acts and behaviours.

# FACEBOOK: Tips for Parents



## Keep passwords secure

Advise your child to set a password that is difficult to guess and does not include a name or common words. An effective password could be a very random mix of letters and characters. They should never use a Facebook password anywhere else online and never share a password.

## Educate children about stranger danger

Teach children that all friend requests from strangers should be declined. Check regularly that their interactions are only with real-life friends and explain to your child that they should never agree to meet anyone they've been communicating online with in person without speaking to their parents first.

## Safe 'friending'

Friend requests should only be sent to friends, family and other people on Facebook that your child knows and trusts. Friends can be added by searching for them and sending them a friend request. Once a request has been accepted, connections can see each other's posts in the Facebook News Feed.

## Encourage respectful behaviour

It is likely that your child may encounter opinions that are different to their own. Help your child understand how to make responsible and safe choices about what they post – because anything they put online can be misinterpreted or taken out of context. It is also important that they never say or do things that they feel uncomfortable about doing and they know where to go for support if someone ever harasses them.

## Identifying fact from fiction

It is important that children understand that not everything they read online may be true. False news stories often have catchy headlines in all caps with exclamation points – but if shocking claims in the headline sound unbelievable, they probably are. If no other news source is reporting the same story, it may indicate that the story is false.



## Limit oversharing

Encourage your child to avoid saying where they are, where they go to school and where they are going to be with friends. They should also be careful about uploading certain images, status updates and messages even with friends. Depending on your child's age, you might go through their privacy shortcuts and account settings together to make selections you're both comfortable with.

## Follow the age guidance

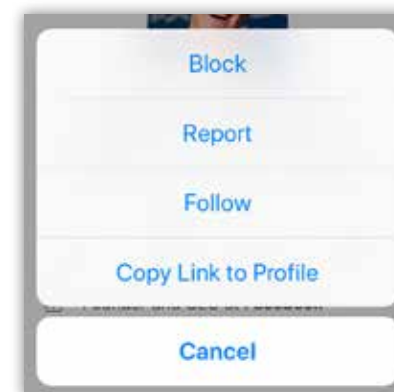
Despite Facebook's 13-plus age requirement, studies have revealed that there are millions of users on Facebook under the age of 13. According to the NSPCC, a quarter of British parents allow children under the age of 13 to have their own Facebook account. Ensure your child is the minimum age required to join a social networking site to be confident you are not undermining your child's healthy development.

## Use the Activity Log

Chat to your children about reviewing their privacy settings and to make sure that they consider the audience when sharing content on Facebook. They can use the Activity Log to review and manage what they've shared on Facebook and limit who sees individual posts or images.

## Report fake accounts

A fake account is an account where someone is pretending to be something or someone that doesn't exist. Fake accounts can include accounts for fake or made up people, celebrities or even pets. Click three dots on the cover photo and select 'Report' if you suspect an account is fake.



## Set some rules

Children nowadays are completely comfortable with technology but it's your responsibility to ensure they're protected from the dangers of the web. You could ask your child to use internet devices in a communal area, explain what acceptable or unacceptable behaviour is and ask your child not to download apps or files without your permission first. Limit usage at bedtimes and before school.

Sources: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/features-and-news/children-social-media-fake-news>  
<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/facebook-lose-users-teenagers-less-engaged-snapchat-instagram-social-media-young-children-a7908446.html>  
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/online-abuse/facts-statistics/>  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2018/02/06/one-four-parents-allow-13s-facebook/>