



# Children and Social Media

## *How old is old enough?*

Most sites have an age restriction of 13+ years due to COPPA (Children Online Privacy Protection Act).

Social media sites collect and markets user data. As parents, your children's data being collected and on sold is the often the least of our concerns. Social media is a phenomenon, there is no other word for it – Australia as of April 2015 had 14,000,000 steady users on Facebook.

In fact, Facebook has the world's largest population and this is only one example of social media!

Recently there was an article from the Victorian Principals Association titled, '**Social Media, Defamation and Schools.**'

This article really brought home how careful we need to be when posting on social media – to remember that nothing is truly private, that we need to think twice before posting, that if we post or even re-post something defamatory we can be legally liable, we lose control of whatever is posted, it can never be totally recalled, our post has no tone of voice or body language attached so it can be easily misinterpreted, what might be a funny comment to us, can easily be mis-read, what was intended as a letting off of steam can all too quickly reach an audience far beyond that which it was intended.... The list goes on!

So if these are only part of a greater list of things we need to consider when engaging in social media, how can we possibly expect our children to manage it responsibly? **The short answer is invariably they can't.** Or at least not without vigilant monitoring and support from parents.

If your child/children are using social media here are the top 5 tips to lessen the risk

1. Get them or keep them off – **if you feel unable to do this then...**
2. Set up an account that you have control over – you get to see everything! Ensure privacy settings are at their highest and give greatest control over who sees the content & who can respond to the content
3. **Talk with your child about is and isn't appropriate to post** – not just in terms of offensive, embarrassing etc content, but are they revealing too much personal information that may identify them?
4. Help them to deal with any negative feedback/comments. This may involve blocking and/or reporting to the social media site
5. Check in **regularly** to make sure they are behaving in a smart, safe & responsible manner

This site from Common Sense Media <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/learningwith-technology/is-it-ok-for-my-kid-to-start-her-own-youtube-channel> has some helpful tips for parents on YouTube, but these can be applied to other forms of social media.

As always the eSafety government site has excellent help guides for the most popular forms of social media and can assist with privacy settings and reporting - <https://www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/games-apps-and-social-networking>

Your feedback is important and welcome, with your help, together we can help to prepare our children to be eSmart – smart, safe & responsible users of digital technologies.