

#SocialMedia ... the Good, the Bad & the Ugly



...the Good

Sharing information and personal messages with others is what social media is all about. Whether your device is a smartphone, tablet, or laptop, there are great websites and apps that make communicating with family and friends easy and fun.

- Connecting with friends
- Learning about the world through sites like YouTube and Twitter
- Meeting people with similar interests on Instagram or Facebook
- Pursuing causes on blogs and websites

When you use social media in a positive, respectful way, it can be a powerful tool for connecting with the world.

...the Bad

Hard to believe, but there are some downsides to using social media.

- **Privacy? —yeah, right.** Any comment made or video uploaded can be shared in a heartbeat. Once posted, you lose control. Hitting “Delete” is like shutting the barn door after the horse escapes. It’s too late!
- **Is it legal?** Check a site’s Terms of Use to see if you’re old enough to access it. Lying about your age is NOT okay.
- **Internet≠free.** Posting a cool picture without permission or giving credit to the owner can get you in trouble, even when you’re just having fun. Downloading music and movies without payment is also a giant no-no.
- **News flash!** Your popularity or self-esteem is not connected to the number of comments or followers you have. ‘Nuff said.
- **So you like Old Navy.** Advertisers and identity thieves are always on the lookout for names, addresses and other personal information. Accepting follower and friend requests from strangers and filling out online forms can be a bad idea.
- **But it’s oh, so tempting.** Sometimes you need to step away from social media. It can never replace face-to-face communication, and it’s not appropriate to use during dinner or while driving.



...the Ugly

When it’s ugly, it’s really, really ugly. People often say and do mean stuff, sometimes without realizing.

- **If you loved me...** Sharing a revealing picture or nudity in a video (sexting), is not a smart choice. Unless you’re okay with your parents, future employers and kitty cat seeing you without clothing, you’re better off saying... uh, no! Don’t give into blackmail, either. An embarrassing picture is the least of your problems because blackmailers never stop.
- **She’s so ugly.** Whether you make nasty comments, spread gossip or threaten people online, it’s all called cyberbullying. No one deserves this type of treatment, so speak up if it happens to you or someone else. Parents, teachers and trusted adults all offer guidance in these situations.
- **A crime is still a crime.** Participating in sexting can be against the law, no matter what your age. Even possessing material considered obscene or pornographic can land you in legal hot water. States are also cracking down on cyberbullying.
- **I’m 16. How old are you?** Beware of predators while using social media. Yes, you’ve heard this 20,000 times before, but it’s still true. Fact: the sky is blue. Fact: strangers can lie. Never, EVER, meet a stranger in person.
- **Please, I can explain.** You’re not the only one using social media these days. College officials, employers and even high school football coaches are noticing how you act. Don’t lose a scholarship or more because of inappropriate behavior. Make your digital footprint a clean one.