

# Parent and Family Guide to Student Social Media Guidelines: 13 and Older



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Family members today have a new role: helping children behave safely and responsibly when they are using social media, whether for fun or for learning. This guide is designed to help you do that. Recently, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) worked with our teachers, librarians, and students, and partnered with [Common Sense Media](https://www.common sense media.org/) to develop guidelines for students 13 and older for the effective use of social media. These guidelines focus on four areas: digital image, responsible posting, considering consequences, and cyberbullying. There are infographics for each of the areas, created by NYCDOE students and teachers for use by students and teachers, which you may also want to share with your child. You can find the guidelines and the infographics on our website at [schools.nyc.gov/SocialMedia](https://schools.nyc.gov/SocialMedia).

## Create the Digital Image You Want

To control their own digital images, young people must consider how they want the world to identify them. This includes aligning their individual goals with their online images, standing behind their own words, and understanding that families can be helpful partners. The following activities are designed to help you work with your child to create a responsible and accurate digital footprint.

Family Activity	Why it Helps
<p><b>Headline Exercise</b> If your child was the subject of a newspaper article, what headline would she want to see with that article? Write the headline. Talk about what the headlines of friends, families and famous people might be. You can also watch the video at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/TheOneSentenceProjectVideo">http://tinyurl.com/TheOneSentenceProjectVideo</a> to hear how other students have answered this question. Review the types of photos and posts you and your child have in your current online spaces. Do they match the headline you'd both like to see? If not, how might future posts address that?</p>	<p>Sets the stage and gets the conversation going.</p>
<p><b>Digital Footprint Assessment</b> Have different family members take this quiz: <a href="https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/2245969/Digital-Footprint-Quiz">https://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/2245969/Digital-Footprint-Quiz</a> and compare results.</p>	<p>Family members can see similarities and differences in how they each may be perceived online. This prompts discussion about what they can do to improve their online images.</p>
<p><b>Imagining Your Audience</b> Remind your child that many people are potential audience members for his online image. What would he like his teacher to see? How about a College Admissions officer? Or an employer? What about a potential date? Discuss what he can do to update his image and improve the way he is perceived.</p>	<p>Puts the child in control of his digital image.</p>
<p><b>Review your Own Profile</b> You can take steps to improve your digital footprint or help your child with hers. Some places to start are simply creating profiles in places like Google (<a href="https://profiles.google.com">https://profiles.google.com</a>), About.Me (<a href="https://about.me/">https://about.me/</a>), and Flavors.Me (<a href="http://flavors.me">http://flavors.me</a>). Look at other students' profiles and discuss what you like and don't like. Consider if there is anything that your child may want to delete or untag to more accurately reflect the image she wants to convey.</p>	<p>Provides an opportunity for family members to work side by side to control their online identities.</p>

**Additional Resource**

“Common Sense on Privacy and Digital Footprints.” *Family Tip Sheet*. Common Sense Media, 2012. Web. 10 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/9-12-familytip-privacyanddigitalfootprints.pdf>>

**Post Responsibly – Be Mindful of Your Audience**

You play a key role in ensuring your child is posting responsibly. The NYCDOE Internet Acceptable Use and Safety Policy (<http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/InternetAcceptableUse>) reminds parents that they are responsible for teaching their particular family values to their children. You can help your child post in ways that best represent the values for which your family wants to be recognized.

Family Activity	Why it Helps
<p><b>Set Up an Account Together</b> Once your child is old enough to create an account (typically, 13), you should set up social media accounts and review default privacy settings together. Make sure your child is only having online friendships and conversations with people you know and approve of.</p>	<p>You can see this process through your child’s eyes and he can see your genuine interest in her success and safety online.</p>
<p><b>Use Current Events</b> Events in the news and situations with friends and family provide great ways to discuss responsible posting. When stories come up, discuss with your child how would handle the situation. Don’t focus only on what not to do. It’s also important to identify examples of people using social media use for social good, a great online presence, or any other positive outcome.</p>	<p>Keeps the conversation current and authentic. It provides a ready answer to the question, “Why do we need to know this?”</p>

**Additional Resources**

“Family Tip Sheet: Common Sense on Boys, Girls, and Media Messages, Middle & High School.” *Digital Literacy and Citizenship in a Connected Culture*. Common Sense Media, 2012. Web. 8 March 2014. <<http://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/6-12-familytip-boysgirlsmediamessages.pdf>>

“Kids and Socializing Online.” *Consumer Information: Privacy & Identity*. Federal Trade Commission. September 2011. Web. 8 March 2014. <<http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0012-kids-and-socializing-online>>

“Kids and Socializing Online.” *OnGuardOnline.gov*. The Federal Trade Commission. September 2011. Web. 8 March 2014. <<http://www.onguardonline.gov/articles/0012-kids-and-socializing-online>>

## Consider the Consequences of Your Online Actions

It's important for students to think through the consequences of their online actions and to be careful about whom they are including as friends, followers, etc. Students don't always realize that what they do outside of school can have consequences at school, and this is especially true online.

Family Activity	Why it Helps
<p><b>Don't Post Sensitive Personal Information</b> Explain to your child why it's a bad to post your address, birth date, or other personal information and what identity theft means. Use real examples if you can find them.</p>	<p>Creates clear ground rules and stresses the importance of holding back information.</p>
<p><b>Keep Information Private</b> Talk to your child about not sharing passwords with friends and make sure you both know how to prevent computers you share with others from automatically saving passwords. (For example, always log off when you have finished using a site – don't just click out of the browser.) Let your child know that we can each be held responsible for another person's actions when that person uses our online accounts to post information or make purchases.</p>	<p>Opens the discussion about the importance of protecting one's whole self, in both the real and digital worlds.</p>
<p><b>Parental Notification</b> Schools notify parents each year about school or classroom-based social media activities. If you haven't heard anything, talk to your child's teacher, and your child, about what kinds of social media activity is part of her classroom work. Discuss the school's use of social media with your child the same way you would talk about other school work.</p>	<p>Keeps you in touch with what's happening in your child's school so you can take actions to support and guide her social media use.</p>
<p><b>Be Aware of Your Child's Behavior Online</b> You may want to "friend" or "follow" your child. Some families keep a copy of their child's online usernames and passwords; others have a place where all family passwords are kept in case of emergency. Establish rules for what is permissible behavior online for your family and discuss the Student Social Media Guidelines at home. You may also want to buy filtering software or set up a program to track computer and cell phone use.</p>	<p>Helps you stay aware of what's taking place online. It also helps children know their parents are there to support them in safe and responsible use of social media.</p>

### Additional Resources

"Avoid Scams." *OnGuardOnline.gov*. The Federal Trade Commission. n.d. Web. 10 March 2014.  
<<http://www.onguardonline.gov/articles/0001-avoiding-online-scams>>

Bazon, Emily. "Don't Stalk Your Kid Online." *Slate Magazine*. N.p., 14 Feb. 2014. Web. 20 Mar. 2014.  
<[http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future\\_tense/2014/02/it\\_s\\_complicated\\_an\\_interview\\_with\\_danah\\_boyd\\_about\\_teens\\_and\\_technology.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2014/02/it_s_complicated_an_interview_with_danah_boyd_about_teens_and_technology.html)>

"Be Smart Online." *OnGuardOnline.gov*. The Federal Trade Commission. n.d. Web. 10 March 2014.  
<<http://www.onguardonline.gov/topics/be-smart-online>>.

"Understanding Social Media: Encouraging Responsible Digital Citizenship and Social Media Use." *NYC Department of Education: Rules and Policies*. NYC Department of Education, Division of Family and Community Engagement. n.d. Web. 10 March 2014. <<http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/7A8FE940-0015-403C-9487-E7B28431A4D6/0/socialmedia41513.pdf>>

## Take Threats of Cyberbullying Seriously

Cyberbullying is the use of electronic technologies to hurt or harass others. Examples include creating or circulating offensive text messages or emails, posts that are not true and create rumors, and embarrassing photos. The guidelines give students suggestions about what to do when someone they know is being targeted, or if they are being targeted themselves.

Family Activity	Why it Helps
<p><b>Know Your Child’s Friends At School</b> Learn the names of your child’s friends and what kinds of activities they do together. If you suspect your child is cyberbullying or is the victim of cyberbullying, you may want to report it to your school’s guidance counselor, Respect for All liaison, or another member of the school staff whom you trust.</p>	<p>Helps families recognize personalities and situations that may become problems.</p>
<p><b>Stay Aware of Behavior At Home</b> Pay attention if your child’s behavior suddenly changes. Some signs of cyberbullying (both being bullied, as well as bullying) are: withdrawal from daily activities, getting upset when online or texting, quickly closing out of applications when an adult walks by, or avoiding discussions about what she is doing on the computer.</p>	<p>Helps family members spot cyberbullying and intervene before it escalates.</p>
<p><b>Know What to Do If Your Child Is The Bully</b> If you suspect your child is bullying someone, it’s important to understand the situation. Try to determine the underlying issues and come up with a plan to address and correct the behavior with your child. Your child’s school Respect for All liaison or guidance counselor can help you with this.</p>	<p>Families don’t need to go through these situations alone. The NYCDOE has professionals and resources to support you.</p>
<p><b>Start the Dialogue</b> Family media agreements will help you have a discussion about how to be responsible online. You can find forms for these agreements online: <a href="http://www.common sense media.org/educators/parent-media-education/family-media-agreements">http://www.common sense media.org/educators/parent-media-education/family-media-agreements</a></p>	<p>By setting clear expectations and establishing boundaries, you make future conversations on the subject much easier.</p>
<p><b>Encourage Your Child to Speak Up</b> When your child notices that someone he knows is not being treated right, encourage him to support the victim, whether by privately telling the victim that he is sorry for what she is going through or by speaking up publicly. Try to find real examples of this from your life or in the media and discuss with your child the different ways he might respond.</p>	<p>Shows that there are alternatives to bullying. Standing up against abuse can give your child confidence and deepen his empathy.</p>
<p><b>Point Out Positive Contributions from Other Young People</b> Encourage your child to stay positive in online communities. Point out examples of others who participate this way, like the students who are part of <a href="http://stuvoice.org/">http://stuvoice.org/</a>. Discuss with your child the different ways she can help keep things positive.</p>	<p>Helps you show your child how social media can be used positively.</p>



**Additional Resources**

“Cyberbullying.” *U.S. Department of Health & Human Services*. n.d. Web. 19 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/index.html>>

“Family Tip Sheet: Common Sense on Cyberbullying.” *Digital Literacy and Citizenship in a Connected Culture*. Common Sense Media, n.d. Web. 21 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/uploads/pdfs/6-12-familytip-cyberbullying.pdf>>

Hinduja, Sameer, Ph.D., and Justin W. “Cyberbullying Warning Signs: Red flags that your child is involved in cyberbullying.” *Cyberbullying Research Center*. 2009. Web. 21 Mar. 2014. <<http://cyberbullying.org/cyberbullying-warning-signs/>>

“Respect for All.” *New York City Department of Education*. n.d. Web. 21 Mar. 2014. <<http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/RespectforAll/default.htm>>

“Tip Sheet: Technology and Youth: Protecting Your Child from Electronic Aggression.” *Center for Disease Control and Prevention*. n.d. Web. 21 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ea-tipsheet-a.pdf>>

“What to Do If Your Child Exhibits Bullying Behavior.” *Anti-Defamation League*. 2012. Web. 21 Mar. 2014. <<http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/What-to-Do-if-Your-Child-Exhibits-Bullying-Behavior.pdf>>

