Gen X'ers Guide to Social Media for their Gen Z Kids

Social Media	What's it for	How you join	Risks	Assets	Age (on paper)
Facebook	Connecting with friends and family and others with similar interests (e.g Harry Styles group)	You set up an account with an email and some personal information	There is no verification for Facebook accounts, you can sign up as anyone.	Can connect with family, friends, and others with same interests.	13 years old – though age is not verified.
Instagram	Sharing photos and videos	Create a page with an email or phone number	There is adult content on Instagram. If made public anyone can message you or see your photos.	Can see lots of content (educational, fun, community)	13 years old - though not verified
Tik Tok	Share videos between 15 seconds and 3 minutes long	Create a page with an email or phone number	There are a lot of people of different ages on TikTok. There is also a lot of political content your child might not be ready to interact with.	There is great educational content from professionals about all kinds of information. Connect with friends and people of same interests.	13 years old - not verified
Twitter	(Similar to Facebook but usually more public) Can share text posts, videos and photos	Create a page with an email or phone number	There is 18+ content on Twitter. While there are ways to block this content there are a lot of loopholes.	There are a lot of cool communities on Twitter. You can also keep updated with news and social events.	13 years old - not verified
WeChat	Messaging App	Extensive verification process due to it being used mainly in China	WeChat is Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Uber, and many public services all rolled into one.	Connect with friends and family	13 years old
Snapchat	Sending messages, videos and photos that will delete either at the end of the day or after being seen.	Create an account with email or phone number	This app does delete all photos, videos, and messages after a certain point.	Connect with friends, post fun photos and videos that only your friends can see	13 years old
LinkedIn	Similar to Facebook with a focus on business/work place connections	Set up an account with email	There is no verification for some information.	Network with ppl from schools, business, etc.	16 years old
Dating Apps (Tinder, Hinge, Grindr, Bumble, etc)	Picking and choosing people's profiles to chat with and potentially date.	Set up an account with just a phone number	Photos & ages do not need to be verified.	Connect with people in your area; many have sections for people looking for friends.	16-18 years old depending on app

Boomers[1] and Xers – this is for you!

Setting up an account on these sites are easy! All you need is an email/phone number, age, username and password! Many of these sites have age limits. People under 13 are not legally allowed to have an account on most sites. Setting up accounts and following your kids or having your children share their accounts with you may help you connect and understand how to connect with them.

Learn about the programs and apps your child is using. Some social media platforms have age restrictions to join, but it's easy for children to get around these.

- Show interest in your child's online life and ask questions.
- When possible, keep tablets and computers in common areas where you can watch while your child uses them.
- Get online family protection. Programs that provide parental controls can block websites, enforce time limits, monitor the websites your child visits, and their online conversations.
- Follow your child's online accounts, and tell them that you are monitoring their online activity to help keep them safe. Some children or teens may create a fake second account for their parents to follow.
- Ask them about the people they "meet" online. Showing genuine interest will help them feel comfortable talking about it. Explain that it's easy for someone on the Internet to pretend to be someone they're not.
- Talk about the importance of keeping online friendships in the online world. Make it clear that if your child wants to meet an online friend in person, it must be in a public place and with a trusted adult.
- Discuss what's okay and safe to post online, and what isn't. Online posts stay online forever. As a general rule, your child shouldn't post anything they wouldn't want a parent or teacher to see or read.
- People can't always control what others post about them. Explain that information and photos found online can turn up again years later.
- Explain that autocorrect can sometimes lead to miscommunication and hurt feelings.
- Some teens may try to find dates or sexual partners on dating sites. Talk to them about finding healthy and safe relationships.

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[1] I was born in 1969 – I am not a boomer – but it is a term my children often use with me when I am not sounding particularly tech savvy. Arguing that I am a Gen Xer has no positive outcomes. Learn from my mistakes.

Some internet vocabulary that will be important in conversations with your kids.

- Online Profile: Most social media sites require users to set up a profile, which usually includes a name, e-mail address, birthdate, interests and a photo.
    - o Public Account: Public for anyone to see. Many apps allow your posts to be seen only by people you allow to follow you or to have a public account.
    - o Private Account: Private accounts let only the people who follow the account to see the things the person posts. They have to send a friend request and then if accepted can see the content you post.
    - o Spam Account: A spam account is a secondary account (usually private) that someone may post more private/embarrassing/"dumb" photos and thoughts. They often are not given out to people they are not close to. It gives them a space to post more "messily"
    - o Vent Account: This is similar to a spam account where it is usually a secondary account where people post "vents". They can post anything from art that means things to angry rants about friends. It's similar to an online diary.
- Messages/Chats: Using instant messaging over the Internet or between smartphones to send messages (e.g. Facebook Messenger, iMessage, WhatsApp, Hangouts).
    - o Direct Messages: These are messages/chats that are only between you and another user. (Instagram, Twitter, Reddit)
        - ▪ Dm: Direct Messages
    - o Group chats: Many of these apps will allow users to make group chats with multiple users.

- Friend/Followers: Depending on the tool, users "follow" or "request" to be friends with people they know, such as classmates or family members. They may also use it to find new friends.
    - o Mutuals: People who both follow each other.
        - ▪ Muts: Mutuals
- Walls/Boards/Pages/Timeline: Social media sites allow people to post or send messages in many different ways. On Facebook, for example, information is posted to a "wall". Depending on a user's privacy settings, some messages are visible to the public, while others can only be seen by friends or followers.
- Photo/Video Sharing: Many social networking sites or apps allow users to upload photos and videos, or to share live videos. These can also be public or private depending on privacy settings.

- o Snapchats: These are photos or videos sent over the app Snapchat that will be deleted after you watch them.
  - o Vlogs: Short for "video blogs", vlogs are posted regularly to a video sharing platform (like YouTube) by individuals called "vloggers". Vloggers can develop very big followings online.
- Joining Groups: Many apps allow users to create groups. People "join", "like" or "follow" groups to access information and have conversations with other members.
- Online Dating: Many apps or websites help strangers find romantic or sexual connections online.
- Slang/Emojis: Many of these apps do have automated bots that check for illegal and inappropriate content. Many communities use different slang or emojis to get around the automated filters.

Pros of social media	Cons of social media
- Staying connected to friends - Meeting new friends with shared interests – particularly useful for young people feeling isolated in their own community. - Finding community and support for specific activities - Sharing artwork or music - Exploring and expressing themselves	- Exposure to harmful or inappropriate content (e.g., sex, drugs, violence, etc.) - Exposure to dangerous people - Cyber bullying can become a risk factor for depression and suicide - Oversharing personal information - Exposure to excessive advertisements - Privacy concerns including the collection of data about teen users - Identity theft or being hacked - Interference with sleep, exercise, homework, or family activities