Five top tips for safe use of social media

It's common knowledge that today's young people are frequent users of social media. Parents are often worried about the risks of social media use, but there are plenty of safe, responsible ways for young people to interact on these platforms. Have a look at our five top tips for encouraging and supporting safe social media use among young people.

1. **Choose the right privacy settings.** We know that some young people like to set the privacy settings on their social media accounts as low as possible to help them stay plugged in to all the interactions and sharing that goes on. While the impulse to connect with their peers is a good one, there are risks to being too open online and privacy settings can be a valuable tool for safe social media use. Ask your children what privacy settings they have in place already. Encourage them to do things like setting their default sharing option on Facebook to 'friends' (i.e. people they've already connected with) rather than 'everyone'.

2. **Think carefully about photo sharing.** It's important to be careful with any information you share online, but photos are especially sensitive. Once a photo is posted to a social media platform like Facebook or Instagram, it can be hard to control whether others view, share or download it. Your child shouldn't share any photos they wouldn't want you, another family member or even a complete stranger to see, and they should be aware that their friends can also upload and tag them in photos. Facebook allows you to review all things you're tagged in using the Activity Log – your child can use this setting to stay on top of what they're associated with.

3. **If something does go wrong, report it.** Social media sites normally allow users to report violations of their terms and conditions. If your child encounters something inappropriate on social media, they can take action to have it blocked or removed. CEOP's [Thinkuknow](#) site provides a thorough [guide](#) on how to report abuse or inappropriate content, and is an excellent first place to turn if you or your child is worried.

4. **Get involved.** It's tempting for parents to focus on the risks of social media use, but there are many positive ways for kids to interact online. Lots of people use social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook to stay informed about current events and get involved in activism and advocacy. Young people can also follow artists, scientists, journalists and other public figures to learn more about a range of topics, like music or technology.

5. **Build friendships.** In addition to getting involved in the broader world, social media can be a great resource for less confident young people who have difficulty with social stress and making friends. Chatting and playing games with friends can seem easier from the comfort of your own home, and these social media interactions may even help some children build confidence in offline social settings.