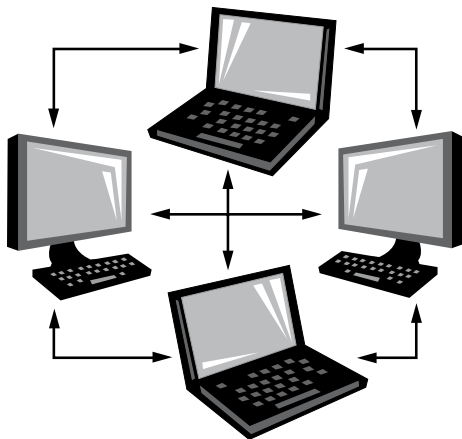


SAFE SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social Butterflies



You've heard their names before: MySpace, Facebook, Friendster, Xanga, Twitter. They're all forms of social media where people go online to chat with their friends, make new friends, and exchange information. Social networking sites are easy to use and understand. Their purpose is to bring people closer together. They let users create personal profiles, add photos, write in a public journal or blog, send messages to others, and invite people to become their online friends—all with just a few clicks of the mouse. When used responsibly, these sites present wonderful social opportunities.

You can stay safe by following the tips below.

- Some social networking sites require that users be at least 13 years of age, and sometimes even 18, to create an account. Don't pretend you're older than you really are. That day will come soon enough!
- Be careful about posting your current location or your upcoming plans. You may not want everyone in your network to have that information.
- Don't post any identifying information on a social website. This includes your full name, your phone number, and your address.
- Be careful of any links that ask you to post your social network information on an outside site. These sites are often created by scammers looking to steal your account and scam your friends in your name.
- Investigate and understand the privacy options of the social network you intend to use or are using, and make sure they work the way you think they do.
- Most social networking websites let users set their profiles to private so that only their friends—usually defined as people that know their full name or email address—can contact them. Make sure your profile is set to private.
- Just because you are using privacy settings, you should still be careful with your personal or financial information; you can't be sure with whom your friends might share the information.
- Don't accept requests or messages from people you don't know. They might be scam artists.
- Never post pictures of a sexual nature of yourself or someone else online.
- Be aware that online information lives forever. Be careful about what you post. College admissions personnel and job recruiters often check out personal information on social websites while weighing their decisions. One day, this will be very important.
- Some people you may meet in social websites may not be who they say they are. They may pretend to be someone else. You should never meet face-to-face with someone you've met online.
- Never give out your password to anyone but your parent or guardian.

If you see something that makes you feel uncomfortable, tell your parent or guardian right away. Likewise, tell them if anything happens online that hurts or scares you.



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