

How to Protect Your Privacy on Social Networks

Tips for Teens

1. Befriend your parents online

Add as Friend

Don't be afraid to friend or follow your parents on the social networks where you hang out. Of course, you probably don't want to share everything you write or post on a social networking site with your parents, but you might find that it's fun to share some photos or trade messages with them! Allowing your parents to connect with you online is also a good way to help alleviate their concern about your online safety and is a good reminder to you that these sites are not anonymous worlds without consequences. Behind an "anonymous" post, for example, is a permanent record of your computer's IP address, which could be used to identify you.

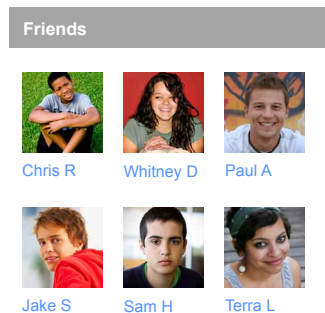
Also, knowing your parents are out there online might make you think twice before writing or posting things today that could embarrass you tomorrow or even haunt you much later down the road. Did you know that most college admissions officers check out college applicants on social networks?

2. Don't over-friend or over-share and remember to respect others' privacy too

How many social networking friends or followers do you have? And how many of those people are your friends in real life? And of those people, how many of them would you trust with an embarrassing secret? For most of us, our real friends probably number less than 20 people. Does that mean you need to de-friend or block people on social networks that fall outside your inner social circle? Not necessarily, but you should learn how to tighten and filter your social networking connections so your online behavior matches your real-world behavior. For example, would you get on your school's loudspeaker and announce to your entire class that you thought your math homework was boring? Probably not, but you're doing the same thing if you blast that information to your classmates on a social network.

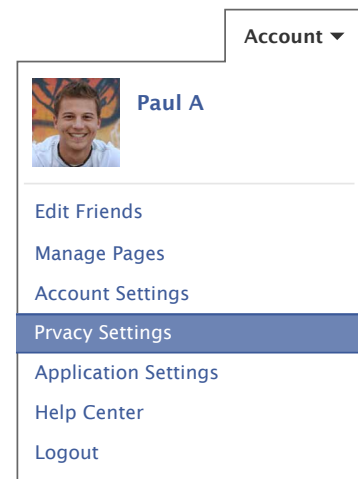
Keep in mind that the people that you allow to be your social networking friends or followers can take the information you share with them and easily share it with anyone else. If you want to share something with all of your social networking connections, make sure it's something that you would feel comfortable about having them pass on to strangers.

Also, when you share online keep other peoples' privacy in mind. If you're about to share something that involves somebody else ask yourself: would you want to be talked about in that way or identified in that photo or video? Things travel extremely fast online and there's often a permanent record left behind so there's a real risk of hurting people when you share online and don't respect their privacy.



3. Learn about privacy settings and use them

Most social networking sites provide a number of privacy controls. Does the social networking website you use allow you to limit the information you share to a specific subgroup of your total friends or followers? When you don't go in and set these controls yourself they often default to settings that are more public than private. Take the time to learn what you can and can't control and what happens when you share information on the site. Do you really want your teachers or your friends' parents to see that photo album you just uploaded? Do you want to open up your profile to search engines and companies that will copy your information and make it widely publicly available? To protect yourself and your privacy you need to carefully consider these questions and adjust your privacy settings accordingly.



4. When you share online your reputation is on the line

Things that you post today can stay online for years. What might seem fun or silly today could have serious repercussions when you're trying to get into college or land a job or internship. When it comes time you may be surprised at how much college admissions officers and employers already know about you – it's because they checked online. A 2009 **study** found that nearly 50 percent of all employers use social networking sites to screen applicants and another **survey** found that 70 percent of college admission officers use social networking sites to evaluate college applicants. So you see, protecting your personal information on a social networking site can be critical to your future success so take the time to protect your privacy today.

Jake M was tagged in an album



Morgan T How Embarrassing!!!

Learn More

For more information about Teens and Social Networking privacy, visit www.truste.com/2010-survey.