SOCIAL MEDIA

 Social media platforms are an integral part of everyday life, helping people stay connected, informed and entertained. But with that connection comes the risk of scams, misinformation, cyberbullying and more. Practicing social media safety helps protect personal information, mental health and even physical well-being.

QUICK TIPS

- Adjust privacy settings on all social media accounts to limit who can see your information.
- Never share personal information such as your home address, full birthdate or travel plans.
- Think before posting. Once something is online, it can be saved, shared or misused.
- Be cautious when interacting with people you do not know in real life.
- Report any harmful, threatening or suspicious behavior to the platform and local authorities as needed.

SOCIAL MEDIA SAFETY TIPS

FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Children and teens often use social media before fully understanding the risks. Parents and guardians play a crucial role in helping their children use platforms safely.

Key Guidelines
- Establish guidelines for which platforms are suitable and when they can be used.
- Keep accounts private, and monitor friend or follower lists.
- Talk regularly with your child about whom they interact with online.
- Encourage open conversations about what they see and experience on social media.
- Use parental controls or monitoring tools when appropriate.

Do's and Do Not's
- Teach children to avoid sharing location, school names or phone numbers.
- Follow or be friends with your child on their social media platforms if agreed upon.
- Model good online behavior through your own social media use.

- Do not assume children fully understand the risks of oversharing.
- Do not wait until there is a problem to start conversations about online safety.

FOR TEENS

Social media is a powerful tool for staying connected. Still, it also comes with the pressure to share, compare and respond quickly. Staying smart online helps keep you and your friends safe.

Smart Practices
- Keep accounts private and limit who can comment or message you.
- Avoid posting your exact location or daily routines.
- Do not share passwords, even with close friends and family.
- Think about how posts may affect your future in school, jobs or relationships.
- If something online makes you uncomfortable, talk to a trusted adult.

Dealing with Cyberbullying
- Do not respond to hurtful comments or messages.
- Save screenshots and report bullying behavior to the platform.
- Talk to a parent, teacher or school counselor if it continues.
- Remember that you can block or mute accounts.

FOR ADULTS

Social media can be an excellent tool for communication, networking and news. It can also expose users to misinformation, scams and personal data theft.

Safety Tips
- Use strong, unique passwords and update them regularly.
- Be cautious when accepting friend requests or messages from individuals you do not know.
- Avoid sharing sensitive life updates, financial information or your full birthdate.
- Watch out for phishing links disguised as news stories, quizzes or sales.
- Stay informed by following trusted sources and verifying information before sharing.

Preventing Identity Theft
- Limit what personal details are visible in your public profile.
- Turn off location tagging and avoid posting real-time travel updates.
- Be cautious when managing accounts linked to financial or health care platforms.
- Regularly review your account's login activity and security settings to ensure optimal protection.

RECOGNIZING AND REPORTING THREATS OR HOAXES

Social media can disseminate real-time information quickly, but it can also amplify false or dangerous rumors or threats.

What To Watch For
- Posts that claim breaking news without linking to credible sources
- Images or videos with no verifiable origin
- Messages that urge followers to "share before it is taken down"
- Threats of violence, harm or school incidents

- Accounts impersonating government officials or organizations

What To Do
- Do not share or forward suspicious content.
- Verify news from official sources such as state agencies, local law enforcement or media outlets.
- Report threats to the platform and local law enforcement if they appear credible and actionable.
- Take screenshots to preserve content in case it is deleted.