

Social media

age restrictions:

A guide for parents

and carers



From 10 December 2025, age-restricted social media platforms will have to take reasonable steps to prevent Australians under the age of 16 from creating a social media account or continuing to use an existing account. The new social media age restrictions are intended to keep young people safe from digital harm. While this is a popular decision among many parents and carers, ReachOut research shows that the majority of young people aged 12–15 (72%) disagree with the restrictions or have mixed feelings about them.

Many young people may struggle with accepting the restrictions and could find it difficult to manage the period of transition away from social media. This guide is designed to help you better understand how this change may affect your teen's emotions and wellbeing, and to suggest some ways you can support them to navigate the transition.



REACHOUT

Understanding the impacts

While there are many expected benefits to staying off of social media, your teen may only be considering what they are set to lose.

Social media is a core element of teen friendships today. It's the most common way to chat with friends, to make new friends, and to keep up to date with each other's lives. Many teens also find connection and comfort in digital spaces.

These benefits are especially valued by teens from marginalised backgrounds, who may struggle to see themselves represented in the physical world around them.



Hear how teen content creator George uses social media to celebrate his sexuality and connect with his community

Our research shows that teens also use social media as a way to discover mental health information, often using these platforms as frequently as they would use a search engine like Google.

Delayed access to social media may mean that your teen feels they are losing access to their standard way of communicating with their friends, learning about themselves and connecting with the world around them. They may feel left out, or uncertain about where they fit in, and this could affect their confidence and overall wellbeing.



Browse our Social Media and Teenagers resources

Helping teens cope with this change

Change is a normal part of life. It can even help us to develop strengths such as courage, flexibility and resilience. But change can also be overwhelming and confusing. Negative emotions around losing access to social media may not disappear overnight. Talking about things with them will help your teen to process and accept what's happened.

Here are some quick tips for supporting your teen during this time of change:

1. Listen closely, and with empathy, to what they have to say.
2. Don't dismiss or minimise their feelings about the situation.
3. Help them to practise acceptance by discussing what they can and can't control.
4. Encourage positive wellbeing behaviours such as exercise or journaling.
5. Support them to build offline friendships to prevent isolation and loneliness.
6. Find ways to spend positive time offline together as a family.



More tips on helping teens to cope with change



Supporting lonely or isolated teens



Navigating tension and behaviour change

Having the freedom to make your own choices and decisions is an important part of growing from a teen into a capable adult. These restrictions may feel like a big loss of freedom, and your teen may respond by rebelling or blaming you. Teens with older siblings who can still access social media might also feel they're being treated unfairly, which could cause tension within the family.

You might also notice some behaviour changes in your teen during this time. If they've become dependent on social media for their sense of wellbeing, they may experience some withdrawal-like symptoms. This could look like frequent mood swings, withdrawal from family life, disrupted sleep, poor eating habits, or issues with communication (e.g. they might become impatient or short-tempered).

The first step if you notice tension or a behaviour change is to speak openly about it with your teen. Approach the conversation with empathy and patience, and practise active listening so they feel heard and understood.

If your teen is unresponsive or uncooperative, try to have the chat again after they've had some time to reflect. If they are really struggling, it might be time to seek professional help.



Tips for having a difficult conversation with your teen



Professional support for teens



If you're worried about your teen's mental health and wellbeing, a visit to their GP is a great first step in getting help. You could also explore counselling or therapy.

Your teen may be feeling a lot of uncertainty about whether a professional can help them, how to talk about what they're going through, or whether they even need to see someone. A good way to support your teen through this

process is to make sure they're prepared for their appointment. Sit down together and help them write out what they're feeling and experiencing. Encourage them to refer to this list during their appointment.



More information on seeking professional help for teens

Further information and support



Visit the eSafety social media age restrictions hub for practical information



Explore more of our resources on raising teens



Visit our Parents and Carers Coaching service for one-on-one support



Support and resources for teens available via the ReachOut website