

Social media can...



help connect.

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE  
Social Media and  
Youth Mental Health  
FROM THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS

## RESEARCH-BASED TIPS FROM PEDIATRICIANS FOR FAMILIES

When it comes to helping your children build healthy digital habits, you may not know where to start. Here are some small steps that can make a big difference for your family:

### 1. Build a family media plan.

- Work together to set rules about social media use so you and your children agree on how devices fit into your lives.

### 2. Balance time with and without devices.

- Create screen-free times and places in your home (e.g., meals, bedtime).
- Set do-not-disturb times and media time limits.
- Track online activities and talk about which ones may be problematic.
- Plan regular screen-free activities your family enjoys.
- Make a habit of turning off media that isn't in use. Try music if you need ambient noise.

### 3. Talk about social media.

- Start regular, open-minded conversations with your children (even the youngest ones!) about their media use, and yours.
- Ask questions like:
  - » What do you like about social media platforms?
  - » How do you feel when you're on social media? And when I'm on social media?
  - » Have you seen anything concerning?
- Help children understand:
  - » What's real and what's edited.
  - » How to recognize ads or inappropriate content.
  - » How media and emotions connect.
- Make sure your kids know they can come to you about their experiences online.

### 4. Set a good example.

- Include your own habits in discussions about social media usage.
- When your attention is on your device, tell your kids what you're doing.
- Be kind to others online and talk to your kids about how you are using media for good.

### 5. Optimize your family's online experience.

- Choose quality content to use together as a family.
- Know which platforms are age- and content-appropriate for your children.
- Set and follow safety rules for who we can chat with online.
- Set privacy settings at the most secure level.
- Watch for warning signs, like if your child is:
  - » Withdrawing from social interaction and hobbies.
  - » Letting screen time interfere with physical activity, healthy eating or bedtime.
- If you're concerned about your child's social media usage or mental health, talk with your pediatrician.

Visit [AAP.org/socialmedia](https://www.aap.org/socialmedia)  
for more resources  
and to submit your questions.