

The Social Media

Important advice and tips Fort Bend parents should know about how teens are using social media and what they're using it for

There are two things we can count on in this world: The sun will always shine, and social media is not going away any time soon. More than ever before, today's digital-age teens are immersed in social media as a means to connect with their friends, share their photos and videos, and express their feelings and opinions. To make it even harder for parents, there are newer, more sophisticated social media venues sprouting up all the time. How are Fort Bend parents supposed to keep up with all of it? *Sugar Land Magazine's* editorial team shares our best advice for how to be a social media savvy parent.

Facebook

With more than 1.2 billion monthly active users, Facebook is the current "dimpled darling" of the social media world. It has become the universal digital connector between friends, families, and relatives - with even long-distance grandparents jumping aboard the bandwagon. Statistics show that as parents, aunts, uncles, and grandmas are logging on, many teens and young adults are logging off, not spending as much time on Facebook. Teens don't always like it when grandma posts an old photo of them from middle school or Aunt Debbie makes a comment on one of their posts. Guess what, parents? They are moving on to more private social media venues where their entire family is not watching their every move. More about those later.

Facebook Advice for Fort Bend Parents

Don't allow your child to set up an account until he or she is at least 13 - in line with the Facebook rules. Check on them regularly and see that their profile privacy settings are correct. View their friend list. If you're the parent of an older teenager who uses Facebook, it's best to keep a very low profile when it comes to commenting, liking, and talking to them about every single one of their posts. Not only is it embarrassing, it may also make them jump off Facebook in favor of a more private social media venue that you know less about, such as Snapchat or Vine, where they are free to post photos and videos without you looking over their shoulder.

What Your Teen Doesn't Want You to Know

Some teens may have a second Facebook account that you don't know about, but most will just use the Facebook "hide" feature - to hide certain posts from only you. Your teen's Facebook privacy settings may be set to "public" allowing the entire world the ability to see and save their photos and posts. They may be telling highly personal or confidential things over Facebook, or they may be using it to cause drama or speak negatively about others.

Setting Expectations

Our best advice is to set proper expectations for Facebook use. A good tip is to insist that your teen "friend" you if they want to partake in social media. We recommend setting a family rule that Facebook is never to be used to harass or trash talk anyone, and the account will be shut down if it's used this way. Savvy families also set ground rules for strong privacy settings or not accepting friend requests of people they don't know well. Another precautionary rule is to review your child's profile (including private messages) at any time. If they won't let you on, take away the cell phone or other privilege until they share their password.

Facebook Do's and Don'ts

They are going to be on social media one way or the other, so it's best to work together with your teen when setting boundaries rather than banishing all forms of digital media use. It's not a good idea to become a spy and stalk your teen's Facebook - constantly looking through his or her friend base and grilling them about every post. You shouldn't friend request all their friends or snoop on all of their pages. Basically, try to keep a low profile.

Use Facebook to Connect with Kids

Although they don't like it when parents comment, like, or post old photos of them in their underwear at age 4, they do like to get an occasional private message from mom or dad telling them how much they love them.



DID YOU KNOW? Most social media takes place on smart phones and not on computers or laptops.

Savvy Parent

Written by Katrina Katsarelis and Kennan Buckner



Unlike Facebook, Twitter users generally post shorter, more frequent comments called "tweets," and they can "tag" someone else's profile, a business, or school by using the @ sign. Twitter is primarily used by teens from their cell phones and is used to make short comments about people, places, or things that interest them. (Twitter has a 140-character maximum so long-winded rants are out of the question.)

Why Do Teens Like It?

Teens like Twitter because they can follow their favorite celebrities or sports figures and see what the stars are doing up to the minute. It's also a great news source because you can search any term, and tweets about that topic will appear. Within Twitter, users can "retweet" someone else's tweet or choose to "favorite" it. But the most appealing thing to kids? Mom and dad probably aren't on it.

Teens Are Tweeting

According to many news sources, Twitter has overtaken Facebook as the most popular social media venue for teens and now has 232 million active monthly users. The reasons teens may be making an exodus? Too many adults on Facebook, too much drama, and too many users over-sharing spam-like posts.

Fort Bend Teens and Twitter

Like teens across the U.S., Fort Bend students are flocking to Twitter, and *Sugar Land Magazine* is in step with them. We're actually retweeting and following many of them and gaining insight to what's on their minds. Twitter is a venue where teens can express thoughts without parents seeing, commenting, or favoriting them. Most of the teen followers we have are tweeting funny comments about life, their boyfriends, the big game, or other current events. They're also connecting with each other by using "hashtags" on Twitter such as "#FortBendPlayoffs" before big playoff sporting events. Others are using abbreviations like "#MoCity" to reference Missouri City. Teens are also posting funny photos, retweeting each other's posts, making wisecracks about celebs, or announcing their whereabouts.

FOLLOW US

Don't forget to follow *Sugar Land Magazine* on Twitter, and we'll follow you back! We give updates on traffic accidents, exclusive Sugar Land specials, and Fort Bend news tidbits.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN? A "selfie" is the term used to describe a photo of oneself that is posted on social media.



Instagram

Instagram is a photo and video-based social media app where teens can share pics and short videos with their followers and on other social media outlets using their phones. If you open an account and search "SugarLandTX," you'll see Sugar Landers have flooded the Instagram world with selfies, fancy food images, and shots of the city. Instagram is fun because pics can be modified to look airbrushed or have colorized effects and filters.

The Visual Twitter

Like Twitter, Instagram users frequently use the hashtag to denote a certain topic. Things like "#ThrowbackThursday" are popular - where people post old photos on Thursdays and denote it by the hashtag or by the shortened version "#tbt." They can also follow the photos of their favorite celebs or musicians and feel instantly connected to the star's world.

What Parents Need to Know

Make sure you talk to your kids about their Instagram use. This system only allows two options for your profile - either public or private. A public profile is completely viewable by anyone with the Internet. A private profile is only viewable by your approved followers. Be aware that Instagram photos can be saved by using the screenshot option on a smart phone, and the app photos are also viewable from a computer or laptop.

If you or your teen notice inappropriate photos, report them to the app by clicking the "..." under the photo, and then selecting "report inappropriate."

FASTER TO ANY SIZE DISASTER



24 Hour Emergency Service



servprosugarland.com



SERVPRO[®]
of Sugar Land
281-313-1338

Independently Owned and Operated

Like it never even happened.®

QUICK TIP: Many families require teens to turn in their cell phones at bedtime to prevent middle-of-the-night usage.



Snapchat



At a recent high school theatre production, *Sugar Land Magazine* witnessed a row of teenagers giggling over a Snapchat video sent to them by one of their friends. And the trend of sending "snaps" is growing by the millions. Snaps are photo and video messages sent to members of the Snapchat user's contact list. The app's 23-year-old founder Evan Spiegel reports that users now send 400 million snaps daily.

What Parents Need to Know

Although these photos are self-destructing, usually disappearing in 10 seconds or less, they will be stored until viewed or for 30 days if left unopened. Some teens find this self-destructing feature enticing for posts parents may not approve of - for example, sexting or sending inappropriate images. Teens may think they're safe from photos being circulated since the snaps self-destruct after a few seconds, but it is possible for users to cheat the system. They can do a screen capture of the photo or snap a picture of the screen with another device, thereby keeping the photo and having it possibly come back to haunt your teens later. Have a discussion with them about sending snaps and how they may get circulated even though they're supposed to self-destruct. Teach them to never send photos that they wouldn't want their teacher, grandmother, future spouse, or future employer to see.

Vine



Vine is a Twitter-owned mobile app that lets users create and share six-second video clips that repeat over and over. Vines can be shared to other social media accounts, and all videos are public. Accessing your smart phone's address book, Vine finds other users in your contact list and connects with them - helping the viral vine spread. Vine is becoming crazy-popular for Fort Bend teens who typically make humorous short video loops of them acting silly, goofing off, or sharing "remixes" of their surroundings.

What Parents Need to Know

Vine recently increased its age requirement from 12 years to 17 after the video looping app became flooded with pornography and sexually explicit videos. However, there is no age verification system in place. Parents should closely monitor Vine use and communicate regularly with teens about boundaries and expectations for social media use. **SLM**