

SOCIAL MEDIA

Adapted from various online articles

At what age can children join Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, WhatsApp and YouTube?

Nearly all social networking sites only allow users aged 13 and over.

This age limit has been dictated by US law through the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA).

Facebook and photo-sharing site **Instagram** both require users to be at least 13 years old before they can create an account, and in some jurisdictions, this age limit may be higher. Creating a Facebook account with false information is a violation of Facebook's terms, including accounts registered for someone under 13. It emerged in a CBBC study that of the children under 13 using social media without permission - 49 per cent were signed up to Facebook.

Twitter, the site where users post messages and tweets in 140 characters, says you must be at least "13-years-old to use its services".

At first **Snapchat**, which allows people to post videos and photos for 10 seconds before they disappear, restricted anyone under the age of 13 from using their site. It then introduced a limited version of the app for under 13s - called SnapKidz - which allows photos and drawing but not sending messages. Users aged under 13 are redirected to Snapkidz.

The minimum age for the mobile phone messaging app **WhatsApp** is 16-years-old.

YouTube requires accounts holders to be aged 18 and over, and also restricts much of its content to over 18s, but it will also allow a 13-year-old to sign up with their parent's permission.



What are the concerns of children using social media sites?

A survey for CBBC, of 1,200 people aged between 10 and 18, found that 96 per cent were signed up to social media networks.

And it found that 78 per cent of those aged interviewed under 13 had joined at least one social network despite not being old enough.

The NSPCC said that some sites can be a "dangerous place for younger children, potentially exposing them to bullying, inappropriate content or grooming". The charity found that 1,380 children - out of nearly 1,700 it surveyed - thought social media sites needed to do more to protect them.

There has been a strong media interest in this topic, including a demand for the large tech companies to do more to help parents in the digital age. There are multiple views on the impact of social media on children's well-being and the research is inconclusive. The UK Parliament has set up a select committee to investigate this topic
<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/science-and-technology-committee/news-parliament-2017/impact-of-social-media-evidence-17-19/>.

In the meantime, parents have to take a judgement on issues around distraction, addiction, self-esteem and cyber-bullying. Parents also need to ensure that their filter settings are appropriate for their age of children.

Children and mobile phones

Click on the links below to read some interesting articles on this topic.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/dec/13/smartphone-ban-children-sleep-depression-suicide>
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jan/12/tech-bosses-kids-time-smartphones-parents-mental-health>
https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/11/fashion/steve-jobs-apple-was-a-low-tech-parent.html?_r=0
<https://www.wsj.com/articles/iphones-vs-parents-the-tug-of-war-over-americas-children-1515772695>



Please note that this has been adapted from an article in a publication, so it has not been written by Oliver House but it includes useful information for parents.