NO LIMITS

Helping Young People Help Themselves

ONLINE SAFETY

Information and tips on healthy social media use, spotting scams, distressing news and cyberbullying

Tips for healthy social media use

Think before you post

Lots of people post on social media without thinking of the potential consequences. If you are angered or wound up by something and feel like getting back, stop for a second and think about whether you would post the same thing tomorrow. Remember, if it's online, it's on there forever and anyone could share it anywhere. A good rule is try to not post anything you wouldn't want your parents, teachers or coworkers to see!

Keep personal details safe

Leaving a trail of personal details out on social media could leave you at risk of someone trying to use them for their gain. Avoid sharing things like contact details, addresses and banking information. Be careful not to get things like your street name or house number, bank cards or ID documents in the background of photos.

Don't believe everything you see

There is a lot of misinformation out there. A lot of people on social media will only tell you their side of the story or tell you what they want you to believe, especially when it comes to subjects like politics and climate change, so take everything with a pinch of salt and if you aren't sure, look up what more trustworthy information sources are saying.

Privacy settings

Privacy settings are a good and quick way to make your social media environment safer. Setting your account to private will stop anyone who you don't want looking at it from going on there. It is also recommended to set your messages so only people you know or who follow you can message you, so you don't get any unwanted messages from strangers or spam accounts.

Be careful who you're talking to

Social media and online communities can be really good for connecting to people with the same interests as you, or people who are going through similar things. However, be aware of people using these things to try and take advantage of others. If anyone you're talking to is doing anything like:

- Sending you explicit messages e.g. anything sexual or violent
- Persuading you to send them any amount of money, pictures of yourself or personal details, or is sending you these things
- Trying to arrange a private meet up with you
- Messaging you constantly or any time you're online

You should report and block them and avoid interacting with them further.

Don't feed the trolls

As tempting as it is, replying to hate comments isn't a good idea. They do things like that because they want a reaction and they feed off it, so the best thing you can do is ignore or block the account.

Take time out

It's easy to end up spending hours and hours on social media, but reducing your social media use can improve your wellbeing as you reduce the time spent being exposed to negative content and free up more time for other things. Try limiting your social media use to just an hour or two a day, not using it before going to sleep, or even having social media free days.

Have a timeline cleanse

Every now and then, it might be helpful to cleanse your timeline, unfollowing accounts that post negative content or that you aren't interested in anymore. It might also help to reduce your social media with less to scroll through.

Spotting scams

Scams are becoming more frequent and harder to spot, so here are some things you can look out for to make sure you don't fall victim to one:

Websites and adverts

Bad wording and images

Websites and adverts that have spelling and grammar errors, or have images that are pixelated, AI or stock images, shouldn't be trusted. Real companies will have designers and copywriters who will make sure everything looks legitimate before it goes out.

Lack of information

Real sites and adverts will have a mix of standard descriptions and information about products. Scams might not include all the same information as they are just a front. If you aren't sure, check the product on a couple of other genuine websites to see what information and images they have.

Web addresses

Real websites will have web addresses with common endings, such as '.co.uk', '.com', '.net' and '.org.uk', whereas scam websites will use cheaper, less common endings like '.biz', '.me' and '.xyz'. Scams may also add in or take out letters so the address looks almost identical.

HTTPS

Seeing 'https' and the padlock symbol at the start of the URL means that the website is secure and safe to use, as your data is encrypted so it can't be read by someone at the other end of the site.

Some sites have 'http' at the start. This doesn't mean they're unsafe, but you shouldn't enter any personal or banking information into them. Only share information on an 'https' site.

Website checker

If you aren't sure about a website, you can use a website checker, like Sitechecker:
sitechecker.pro/website-safety

Emails

Email addresses

Check the address that the email came from to see if it is from someone you know or a real company. Like web addresses, scammers will try and make an address look legitimate by using similar characters or adding in or removing letters.

Spelling and grammar mistakes

This is another obvious sign that something isn't right. While people may occasionally make an error, if an email is littered in mistakes, then it probably isn't safe.

Links

Always check links in emails if you aren't sure. The best way to do this is by hovering over the link to show you where it goes. You can do this on a phone by holding down the link to open a preview.

Does it sound like them?

If you get a dodgy-looking email that has come from someone you know, think whether it is written how they would write it. If you're not sure, it's best to check with them through another communication method.

Requests

Be wary of emails requesting that you reply or click a link to send personal information like your phone number or bank details. Scammers will often try and sound urgent in these emails to get you to send over any information quickly.

Remember to trust your gut feeling - if something doesn't seem right, it probably isn't.

Looking after yourself around distressing news

It might seem that in the past few years, the negative and worrying news has been never-ending and if we are online and on social media, we're more likely to see it more often. Distressing news can really stick in our minds and make us feel scared and down, so we need to be good at looking after ourselves in response to it. Here's some things you can try to help yourself:

Acknowledge the clickbait and fact check

There are news outlets and social media accounts out there that will spin and catastrophise events to get clicks and reads, or push a certain agenda. This means we can be exposed to some pretty extreme news and views that are far from the facts.

Understanding that things are written a certain way for the company's or account's own gain might help put your mind at ease a little. It's also worth looking at the same news from a few different sources to get a better picture of what's actually going on.

On the next page, we've got some reliable news sources and a couple of fact-checking websites, which work to tell you the truth, disprove fake news and make you aware of false information being spread.

Control your social media

Whenever something bad happens, it's all over our social feeds instantly. This doesn't help us when we are trying to escape from negativity and can make things feel overwhelming.

You might want to try unfollowing or muting news accounts so you only see the news when you want to see it. Taking breaks, or cutting down the time you spend on there might also help you to clear your mind and take away thoughts about the news.

Read a positive story to finish

When checking the news, one thing you can do to leave you feeling more optimistic is finish by reading a couple of more positive stories to remind you that no matter what, there are still good things happening and good people out there.

Talk to someone about how you're feeling

If distressing news is affecting the way you're feeling, it's always good to talk to someone about it. Family or friends might be feeling the same way or might be able to reassure you. You can also talk to No Limits' youth workers about how you're feeling.

Reliable news sources

BBC

bbc.co.uk/news

@bbcnews

Channel 1

Channel 4

channel4.com/news

@channel4news

Channel 4

The Guardian

theguardian.com

@guardian (Instagram)
@theguardian (Facebook)

Reuters

reuters.com/world/uk

@reutersuk (Facebook)

Fact-checking tools

Full Fact

fullfact.org

@fullfactorg (Instagram)
@fullfact.org (Facebook)

BBC Verify

bbc.co.uk/news/bbcverify

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying carried out in tech and online settings, for example, on social media, video games or messaging. People turn to cyberbullying because it is less confrontational and it is easy to hide your identity.

Just like in-person bullying, it can have a significant negative impact on the target's wellbeing and it is never okay.

What can you do?

Don't retaliate or reply - that's what they want you to do

Change the settings on your account to be more private

Block or mute accounts that are targeting you

Report accounts sending unkind posts and messages. This page on Childline has information about reporting cyberbullying on different social media platforms: childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/types-bullying/bullying-social-media

Save comments, posts and messages as evidence

Tell someone who can help, like a parent, teacher or coworker

Online hate crime

If you are being targeted because of your race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or transgender identity, this is a hate crime and can be reported to the police online or through talking to someone at a hate crime reporting centre, like our Advice Centre.

Find out more about online hate crime and report it at:
stophateuk.org/about-hate-crime/what-is-online-hate-crime

Want to talk to No Limits?

We offer free, confidential information, advice and support for young people under 26 in Southampton, Hampshire, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight.

Advice Centre

Open six days a week, come down and talk to a trained youth worker about any issue you have, without needing to make an appointment.

Address

13 High Street
Southampton, SO14 2DF

Opening times

Mon 10am-5pm | Tue 10am-5pm
Wed 1:30pm-8pm | Thu 10am-8pm
Fri 10am-5pm | Sat 10am-1:30pm

Advice Centre
nolimitshelp.org.uk/advice-and-wellbeing-hub/advice-centre

School and college drop-ins

Our youth workers are in Southampton schools and colleges weekly or fortnightly with a drop-in stand. One-to-ones are also bookable.

The stand has a different health and wellbeing theme each time. Our youth workers will be on hand to talk to you about the theme or give you further advice if you need help with something else.

Take a look in the link to see when we're in your school or college.

School and College drop-ins
nolimitshelp.org.uk/advice-and-wellbeing-hub/school-and-college-drop-ins

Find out more

nolimitshelp.org.uk | 02380 224 224 | enquiries@nolimitshelp.org.uk

Our quick online safety top tips

Make different passwords for different accounts

Store passwords in a secure password manager. Don't write them down in your notes app or in a notebook

Don't share personal information in public online spaces

Don't click on links in messages or suspicious-looking emails telling you to update or send details or bank information

Unfollow, mute or block accounts that don't make you feel good

Want to find out more?

Childline - Online safety
childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety

Childline - Bullying on social media
childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/types-bullying/bullying-social-media

Mind - Coping with distressing events in the news
mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/coping-with-distressing-events-in-the-news

YoungMinds - Social media and mental health
youngminds.org.uk/young-person/coping-with-life/social-media-and-mental-health