



SmartSocial.com Parent Guide:

How To Navigate Social Media with Your Student

Schools: Bring this program to your community ([click here](#))





What will you learn in this guide?



How to monitor
your kids online



How to create a
family online
safety plan



How to build a
positive online
brand

We'll give you the answers to some of parents biggest social media questions:

- How do I know what my kids are doing on their phones and social media?
- How can I regulate screen time while also developing a positive relationship with my children?
- How can I help my child focus on their future while staying out of trouble?

How to make the most of this guide:

- Dedicate 10-15 minutes to read through this entire guide
- Consider going through this guide with your student
- Read all the way until the end and take the next steps to put your knowledge into action

Step 1: Begin by monitoring your kids online

How do I know what my kids are doing on their phones and social media?

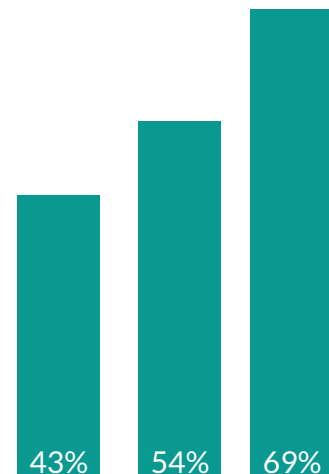
Teens know how to hide their behavior on social media (sometimes in private messaging features, sometimes by hiding apps), they are constantly downloading new apps, and they learn new platforms incredibly quickly. However, no parental control app or tool is going to be better at protecting your kids than you having a healthy relationship with your student. We want to give you a few of these tips in this guide.

SmartSocial.com believes it's important for parents to be on the same apps as their children. Before giving your children access to a new app, do some research independently, learn how the app works, sign up for an account, and determine if the app is safe for your children to download. Parents should regularly Google their children, look for any red flags in their child's search results, and talk to their children about what they found.

If you want a parental control or monitoring app to help protect your family, we have a free [Parental Control Software & Cell Phone Monitoring Comparison Guide](#). Keep in mind that even with these monitoring solutions, parents still need to stay on top of their children's online activity.

Why is it important to monitor your children online?

- 43% of teens say they would change their online behavior if they knew that their parents were watching them
- 54% of teens said they'd be a lot more worried about it if parents knew what actually happens on social media
- 69% of teens regularly receive personal messages online from strangers and most of them don't tell a trusted adult



Tactical Tip: Google your children each week or sign up for Footprint Friday (a tool that helps you monitor your children in less than 5 minutes every week).

Google Keyword Variations:

- **First Name + Last Name**
Example: Josh Ochs
- **“First Name + Last Name” (in quotes)**
Example: “Josh Ochs”
- **“First + Last” + City**
Example: “Josh Ochs” Long Beach
- **“First + Last” + School**
Example: “Josh Ochs” USC
- **First, Middle, and Last Name**
Example: Josh Keith Ochs
- **Social Media Usernames**
Example: @JoshOchs
- **Image Results for “First + Last”**

Step 2: Then, create a plan that will keep your family safe online

How can I regulate screen time while also developing a positive relationship with my children?

We asked parents and educators what they were struggling with most when it comes to digital safety and an overwhelming number of parents told us that it’s difficult to set screen time limits with their students (and make sure students are behaving positively online). Parents are finding that telling their students what not to do is not guiding their students towards what they should be doing. **We find that the best way to regulate screen time and help your children develop a healthy relationship with social media is to create a social media plan** (which then helps you have more of a purpose with your devices, instead of making them a pastime).

One of the best ways to motivate your student to want to build a positive online brand is to have them plan out their future.

Here's some sample questions to get your student planning (and starting a dialog):

- “Where do you want to go to college?”
- “What do you want your major to be in college? Do you want to play sports/band/join clubs?”
- “What do you want to do for your career?”
- “What do you think that college/employer might want to learn about you on your social media?”

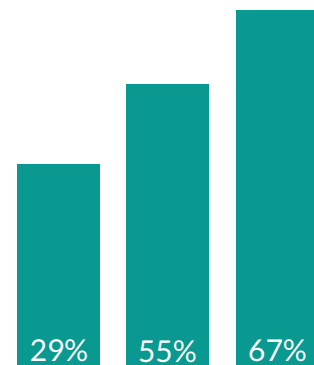
Once you have encouraged your student to create a plan/vision for their future, it's time to create a social media plan to keep them safe (and on track):

- Regularly discuss digital safety with your children. Consider showing them what happens in news articles and online. The goal of these conversations should be to encourage your kids is to use good judgement when it comes to social media
- Mentor your children to use technology with a purpose instead of a pastime. Help your children find ways to use social media to shine online for college admissions or future employers (this will help your them use screen time in a way that positively impacts their future)
- Encourage your children to earn screen time by doing household chores or spending meaningful time with family. Outline how much time can be earned for each activity and when that earned screen time can be utilized
- Model/mentor good screen time behaviors. They look to you (the parent) for these examples
- Design a simple screen time schedule. For example, no screens during dinner, no screens 1 hour before bed, no screens at night, etc...
- Set guidelines around who your children can talk to on their phones, social media, and online
- Require permission from a parent before downloading a new game or app
- Determine where your family's mobile devices will be kept each night. We recommend that parents have a charging station in their rooms (or the kitchen) and collect their family's phones before bed
- Remind your children that they can always come to you or a trusted adult if they they experience anything uncomfortable online or just want to talk

Why is it important to create a family social media plan?

Without their parent's guidance, children can get themselves into dangerous situations or ruin their chances of getting into their dream college

- 29% of teenagers have been stalked or contacted by a stranger or someone they don't know online
- 55% of teens have given out personal information to someone they don't know, including photos and physical descriptions
- 67% of teenagers say they know how to hide what they do online from their parents



Tactical Tip: Encourage your children to find offline activities they would be proud to share on social media. Empowering your children to find offline hobbies they enjoy can generate excitement if it means they will have new (and positive) content to post online.

Step 3: Build a positive online brand (and student website)

How can I help my child focus on their future while staying out of trouble?

After speaking to over 150,000 students in 25 states, we have found that encouraging students to build an online brand is one of the best ways help them focus their digital efforts on their future (while also improving their online presence).

Now that most colleges and employers use Google to search for candidates, many believe that Google results are the new digital resume.

SmartSocial.com has found that students who build a personal website are better able to dominate their online presence and stand out from their competition.

How can I help my child focus on their future while staying out of trouble?

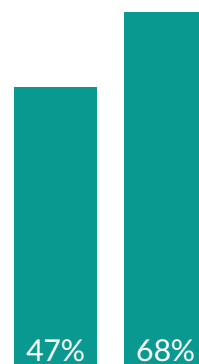
Many students have heard that “what you post can impact your future” but they are looking for several examples so they can come to that conclusion on their own. Consider sharing stories with your children about how others have been fired or kicked out of school because of their actions online. Don’t jump to judgement, instead ask your children what they think of the outcome. Once your children understand how their digital footprint can impact their lives (both positively and negatively) they can start to make better choices online.

Giving your children a purpose online (aka: building a personal website) can help them stay out of trouble and use their screen time in a positive way. We recommend that parents of children ages 14+ sit down with their child and have them write out a short paragraph about what story they want their website to tell. Then, have your children make a list of any school projects, volunteering activities, or internships they want to showcase on their new website. For parents of children younger than 14, make these lists and encourage your children to focus their time on positive offline activities they can one day share on their personal website.

Why is it important for students to build a positive digital resume?

In 2017, Harvard rescinded acceptance for at least 10 students over their behavior in a private Facebook group

- 68% of college admissions officials say it’s “fair game” for them to review applicants’ social media profiles on sites like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to help them decide who gets in
- 47% of college admissions officers say that what they found online has a positive impact on prospective students



Here are some examples of positive student websites we have helped build with families:

- <https://www.JoshOchs.net>
- <https://www.EmmyRener.com>
- <https://www.JazminRamirez.net>

***Tactical Tip:** Once your child has created their personal website, encourage them to link to their social media profiles (this will help them dominate their search results). Ensure that their social media profiles all use the same professional headshot and include a link back to their personal website.*

What are the next steps?

1. Google your children to monitor what they (and others) are posting
2. Create a social media plan and dialog with your students weekly
3. Help your child build a positive student resume tied to their college goals

Parents: [click here to take your family's digital safety to the next level by helping your student to be positive on social media](#)

Take a deeper dive into our 3 step family online safety plan and get even more hands-on advice you can implement right away!

Parents: Help your students be positive on Instagram with our program

Schools: Bring our positive program to your campus