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Navigating Social Media Sites for Teenagers

Social media has opened up new opportunities for youth to share information. Most youth do not think about what they post on a daily basis and how that may affect them in the future. **The reality of the digital age is that once it is posted, it is out there forever** and is fair game for anyone at any time to access it, use it and abuse it. This can be very detrimental for youth as they mature into adulthood and start to enter the workforce. This sheet will provide some tips for youth to maintain their professionalism at a young age so when they are ready to look for a job, social media will not come back to haunt them.



1. Remember that anything on the internet is public information, even the information about you. It doesn't matter what "privacy" settings you used. Your information can be forwarded to others through your friends and their friends can share your information with more friends without your knowledge. In reality, once it is out there it is out there forever and becomes a part of your history.

2. What you post, share, re-tweet, etc. is a reflection of who you are. Values, ethics, and morals cannot be taught but have been developed by a person over time through their interactions with their families, mentors, and friends. These are all reflected as the person you are when you engage in social media.

3. If you bully someone, lie, post an illegal activity, talk negatively about adults (teachers, etc.) or people your age (friends, enemies, etc.) you are setting yourself up for misfortune. These items cannot only get you in trouble with the law, but they can hurt your chances of being viewed as a responsible, conscientious, concerned citizen; qualities that employers and college admissions are looking for.

4. Be careful how you react online. The quick tweets or posts you sent in the heat of the moment may have been sent out in a state of pure emotion and not reflect how you really feel but once they are out there, they are out there. Someone who does not know you but sees your post will start to question your character and maturity.

5. Watch out for those photographs of you! It may have been funny at the time but what were you doing in that photograph? Does it portray you in a positive and mature light? Be careful with artistic portrayals of yourself. What may seem like an innocent profile picture with you kissing the camera may not be seen as such by others.

6. Remember what your grandmother told you: If you don't want anyone to know a secret, never write it down.

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At the same time that social media can hurt you, it can also help you. Follow these tips to find a successful path in building a positive profile through social media:

1. Separate your personal from your professional life in social media. Sites like Facebook are good for your personal life and sites like LinkedIn are great for your professional life. Don't mix the two. A suggestion is to have each site with a different name: Such as LinkedIn with J. Doe and Facebook as Jane Doe.
2. If you use sites such as LinkedIn, allow it to represent who you are and what your strengths are in the professional and business world. What you put online should reflect anything you would put in a paper resume, a business card or a pamphlet.
3. Use social media to highlight why you would be a great fit for a particular school or job. Like pages with similar values to the organizations you are interested in, post photographs, accolades, accomplishments, etc. that reflect how you would be an asset to that company or school. Sharing your positive attributes will only help you.
4. Remember that social media can be a networking tool. You may find out your friend's father works at the company you want to intern at. It may turn out that your former teacher graduated from the school you want to go to. By acting responsibly on social media sites and corresponding through professional sites, you may create new connections and networks to help you get where you want to go.

As youth mature and look towards building a future in the workforce, it is important to consider how social media will affect them when it comes to apply for a job or to a college. Hopefully these tips will help make it a positive experience.

