

Information for Parents of **Secondary School-Aged** Children (12 – 15 years old)

This is a simple guide to assist parents with information to prepare and understand the pending changes to social media platforms for children under the age of 16 years old.

What's Changing?

After 10 December 2025 social media platforms identified as age-restricted must take reasonable steps to stop Australians under 16 from creating or keeping accounts. That means platforms (not parents) are required to prevent under-16s from having accounts.

eSafety Commission – [Social Media Age Restrictions](#).

Why Does It Matter For Secondary School Students?

Many kids over 12 will have social media accounts. These are likely to be deactivate on 10th December, The law makes it harder for platforms to allow accounts for under-16s, helping reduce exposure to content or features designed to keep us glued to screens. But note: kids can still see some content on platforms without logging in (i.e., logged-out browsing) – so supervision still matters.

eSafety Commission – Social Media Age Restrictions & Your Family.

Immediate Steps:

1. Talk through the change. Empathise with their feelings about the adjustment. Don't dismiss or minimise them. Gently encourage them to accept the new regulation.
2. Support your child to download any key photos or memories that they have on existing apps that they would like to hold onto (see instructions below).
3. Use this as an opportunity to talk about which contacts they would choose to keep and who they need to exchange details with. To guide this discussion ask about
 - i) which friends they have **fun** with,
 - ii) who they turn to for **close support**, and
 - iii) who sometimes seems to be **unkind**

Metaphors to use:

Tobacco, Alcohol, and Drivers Licenses can be used as examples where the community has introduced regulation to protect health, safety and wellbeing. These will help to explain why this regulation has been introduced.

When tobacco first became popular, its risks weren't well known. Over time, evidence showed it harmed health. Governments stepped in to protect the public through advertising restrictions, health warnings, and age limits. Social media is at a similar stage. It is widely used and addictive, with evidence of widespread negative effects on wellbeing.

Next steps

Australia's new minimum-age law for social media (16 +) gives families the chance to reset digital habits early. The Time to Refuse movement and our book 'Raising Anxiety: How our good intentions are backfiring on children (and how to fix it)' helps parents take this opportunity by showing how to build healthier routines for children growing up in the digital world.

Here's how parents can apply 8 *action steps*:

1. Face Reality – be honest about screen time

Notice how often phones and tablets appear around your teenager. Imagine what your family could gain if that time was spent playing, reading, drawing or exploring outdoors.

2. Notice patterns

Pay attention to when and why you or your child reach for a device – boredom, habit, comfort? Talk about these triggers together so kids learn self-awareness early. Realise that without the pull of the device your teen will engage in new activities, particularly if you don't fall into these patterns yourself. Remember, kids copy what we do – they don't listen to what we say.

3. Define your family values

Write down what matters most – kindness, curiosity, health, listening. Ask, "Does time online help or hurt these values?" Let this guide your family tech habits.

Next Steps

4. Set limits

Create simple phone-free zones: bedrooms, dinner table, and car trips that all family members observe. Explain that disconnecting is part of keeping minds calm and creative. The new law supports this by keeping social apps off-limits for under-16s.

5. Create sacred spaces

Encourage screen-free activities with purpose – a part time job, helping the neighbours, cooking, getting outside. Replace digital tools with physical ones: books, art supplies, a journal, real alarm clocks.

Plan a movie night with the family – choose ahead of time so that when it comes to watching there is less irritation.

6. Replace & Reconnect

Swap scrolling and gaming for real experiences. Join local sports, dance, craft or community groups so teens meet others connect and build their social skills in the real world.

7. Rethink

Put your own phone away at certain times of day to remove 'technoference'. These changes will lay the foundations for balanced digital lives later.

8. Create Intention

If your teen confides in you that they are going to continue and will find a work around – encourage them to restrict and have addictive media on only one device, that they use in only one place in the home (**not** a bedroom), so that they use it intentionally. For more information see Dr Einstein's video on the dip or seminars on anxiety or read *Getting Technology Right in Raising Anxiety*: Why our good intentions are backfiring on children (and how to fix it).

For young adult self management: timetorefuse.com/action

Conversation Starters To Support Your Child's Understanding of This Process

"Some apps are made for older kids. They can make you feel worried or pressured. Let's talk about what's ok to watch."

"If you see something that upsets you, tell me and we'll deal with it together."

The Einstein Report – Discussion Prompts

What you'll find: A selection of conversation prompts that can help facilitate the conversation surrounding the new change.

If Your Child *Already* Has An Account

Platforms will be asked to take reasonable steps to remove or restrict accounts that belong to under-16s.

Transport & Infrastructure Department – Social Media Minimum Age Facts Sheet.

To learn more about reasons for the regulation visit [here](#)

FAQS

Does the law stop kids viewing content entirely?

No. Logged-out browsing (watching videos without an account) is still possible on many platforms, so supervision and content controls are still recommended.

Can parents be fined if their child uses social media under 16?

No, enforcement targets platforms, not families. The obligation and potential penalties are for the platforms.

Which platforms are covered?

The law covers “age-restricted social media platforms.” The eSafety Commissioner and government lists (and guidance) specify which services are regulated and which may be excluded. Check eSafety’s pages for the up-to-date list.
eSafety Commissioner – [Social Media Age Restrictions](#).

[Transport & Infrastructure Department – Social Media Minimum Age](#).

Extra Links & Resources For Parents

eSafety Commissioner – Parents and Carers Hub

What you'll find: Official advice from Australia's eSafety Commissioner on keeping children safe online. Includes step-by-step guides for setting parental controls, managing screen time, and talking to kids about online risks. Short video about social media delay & how to talk about it with students.

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts – Social Media Age Laws

What you'll find: Government fact sheets outlining the policy background, implementation timeline, and how the new rules aim to protect young Australians online.

The Social Media Ban: A guide for young people

What you'll find: Headspace guide to how to negotiate the social media ban.

Guide for Backing up Content

1. Request a full data download

This is the most reliable method to preserve everything from your account. Most social media platforms provide a feature that allows you to export all your stored information—this can include images, videos, private messages, comments, profile details, and logs of your activity.

Where to locate this option:

Open the app or website and head to Settings.

Look for sections labeled “Your Activity,” “Privacy and Security,” or “Download Your Information/Data”.

You’ll usually be asked to re-enter your password.

After submitting the request, the platform will send you a download link via email. The file is commonly delivered as a ZIP archive that contains all your account data.

Important note: Start this process before December 10. Depending on how much data your account holds, it can take several hours to a couple of days for the file to be generated.

2. Save important photos and videos one-by-one

If you have specific media files you value highly, it’s a good idea to save them manually to your device, even if you are also downloading the full archive.

Steps:

For Photos/Videos: Open the image or video you want to save. Select the Options menu (often shown as three dots) or choose the Share button, then select “Save Photo/Video.”

For Messages: If the platform doesn’t include chat logs in the main data export, you can take screenshots of conversations you want to keep. However, the full archive (Step 1) is usually the more complete method if available.

