



# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

Sites like Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook (increasingly less popular with youth) can help kids stay connected with friends and family, communicate with their peers, and meet people who share similar interests.

When developing their activism campaign, your Ocean Hero may want to integrate some form of online activism. With this in mind, here are guidelines should consider discussing and implementing with your t/ween:

- Don't share passwords with friends, which are in place to protect against things like identity theft and photo sharing without consent.
- Turn location services off, and never post your home address or school name in any place that is public.
- When posting about a public event, consider saving your posts until after you have left the location.
- Do not agree to meet someone in person that you don't already know in real life, unless you have checked with your parent or other legal guardian first.
- Practice respect by never posting embarrassing or hurtful information or photos of others.
- Post like your Principal is watching: Social media lives forever, so don't share anything that you wouldn't want your school administrators, teachers, college admissions officers, and future bosses to see – because they will.
- Report harassment or bullying immediately so adults can help with next steps, which include blocking the user and/or reporting (see below).

- Don't "friend" or connect with strangers – not even friends of friends – and never agree to meet someone in person that you don't already know in real life.

Most importantly, we recommend that Guardians follow and friend their Ocean Hero on all accounts, keep a record of the child's accounts and passwords, and review these settings regularly to make sure you remain connected and up to date as much as possible.

If your Hero reports bullying or harassment – or you see evidence of this in behavior or on a social media account – follow these steps from the U.S. Stop Bullying program:

**Notice** – Recognize if there has been a change in mood or behavior and explore what the cause might be. Try to determine if these changes happen around a child's use of their digital devices.

**Talk** – Ask questions to learn what is happening, how it started, and who is involved.

**Document** – Keep a record of what is happening and where. Take screenshots of harmful posts or content if possible. Most laws and policies note that bullying is a repeated behavior, so records help to document it.

**Report** – Most social media platforms and schools have clear policies and reporting processes. If a classmate is cyberbullying, report it to the school. You can also contact app or social media platforms to report offensive content and have it removed. If a child has received physical threats, or if a potential crime or illegal behavior is occurring, report it to the police.

**Support** – Peers, mentors, and trusted adults can sometimes intervene publicly to positively influence a situation where negative or hurtful content posts about a child. Public Intervention can include posting positive comments about the person targeted with bullying to try to shift the conversation in a positive direction. It can also help to reach out to the child who is bullying and the target of the bullying to express your concern. If possible, try to determine if more professional support is needed for those involved, such as speaking with a guidance counselor or mental health professional.

If you need support or have questions, please visit the Ocean Heroes Guardians Facebook page. We're here to help!