

# SOCIAL MEDIA DEBATE:

Are Kids Ready to Connect?



# Writing Prompt

Should kids under 13 be allowed to have their own social media accounts? Write a persuasive essay arguing your position. Use at least 5 vocabulary words from the list in your writing.





# Introduction

As social media becomes increasingly prevalent, the question of whether children under 13 should have social media accounts is hotly debated. This unit explores the arguments for and against kids using social media, encouraging students to form and express their own opinions on this relevant topic.

# Persuasive Outline

1. The Appeal of Social Media for Kids
2. Potential Benefits of Kids Using Social Media
3. Risks and Concerns of Early Social Media Use
4. Age Restrictions and Parental Controls
5. Balancing Online and Offline Interactions



# The Appeal of Social Media for Kids

- The allure of social media platforms for young users
- The pressure to conform and fear of missing out (FOMO)
- The desire for self-expression and validation



# Exemplars:

1. Social media platforms offer a digital playground that captivates young minds, providing instant gratification and a sense of belonging that can be irresistible to children.
2. The fear of missing out drives many kids to seek social media access, as they believe their peers are living exciting lives online that they're not part of.
3. For children, social media represents a canvas for self-expression, offering tools to showcase their personality and creativity in ways that feel empowering and validating.

# Potential Benefits of Kids Using Social Media

- Opportunities for connection and communication
- Exposure to diverse perspectives and information
- Development of digital literacy skills



# Exemplars:

1. Social media can serve as a bridge, allowing children to maintain connections with geographically distant friends and family, fostering a sense of closeness despite physical separation.
2. Properly guided use of social media can expose children to a wealth of diverse ideas, cultures, and perspectives, potentially broadening their worldview from an early age.
3. Engaging with social media platforms can help children develop crucial digital literacy skills, preparing them for a future where online competence is increasingly important.



# Risks and Concerns of Early Social Media Use

- Cyberbullying and online harassment
- Privacy and data security issues
- Exposure to inappropriate content and online predators



# Exemplars:

1. The anonymity and distance provided by social media can embolden bullies, exposing children to harsh criticism and harassment that can have severe psychological impacts.
2. Children's naivety about data privacy can lead to oversharing of personal information, potentially compromising their safety and future opportunities.
3. The vast and often unregulated nature of social media content puts children at risk of exposure to age-inappropriate material, potentially affecting their emotional and psychological development.

# Age Restrictions and Parental Controls

- The effectiveness and enforcement of age restrictions
- The role of parental oversight and education
- The balance between protection and autonomy



# Exemplars:

1. Age restrictions on social media platforms, while well-intentioned, are often easily circumvented, highlighting the need for more robust verification systems to protect young users.
2. Parental controls and oversight play a crucial role in ensuring safe social media use, but they must be balanced with respect for children's growing need for privacy and independence.
3. Educating children about responsible social media use is essential, empowering them to make informed decisions and navigate online spaces safely as they grow.

# Balancing Online and Offline Interactions

- The importance of face-to-face communication skills
  - The need for diverse, real-world experiences
  - Strategies for healthy digital habits
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# Exemplars:

1. While social media offers unique connection opportunities, it's crucial to prioritise face-to-face interactions to develop essential social skills that can't be fully replicated online.
2. Excessive focus on social media can limit children's exposure to diverse real-world experiences, potentially narrowing their perspectives and hindering personal growth.
3. Teaching children to set boundaries with their social media use from an early age can help them develop healthy digital habits that will serve them well into adulthood.

# Vocabulary List

1. Digital citizenship: Responsible and ethical behaviour when using technology and participating in online communities
2. Cyberbullying: The use of electronic communication to bully, harass, or intimidate someone
3. Data privacy: The protection of personal information shared online
4. Screen time: The amount of time spent using devices with screens, such as smartphones or computers
5. Digital footprint: The trail of data created by a person's online activities
6. Social validation: Seeking approval or acceptance through social media interactions
7. Digital literacy: The ability to use, understand, and create content using digital technologies
8. Echo chamber: An environment where a person only encounters beliefs or opinions that coincide with their own
9. Viral content: Online content that spreads rapidly through social media sharing
10. Influencer: A person who has the power to affect others' purchasing decisions or opinions through social media

# Vocabulary List

11. Digital detox: A period of time during which a person refrains from using electronic devices
12. Netiquette: The correct or acceptable way of communicating on the internet
13. Phishing: The fraudulent practice of sending emails or messages pretending to be from reputable companies to induce individuals to reveal personal information
14. Clickbait: Content whose main purpose is to attract attention and encourage visitors to click on a link
15. Algorithm: A set of rules followed by social media platforms to determine what content to show users
16. Geotag: A digital tag that reveals the geographical location of a photo or post
17. Trolling: The act of deliberately provoking or upsetting others online for amusement
18. Cybersecurity: Measures taken to protect against criminal or unauthorised use of electronic data
19. Digital divide: The gap between demographics and regions that have access to modern information and communications technology and those that don't
20. Content moderation: The process of monitoring and applying a set of rules and guidelines to user-generated submissions



# Exemplar Essay Response

Social media has become an integral part of modern life, but the question of whether children under 13 should have their own accounts is a contentious issue. While social media offers opportunities for connection and learning, the risks outweigh the benefits for young children.

One of the primary concerns is cyberbullying. The anonymity and distance provided by social media platforms can embolden bullies, exposing children to harassment that can have severe psychological impacts. Young children may not have developed the emotional resilience to handle such attacks, potentially leading to long-term mental health issues.

Moreover, children's understanding of data privacy is often limited. They may unknowingly share personal information, creating a digital footprint that could have future repercussions. This naivety about online security also makes them vulnerable to phishing attempts and other cyber threats.

Another significant issue is the impact of social media on children's developing self-esteem. The constant quest for social validation through likes and comments can create unhealthy pressure. This, combined with exposure to carefully curated content from influencers, may distort children's perception of reality and their own self-worth.

# Exemplar Essay Response

While proponents argue that early exposure to social media can enhance digital literacy, these skills can be developed through safer, more controlled environments. Educational platforms and monitored online activities can provide the benefits of digital engagement without the associated risks.

Instead of rushing to give children social media accounts, we should focus on teaching digital citizenship. This includes understanding netiquette, recognising the importance of cybersecurity, and learning how to navigate the online world safely.

In conclusion, while social media has its place in modern society, children under 13 are not yet equipped to handle its complexities. By delaying social media use and focusing on building a strong foundation in digital literacy and citizenship, we can better prepare our children for safe and responsible online engagement in the future.