A parents' guide to social networking websites

GET WITH IT!



understanding and sharing the world of social networking websites with your children



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1. Introduction

1.1 This booklet will help you, as a parent, to understand social networking. It will give you information and advice and, as a result, you will be able to talk with confidence to your children, including teenagers and young adults, about the benefits and risks they need to be aware of.

Social networking has many positive features but, sometimes, a situation might arise that is dangerous and presents risk, especially to younger teenagers. They may know more than their parents about the operation of technology but they haven't achieved full maturity and their life experiences are still limited. They may not yet realise the harm that can be caused by, for example, careless or malicious mis-use.

As a parent, you can guide them through those teenage years and encourage them to develop a mature attitude towards new technology. But you will be able to do that only if you know something about the technology. Therefore, the first step has to be taken by you, the parent. **This booklet will help you.**

If you find it difficult to get started, ask your child to help and you can learn together. This shared experience will add a new dimension of trust between you and provide a context for conversation about social networking.

1.2 The booklet is based on two questions about social networking sites,

Q1. *What* do you as a parent need to know? and,
Q2. *Why* do you need to know it?

A1. *What* you need to know is basic information about social networking sites, how to navigate them and sensible precautions for your children.

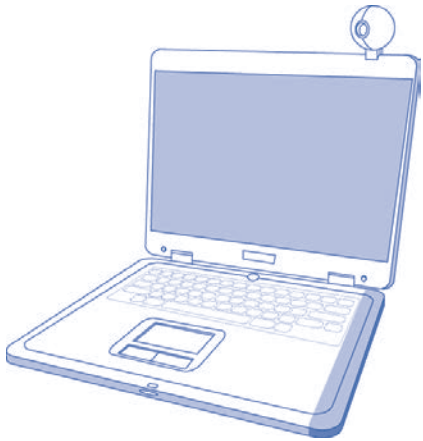
A2. *Why* do you need to know this? It will enable you to understand the risks that may exist and it will prepare you to deal with any unwanted issues that may arise.

The answer in each case brings us back to the purpose of the booklet, i.e. to help you, as the parent,

- to know what your children are doing on these sites,
- to be aware of what more your children potentially might do on their chosen site,
- to know when you should agree to them doing more,
- to know when and when not to intervene,

while, all the time, guiding and advising them.

1.3 There are numerous social networking sites and they are very often better known by their commercial names, for example, 'Facebook'[1], 'YouTube', 'Twitter' 'Tumblr', 'Flickr' and 'Google+'. Similarly, 'social media' is often used instead of 'social networking'.



1 *the reference to trade or commercial entities conveys no preference or approval of those entities by the Office for Internet Safety as against other service providers.*

2. What are social networking websites?

2.1 Social networking v other websites

The predominant feature distinguishing social networking sites from other websites is that in social networking sites you give personal information about yourself in order to gain a place on the site. You can also change the content, you can add your own content, and you can communicate with other people who themselves are adding their own content. The users aren't just watching; they're creating and participating.

2.2 Three key activities

You will have a better understanding of how a social networking website works if you divide it into three main activities: identity, communication, and sharing.

- **Identity.**
  Creating an identity for oneself online takes place on a special webpage called a 'profile'. It is your public face. It is what other people see when they visit you online.

  The profile webpage carries most of the options you need to manage your account:-
  - creating lists of 'friends' (people you communicate with),
  - sending and receiving messages,
  - publishing (uploading) photographs and videos, and
  - setting the privacy level of your profile,
  - update status and comments,
  - personal information about education, work, family, places lived in, etc.

On many sites, you can decorate the profile with patterns and colours, photographs, graphics, sounds and videos to match your personality and interests. Teenagers will spend a lot of time on their profile.

- **Communication.**
  The sites offer a number of ways to communicate. You can:
  - mail (like email),
  - send and receive voice, video and instant messages,
  - leave comments on someone's profile,
  - write a blog or record a videoblog. ("Blog" is short for web-log. It is like a diary, but with one big difference; instead of being secret, a blog is supposed to be read by other people.)
  - You can also take part in discussion groups and special interest groups. These sometimes involve conversations in a chatroom.

- **Share.**
  You can publish information about yourself and your hobbies and interests. Other people can read it and decide whether they'd like to add you as an online 'friend'. You can record your own music or videos and publish them online. You can send 'friends' a message letting them know you've found an interesting video or new piece of music. You can 'like' comments. You can share photographs of yourself, swap funny pictures or links to other sites.

2.3 Do I as a parent need to know about social networking websites?

The answer to that question is "YES" - the more you know about these sites, the more likely it is that you will be able to help and guide your children.

Later, in section 4, you will be given more detailed information but, at this point, you should note the following points. They will help in setting these sites in the wider context.

(a) Think of the internet as a public place. Your son or daughter may be at home and within your sight, but, once logged on, they have, in 'virtual' world terms, left the boundaries of the home. They have in fact entered a public place. And, if it happens to be a social networking website, it is one of the internet's most crowded public places.

(b) Too many people disclose too much too soon. All users should adopt the same approach to the disclosure of intimate or personal details when online as they do offline (i.e. in the course of our non – online lives). We would not give our name, address, mobile phone number to a stranger on the street, nor would we hand over photographs of ourselves. Yet, without realising it, many users, especially teenagers, do this online all the time, when using social networking sites.

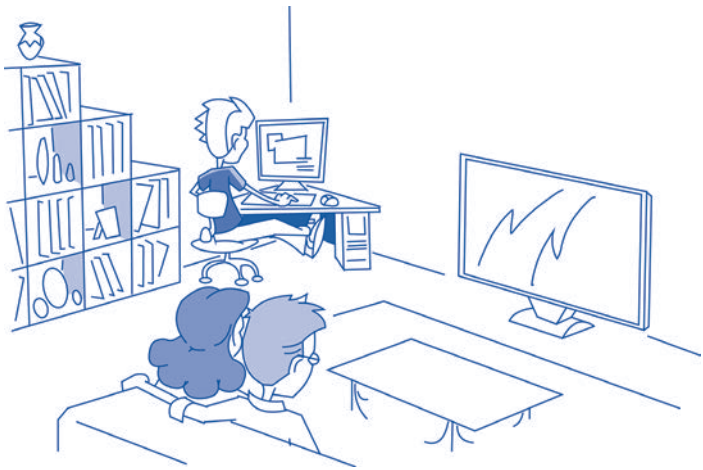
(c) Do I remain in control of my content?

- Social networking websites give users control over the content they want to publish online.
- But they lose control the moment that information is online.
- Photographs are a concern here. All teenagers should be aware that they **lose control of their photographs once they are online.**
- Sharing photographs and creating an identity around a profile picture are popular activities on social networking websites.
- But a photograph online is there forever. A teenager can't get it back.
- Even on profiles set to private, teenagers can never be sure who exactly is viewing or downloading the photographs.
- Photographs and even videos can be altered using image or video editing software and then

republished on other websites. *The teenager can delete the photograph from their own profile, but they can never delete it from the internet.*

In this booklet, when you read the word friend it means just that: a friend.

When you see 'friend' it can mean something different. Social networking websites describe *any* contact online as a 'friend'. The contact can indeed be an offline friend. It can also be a stranger or someone a teenager doesn't know very well.



3. Social networking websites – the risks

3.1 These are among the main risks presented by social networking websites:

- Bullying, intimidation and harassment
- Teenagers damaging their own reputation and good name by their behaviour online by
  - Giving out personal information online and not knowing who can see it
  - Publishing unsuitable photographs or videos of themselves or others (e.g. younger siblings or other family members) online. Once the images are online they can be copied and circulated by other users
- Spending too much time online and neglecting physical exercise or homework
- Being approached by online predators who may try to coax them into an offline meeting
- Identity theft
- Seeing inappropriate content (text, photographs, videos), including pornography, hate, racist and self-harm material
- Being influenced by the profiles of users who glamorise drinking, drugs, fast driving or other anti-social behaviour
- Breaking the law by posting copyrighted material online,
- Using mobile phone credit or other forms of online payment to purchase apps or gain access to restricted sections in social networking websites,
- Being constantly distracted by alerts and notifications, especially on their smartphones and mobile devices (tablets, etc), making it harder for them to concentrate.





3.2 There are measures you can take to help your children and teenagers to stay safe online. The following could be useful if you want to have more input into when and for how long your children, especially teenagers aged 13-15 years, can use their social networking website,

- create a 'buddy-list' of trusted friends they can communicate with online,
- consider whether your child should have electronic communications devices (including smartphones) in their bedrooms overnight and
- learn how to use the technology yourself.

3.3 A good approach is to treat online safety as a 'co-operative' relationship between you and your teenage children. Sometimes a teenager won't tell a parent about a bad experience online, because they fear being blamed or losing their internet access. If teenagers feel they can talk openly about their online habits and experiences, it will lead to more security in the long run.

3.4 Tech-savvy teenagers can usually find ways around the restrictions that parents place on their online freedom. It therefore becomes more important that they are able to make responsible decisions on their own. Teach them the values of safer internet use and 'netiquette' – a code of conduct for web users. Those values will help them make informed decisions about their online behaviour even when you are not around.

If you ever come across content on the internet that you suspect may be illegal please report it using the www.hotline.ie service. The service is confidential and you may make your report anonymously. The Hotline website gives details of how you can make a report.

4. Staying safer online

In this section we look at all the main aspects of social networking sites and draw attention to higher risk areas or activities. We also suggest some ways to overcome them.

4.1 Online Profiles – how much to tell?

(i) A **profile** is the person's public face. It is their online identity.

If you, a parent, want to see what your teenage children are doing on a social networking website, this is your starting point. Start by asking permission to see their profile. You may also wish to consider having a 'contract' with your child/teen setting out, for example

- what they may or may not access on the internet
- the length of time they can spend each day or week on online social or recreational activity
- access for you as the parent to their profiles and passwords in exchange for the provision by you of the relevant electronic device
- an agreement that the purchasing of apps and other products must only be done through you, the parent.

(ii) **Be aware of shadow profiles.** Some teenagers have more than one profile. One is polite and respectable. The other is, for them, their real profile: it will give you a more accurate idea of your teenager's behaviour online. It may be a space they don't want you to see (well, not if they've gone to the trouble of creating a shadow profile!).

You can detect a shadow profile by keeping an eye on the comments section. A teenager who spends hours every week on their profile but shows few signs of recent communication may be showing you their shadow profile.

(iii) Once you know that your teenager has a profile at all, you should give them a clear and simple



but very important piece of advice: **always keep profiles private.** Anyone online can contact your child if their profile is public. Only online 'friends' can see a profile that is private.

(iv) Depending on the site being used, personal information and communications may be accessed by different groups such as 'friends' and even 'friends of friends' i.e. people not directly known to the original person. It is therefore a good idea to monitor the management of your child's profile as site rules /protocols may be altered from time to time.

You are advised that, especially for younger teenagers (13-15 years), setting a profile to private is the *minimum* level of security they should have. But teenagers shouldn't see this as allowing them to safely say anything online. No profile is totally secure. There are ways to break (hack) into someone else's account and misuse their information.

Your profile is your public face online.

You can choose to keep your profile 'public'. That means anyone online can look at it, see your personal information, and send you messages.

Or you can set your profile to 'private' (if that option is available). That usually means that only 'friends' can see your profile and send you messages.

Monitor settings and sharing protocols on the particular site.

Teenagers under 18 should always set their profile to 'private'.

4.2 Personal Information – handle with care!

Guard personal information online. NEVER give your home address, phone number, email address, name of school online. Teenagers give away this information online too often and too easily. Information

online is easily copied, downloaded, stored, printed, or even published on another website. You can never be 100% sure who has access to the information or how it will be used.

As the parent, encourage your teenagers to ask themselves this question: **does the world really need to know this piece of personal information about me?**

For example, there is no reason to have one's mobile phone number online. Who, outside of family and friends, needs to have that phone number? The same applies to a teenager's home address or many other pieces of personal information. The people who *should* have this information (family and friends) already have it. Online it can be lying around for people who *shouldn't* have it.

4.3 Registering – be truthful but be sensible!

The same care should be applied when **registering** to create an account on a social networking website. **Always ask:** is it necessary to reveal this piece of information about myself?

A teenager can safely say they live in Ireland. They can safely say they live in, for example, Cork or Dublin. But if the registration form asks for more detailed information (information that could identify and locate the teenager in the real world), they should leave the space blank.

You may notice that sites can differ about the details to be entered, but always remember that not all spaces on a registration form have to be filled in. Teenagers should fill in only the information they have to. Even if asked, don't use your family name (only your first name), especially if you have an uncommon family name or you are the only family with that name in your town.



For the same reason, **teenagers don't have to use their real name as their username** (which will appear on their profile). On many sites, they can use a nickname or a made-up name. Offline

friends will still be able to find them online: they can be told the nickname when they meet face-to-face or are on the telephone. If offline friends and family are aware of a teenager's identity online, why does anyone else have to be?

But teenagers should consider carefully the username they choose. Usernames such as 'Sexylady' or 'BeerBoy' do not give out a great impression.

It's important, however, that teenagers **always give their correct age when registering.** Some – though not all – social networking websites automatically increase the privacy and safety levels of users under the age of eighteen.

Some social networking websites have made their registration process easy and quick. That appeals to teenagers, who may be short on time and patience. (But be careful setting up a quick profile, as the default settings may not be set to 'private' when you first choose to make your profile live.)

New users have to give only basic information to set up an account. It is important to remember, however, that as a teenager builds up their profile they can add extra information on themselves and their interests and hobbies. If they are not careful, they could publicly give away more detailed information on their home address, school, or mobile phone number.

If a teenager has put personal information online and regrets doing so, **deleting the profile won't always solve their problem.** Not if someone has already copied or downloaded the information.

This doesn't mean teenagers can't say anything about themselves online. They can, but they need to be sensible. **Any personal information they reveal should be general.** If they say they like playing Gaelic football, they don't have to add the name of their local GAA club. It could identify them offline.

Never assume that personal information is private even if the profile is.

Do not **assume online conversations are private even if the profile is.**

Users cannot be certain that their conversations are taking place within the safety of a trusted group of friends. Teenagers shouldn't say anything that is deeply personal or will embarrass them later on. A good test is this: if a teenager wouldn't be prepared to say it out loud in a crowded room, they shouldn't say it online at all.

If you are not prepared to say something or show something to people in a room with you, then don't say it or show it on social media.

4.4 Images and Photographs online – they can stay there forever!
Photographs present a high risk of embarrassment in later life. A sixteen year old might publish a silly photograph for their profile picture to give their 'friends' a laugh. It might surface again when they are older and looking for a job. A potential future employer might not see the funny side.

There are more sinister risks as well. Photographs that seem innocent can give away identifying information about a teenager, such as their name. The background in the photograph could identify their school or local sports club. Photographs with a 'tag' can put a name to a face online. Using the 'tag' feature means a small box will appear on screen to name each person in a photograph.

Inappropriate photographs of teenagers are a serious issue. Sometimes the teenager creates the risk when they publish a 'sexualised' image of themselves online, trying to look attractive for their boyfriend or girlfriend or win praise from their 'friends'. A sexualised image does not have to contain nudity. It can mean that the teenager poses in a manner that has sexual overtones. Some

websites even allow users to rate a photograph as 'hot or not', with each photograph carrying an average rating. This can raise strong legal issues if the teenager is under seventeen years old. Some adults go online to search for inappropriate photographs of young people.

A teenager should tell their parents or a trusted adult immediately if someone online asks them for a photograph, regardless of whether the image is innocent or not.

Like personal information, **if there isn't a worthwhile reason for a photograph being online, it shouldn't be there.**

Be aware that anyone posting sexualised images of themselves or others, showing intimate / private areas of the body may be committing a serious criminal offence, such as distributing child pornography. Remember that, once added to a site, the image is no longer under your control.

4.5 Videoblogs

The same goes for a videoblog, which will contain images of the teenager and can reveal personal information. Once the videoblog is online they have lost control over it.

4.6 Friends and online 'friends'

Teenagers who are serious about their safety online need to realise that **'friends' aren't always friends.** 'Friend' is the catch-all term used to describe a contact on a social network. It describes *any* contact, whether the teenager knows them offline or not. Most of the time online 'friends' will be a teenager's offline friends and they use social networks to keep in contact with them. But friends have friends, who in turn have more friends. Suddenly a lot of people will have access to each other's profile. This increases the risk of contact from a stranger and of personal information falling into the wrong hands.

Online popularity can be very important for some teenagers. It can be measured by the number of 'friends' added to a profile. Sometimes, in their desire for popularity, teenagers become too relaxed about who they'll accept as 'friends'.

Teenagers should review their list of online 'friends' regularly, so they are sharing their information only with people they trust.

4.7 'Strangers'

They should treat a stranger online with the same caution as they would treat a stranger on the street. Adults can lie about their age, their interests, and who they really are in an effort to win the trust of a teenager. Conversations with strangers online can begin innocently, but quickly become unsettling and even dangerous, e.g. asking teenagers for webcam, video or photo images of themselves or trying to arrange a meeting in person.

Teenagers should ignore messages from strangers online and delete spam emails without reading them.

And, of course, teenagers themselves shouldn't try to contact strangers online. **A list of the people your teenager has accepted as 'friends' can be checked on their profile.**

4.8 Bullies online

Strangers aren't the only ones who can upset a teenager through contact online.



Bullying, including cyberbullying, is a serious problem for many teenagers. Cyberbullying is bullying that is conducted online and through mobile phones. This form of bullying can be subtle and difficult for parents to detect, because the effects are psychological rather than physical.

Be aware therefore that **bullies don't have to be in the schoolyard any more.**

Exclusion is a strong form of bullying: being left out of a group of friends online can be as distressing for a teenager as being left out of a group of friends at school.

Bullying on social networking websites can take more obvious forms, too: sending threatening and abusive messages, harassment, or spreading false and hurtful rumours about someone.

An online bully can publish nasty messages directly onto someone's profile. They can even impersonate their victim. They can set up a fake profile pretending to be that person. Or they can hack into the person's real profile and change their personal information.

Be aware of being 'fraped' and 'fraping'. These terms describe what happens when a user takes a break but leaves their profile open; someone else can get into the profile and starts misbehaving with it.

That is why teenagers should keep the password of their social networking account secret, and turn on the option to review comments before they are published on their profile.

Passwords should be difficult for bullies to guess. In many cases a bully can easily find out a person's date of birth, their favourite football team, or the name of the family pet. If any of them are used as a password the bully can access the person's account. The hardest passwords to guess are mixtures of letters and numbers (e.g. ha6ym74).

How parents can help

Children are sometimes reluctant to tell their parents they've been bullied online because they fear losing their internet access. If your teenager is upset after using an electronic device, or suddenly stops using their social networking website altogether, they may have experienced bullying online. They can ignore the bullying, or block the bully from sending them messages. This isn't a solution to long-term and sustained bullying, however. **Speak to your child if you suspect they are being bullied online or offline.**

Remember, also, that parents need to act responsibly if they find out that their child is using the internet to bully someone else. **A teenager can damage their reputation and good name by their behaviour online.**

NOTE: *Please see the CYBERBULLYING booklet in this series.*

4.9 Policing the web

Anyone else who uses the internet with bad intentions should be aware that **behaviour online isn't anonymous.** A computer's Internet Protocol (IP) address is like an identity tag for the computer and it leaves a record of where a person has been online. Therefore, an online bully can try to hide behind a false name and fake profile, but they may be traceable through their IP address.

Save any bullying messages that your child has received as evidence and contact your Internet Service Provider (ISP). This is the company that supplies you with internet access. Most ISPs in Ireland have rules (Acceptable Usage Policies) for how people behave on their networks and services. These rules ban customers from using their network to bully or harass another person, be it a child or an adult.

4.10 Searching for videos

Videos are important parts of social networking websites. The websites warn that people who upload videos containing nudity, violence or offensive material will have their accounts deleted. Employees called moderators use special software to find and delete such videos. They will investigate 'flags' or warnings from users who have found inappropriate content. But even so, such content does find its way online and can stay there for a while before being found and deleted.

People who publish inappropriate videos often use sophisticated tactics, which they change as new safeguards are introduced. For example, some people upload videos that contain no inappropriate content themselves but give directions to find it elsewhere on the

web. Also, some videos might not match their descriptions. There have been cases of popular children's cartoons being uploaded but with the original voices replaced with offensive language.

Other videos are simply too adult for a young audience. Encourage teenagers to be careful about the types of videos they search for. They should switch off any videos that contain graphic material (violence, pornography, hate, self-harm, eating disorders), and talk to a parent or trusted adult immediately.

4.11 Neglecting 'ordinary' life

It can be easy to **neglect offline life for online life.**

Some teenagers who spend long periods of time online have shown signs similar to addiction, such as social withdrawal, being irritable away from their devices but happy while on them, and lying to family and friends about their online habits. They have also developed problems in other areas of life, through neglecting homework and exercise, and not bothering to meet friends face-to-face.

Teenagers should have a healthy balance between their online and other daily activities.



4.12 Underage users

Finally, **while you're never too old to use a social networking website, you can be too young.** Children are becoming interested in media technologies at younger ages. Social networking websites generally apply a minimum age. But it can be relatively easy to by-pass the age verification systems when registering.

If your child is below the minimum age to use a particular social networking website, you should delete their account immediately. They can be redirected to sites which are more age appropriate. Children who are younger than 13 must not be allowed to join sites for those aged 13 and over. The under 13s should be encouraged to join sites that are suitable for their age group. If younger children join social networking sites which are meant for those over 13 they may see content they are simply not equipped to handle.

TOP TIPS FOR SAFER USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES
Set profiles to private
Guard personal information online: even private profiles are not 100% secure
Think before you publish: information and photographs online are there forever
'Friends' aren't always friends: be cautious when communicating online with people you don't know and trust in the real world
You aren't anonymous online: behaviour online can damage your real life reputation
Don't respond to communication that is bullying or makes you feel uncomfortable: tell a parent or a trusted adult what has happened

5. What to look out for on a teenager's profile

We hope you are now better informed about social networking websites.

If you now decide to look at your child's profile, you should examine it with the following questions in mind:

1: Is their profile private or public?

2: Does the profile picture identify your child and is it an appropriate photograph?

3: How much personal information has your child given away on their profile? Have they published their real name, home address, mobile phone number, or given away details on where they'll be at certain times of the day? Look too at their blogs. Have they revealed personal information in their blog?

4: Have they been in contact with people they do not know or trust in other circumstances? Have strangers been trying to contact them through their profile?

5: Are the comments (text, voice or video) on their profile appropriate? Do any of them encourage drinking, drug use, anti-social behaviour, or are they of a sexual nature? Do any of the comments suggest that your child is being bullied or harassed online?

6: Does your child have a collection of photo albums or a slideshow of photographs on their profile? Are the photographs in these albums appropriate, and do they identify your



child (e.g. are tagged, or have captions identifying who's in the photograph)?

7: Has anyone online asked your child for a photograph or webcam image of themselves?

8: Has your child uploaded a video of themselves (e.g. videoblog) online? Are the videos appropriate, and do they give away personal information?

9: Is your child's profile linked to their mobile phone? Is the mobile phone number visible?

10: Has their profile a VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) service? (It allows people to make voice calls across the internet, and can be similar to making a telephone call.) Also, are there instant messaging services on their profile? If so, do they use these services to communicate only with trusted offline friends and family?



6. Social networking websites – free to user, big commercial success

Social networking websites are big business. This is largely because they have built up an asset that is very valuable: namely, a loyal worldwide audience, together with their personal information. This information can be used to target advertising at a vast pool of potential customers.

Media corporations and advertisers have adapted to the habits of online users. It is known that young people are spending more time online and less time on traditional media such as television. However, media corporations still need to sell their films, television programmes and their music. Advertisers, too, still need this audience to promote their products. As the audience moves online, media corporations and advertisers have followed them, the result being that social networking websites have increased in value.

They may not realise it, but the manner in which sites are managed can put young people under a lot of commercial pressure. They spend a lot of time on their profiles. Instead of jumping from website to website (like channel-hopping on television), they stay in one place. This is ideal for media corporations and advertisers: they know exactly where to direct their content and their advertisements.

The corporations and advertising agencies can gather information on young people's hobbies and interests from their online behaviour and profiles. As a result, they know what kinds of content and advertisements to target at individual teenagers. From an advertisers' point of view, this is more efficient than running a television advertisement and hoping that some of the people watching will be interested in the product.

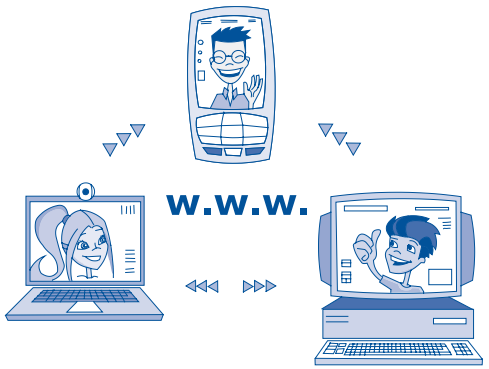
In any media industry, the larger your audience, the more you can charge for advertising. Making sites available free to users has been

shown to have been a very good commercial decision by the site owners; it ensures a much bigger audience than would otherwise be the case. Most teenagers, after all, do not have a lot of money, so free social networking websites are attractive as a cheap way of communicating. But, although free to the users, they must join the site before they can use it to communicate with their friends. And the friends too must join the site. In this way social networking websites have built up huge audiences.

Advertisements are usually presented as 'promoted' videos or profiles, sponsored links (a paid-for link to another website), or banner advertisements (like pictures or graphics on screen).

There is a strong consumer culture on social networking websites. It is possible to become 'friends' with a brand, meaning a teenager can link to a profile set up to promote a product.

Some social networking websites offer services that link a profile to a user's mobile phone, e.g. an SMS text message alert is sent to the user when a 'friend' leaves a comment on their profile, or they can access their profile through the internet application on their mobile phone. These services incur charges to a teenager's mobile phone account.



On da net its gud 2 tlk

Teachers may be horrified by the way teenagers spell on social networking websites. 'Was' becomes 'wuz', 'the' becomes 'da', and 'night' becomes 'nite'. Expect to see '4U' instead of 'for you'. And if you don't already know what 'OMG' means, you could have a hard time guessing.

Many of these abbreviations were carried over from texting on mobile phones.

The language has become a key feature of the culture on social-networking websites. Some reasons are practical. It saves time. 'B4N' is quicker to type than 'Bye for now'. Other reasons are less obvious but more important:

- the language marks an identity that sets teenagers apart from parents and adults online.
- It's a language common to peer-groups of teenagers: people of similar age, interests and outlook on life.
- It sets a boundary between those who belong and those who don't.

All languages change over time. It isn't necessarily a bad thing that teenagers write this way in text messages or on their profile. However, think before you use it in homework or in examinations.

OMG – Oh My God
F2T – Free To Talk
4 – For
4U – For You
2L8 – Too Late
B4 – Before
WOT – What
G – Grin
H – Hug
K – Kiss

H8 – Hate
CUZ – Because
SUM – Some
U – You
R – Are
NE – Any
BRB – Be Right Back
BFF – Best Friend Forever
LOL – Laughing Out Loud
LV – Love

For safety reasons it's a good idea to be aware of the abbreviations below:

POS
Parents Over My Shoulder

PAW (or PRW)
Parents Are Watching

PIR
Parents In Room

WTGP
Want To Go Private?

ASL
Age, Sex, Location

F2F
Face To Face

GNOC
Get Naked On Cam (webcam)

NIFOC
Naked In Front Of Computer

PRON
Porn

TDTM
Talk Dirty To Me

LMIRL
Let's Meet In Real Life

IPN
I'm Posting Naked



7. Useful websites

Please note that these links are provided to assist you. The Office for Internet Safety does not accept responsibility for websites listed or the information contained within them.

www.watchyourspace.ie
A website devoted to providing a portal for young people to show their support for victims of cyberbullying

www.makeitsecure.org
Provides information on IT security risks online

www.webwise.ie
Provides parents (parenting hub www.webwise.ie/parents/) and teachers with educational resources, advice and information about potential dangers on the internet

www.childline.ie
Child safety issues

www.hotline.ie
Irish hotline for public to report child pornography and other illegal content

www.scoilnet.ie
Provides advice and support to schools on Information Technology

www.barnardos.ie
Charity for the protection of children

www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie
The Professional Development Service for Teachers Technology in Education provides advice and support on ICTs in education

www.ihrec.ie
The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission

'Get With IT!' Series

The 'Get With IT!' series of booklets is available on the publications section of the Office for Internet Safety website www.internetsafety.ie .

There are four booklets in the series:

A parents' guide to new media technologies,
A parents' guide to filtering technologies,
A parents' guide to social networking websites, and
A guide to cyberbullying

Hard copies of the booklets are available on request from the Office for Internet Safety at:

Freefone: 1800 24 25 95
Email: internetsafety@justice.ie

GET WITH IT!

This booklet is about helping you

The world of social networking websites is one of fun, communication and creativity. But for many parents, social networking websites can seem strange and confusing. Parents sometimes worry about the risks that these websites can hold for their children.

This booklet will help parents to understand these websites and help them to safeguard their children online.

For more information Contact:

Office for Internet Safety
Department of Justice and Equality
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Dublin 2
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