



The use of social media is a privilege, not a right. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube all have strict guidelines to ensure that all users of their services are safe from harmful content, malicious behaviour and personal attack. By creating an account with a social media site, users are entering into a contract, breaking the rules of which can result in expulsion from the site and even criminal charges.

Facebook and Twitter require that all registered users are aged 13 and over, and both sites require parental or carer permission and supervision for users under 18 years of age. It is parents and carers' responsibility to monitor their children's behaviour across the social media platforms their children may be using. In some cases, parents may be held accountable for the actions of their children, especially if they have allowed a child under the age of 13 to create an online profile.

The reality is that there are a number of factors which can inhibit the ability of parents, carers and websites to monitor inappropriate usage by children and teenagers. The sheer volume of users across the most popular social media websites makes effective monitoring by site administrators an ongoing battle. On the other side of the screen, parents and carers are often less knowledgeable about social media and the internet than their children, making employing effective rules and guidelines about usage a challenge.

There are numerous studies on the behaviour of individuals in the 'cyber' world, as compared to real life. The overwhelming conclusion is that the sense of anonymity can lead people, especially children and teenagers, into behaving without the sense of moral duty they would have in 'real-life' situations. The isolation experienced by victims of online bullying is heightened by the lack of accountability or immediate support in an online environment, leading to a sense of isolation and despair, and the pervading influence of the internet means that victims can feel like there is no safe haven. These findings highlight the need for parents of children online to be aware of the dangers specific to online interactions and to cooperate with their children's school if appropriate.

If you would like further information on this topic there are a number of government developed online resources available to parents, schools and children including: [www.cybersmart.gov.au](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au) and [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

Constable Care works closely with the Child Protection Unit at Edith Cowan University to remain at the forefront of child safety education. For information on Constable Care visit [www.constablecare.org.au](http://www.constablecare.org.au)

**TEACHING  
KIDS  
TO DO THE  
RIGHT  
THING**

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