# Teen safety:
6 tips for using AI and social media

Regardless of how we might feel about social media and artificial intelligence, these technologies are here to stay – and will impact teens' lives in significant ways. But there are steps any family can take to help keep teens healthy, safe and well-informed in today's digital environment.

Here are tips for parents, teens and families.
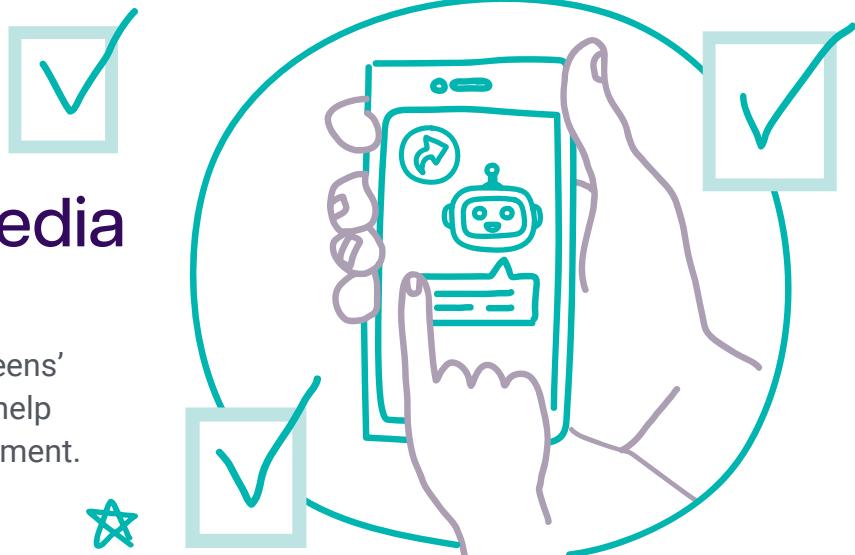
	THE REALITY:	HOW TO HELP:*
1 Prioritize in-person relationships	Some teens may develop strong attachments to AI chatbots, turning to them for companionship instead of building authentic relationships with other people. Psychologists say adolescents are also less likely than adults to question the accuracy of information generated by a chatbot.	Kids need supportive relationships with other humans in their day-to-day lives to be healthy. Help teens to build and prioritize relationships within their communities outside of screentime.
2 Watch out for misinformation	To be smart and safe online, it's important for teens to understand how misinformation spreads on social media. AI tools can contribute to this problem, quickly fabricating text, audio, images and video.	Data shows that teens frequently seek health advice online, including from chatbots. But these AI responses are often riddled with inaccuracies. Encourage teens to slow down, verify information with medical professionals or discuss it with adults they trust.
3 Be mindful of data collection	It doesn't take a tech expert to know that companies track user data, often for targeted ads or to sell to third parties. Encourage kids to consider what kind of data the apps they use might be collecting and who benefits from it.	Review privacy settings on apps to learn about data being collected. Choose apps with strong privacy protections. Remind teens to be careful with what they post, choose to share publicly or reveal while using chatbots.
4 Understand how AI can be a learning tool	AI chatbots can help in brainstorming, but they should be used thoughtfully. Being overly dependent on AI can impede a teen's cognitive development.	Talk to teens about the limitations and potential harms of AI technology and encourage them to question the accuracy of AI-generated content. Consider using AI tools as a supplement — not a replacement — when doing homework.
5 Manage screen time	Developing brains are more vulnerable to social rewards because of hormonal changes that prompt the development of dopamine and oxytocin receptors, which begin to multiply between the ages of 10 and 12. This is why social media can feel addictive to young people — and why screen time should be limited.	If your teen's interactions on social media or with AI bots prevent them from socializing with people or getting quality sleep at night, try using parental controls to set screen and content limits. Try a digital detox as a family and talk about how the social media break affected you.
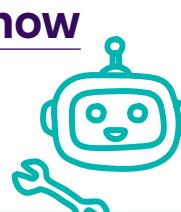
6 Discuss AI and social media with teens
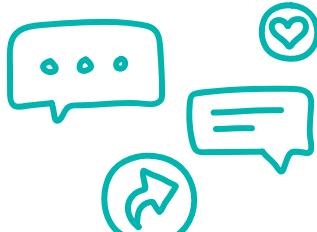
Ideas to begin a conversation:

Based on what you saw online today, what do you think social media algorithms will show you next?

Do you ever feel tired and frazzled after you've looked at your phone for too long? That happens to me sometimes. Why do you think that is?

Do you think your time on your phone today was productive or worthwhile? What did you get out of the time you spent on your phone today?

Did you see anything online today that made you go "huh, I wonder if that's true?" Can you show me?

Are there any online trends I should be aware of?

Further reading

"Social Media and Youth Mental Health" (U.S. Surgeon General)

"Health Advisory on Social Media Use in Adolescence" (American Psychological Association)

"Artificial intelligence and adolescent well-being" (American Psychological Association)

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