

BEHIND THE SCREEN



For Parents
and Caregivers

from Steve Chapelle

Messages and photos appear to move from the sender directly to the recipient. However, they are instead first received onto multiple server hard drives of service and social media providers before they reach the recipient.

Content

Most social media services require the member to declare they are at least 13 years of age or have received parental permission to use the service.

Before posting, one should understand that their content will define itself into one of three categories: Purposeful, Pointless or Dangerous.

Social media service providers require members to grant them unrestricted use of their content while they are an account holder. This primarily refers to the sale of your content to third parties, of which you will receive nothing.

Expect your posted content to remain World Wide Web-available through post-secondary, career inception, family-raising and old-age years.

Cyberbullying is against the law, and harsh penalties continue to be given to those found guilty.

Audience

Advertisers are the likeliest recipients of social media users' messages and photos.

Thieves pose an inconspicuous threat to social media users' property and identity.

Determined by severity of the misbehaviour, police remain two degrees from any given social media user.

Harassment, blackmail and sexual abuse opportunities for predators increase with each indiscrete posting of information and photos.

Individuals and organizations who haven't properly secured their sensitive information are vulnerable to hackers.

Controls

Mental:

1. Understand the basic structure of social media networks, the objectives of the providers and their methods for procuring your information.
2. Exercise *honest* judgement on what you post.
3. Self-restraint - Emotions, intoxication and self-righteousness may all affect this.

Technical:

1. Account privacy settings — set all to 'Friends only' or the equivalent. Followers — for a personal account accept only trusted acquaintances whose accounts you have verified as genuine.
2. App permissions and location services access to the device:

Android — Built-in from version 6 and up. Settings > Apps > (settings gear) select the permission > enable/disable for each app. Version 5 and earlier require a third-party permissions manager app from the Google store. Location Services: Enter Settings; enable/disable Location Services for the device.

iOS permissions management — Built-into all versions. Settings > select an app > enable/disable permissions for each. Location Services: Enter Settings > Privacy > select and enable/disable Location Services for the device.
3. Internet session privacy can be encrypted using a VPN app like Hotspot Shield and TunnelBear from the Google or Apple store. Individual data files can be encrypted and password protected using a free app such as AndroZip and iZip.
4. Settling on a parental control app requires knowledge of the social media and texting services used by your child. Parental Control apps like Mobile Spy and Phonesherrif, as well as the age-configurable browser app Mobicip can be downloaded from the Google and Apple stores. YouTube Kids can replace the main YouTube app but beware of inconsistently appropriate content. Android does not offer parental controls and will require a 3rd-party app. iOS does — open Settings > General > Restrictions; set a first-time password to control this area. Disable the child's ability to install, uninstall and purchase apps. Age limits for iTunes content may be set. Exit when complete.

Conclusion: Understand that a social media account is a personal advertisement, and most of the time a semi-private text or email between one or few individuals is instead appropriate.

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Steve Chapelle has been providing social media behavior education to Canadians since 2006. Prior to that he spent over 20 years in technology management, analysis and customer service, primarily in the financial services sector.