



Is my child old enough?



Get the answers to the questions you're asking about Twitter 

Twitter is a social media site where users create a profile and share brief messages of up to 140 characters (called tweets) with other users. Tweets can include links to photos, video and websites. Twitter members create a profile and can follow other tweeters of interest. They can 'retweet' and reply to other users' tweets.

Twitter doesn't state a required user age, but you may like to consider the following:

What are the risks?

As with all social media that encourages interaction between users, the risks come from contact with people your children don't know, cyberbullying and trolling, and from your child potentially accessing inappropriate content.

What is trolling? How do I protect my child?

Trolling is when individuals make comments that are meant to upset or enrage people. Trolls can be quite mean and very hurtful to vulnerable people. To help protect your child, talk to them about how some users make mean comments because they have nothing better to do. Explain that they are mean to lots of people and usually act this way to get a reaction. Talk about how to report them to Twitter, how to block them and how to deal with their feelings if they are sent mean tweets.

Help your child understand and use the Help Centre

Twitter has a Help centre (<https://support.twitter.com>) that explains how to use and stay safe on Twitter. Go through this with your child so they understand how to use the service, the rules of Twitter and how to report and block people. Make sure they (and you) understand how it all works.

Are you going to supervise or 'follow' your child on Twitter?

If this is the case, be prepared to learn more than you might like about their friends. Try to withhold comment unless you are worried about safety. It is better to talk to your child in person if you have concerns than post comments publicly.

If you publicly embarrass them, you will break your child's trust and they may simply communicate with friends on a different program – or open a separate profile without your knowledge.

How do I talk to my child about my concerns?

Be honest with them. Express your love and concern about what might happen online. Ask if they have experienced bullying or sexual advances. Banning seldom works and children will find other ways to get online and may stop talking to you about issues to avoid getting in trouble. Keep the communication open. If they won't talk to you about things, recruit a trusted family friend or family member to keep the communication going.

When should I be worried about my child?

If your child's behaviour changes at home and/or school you should talk to them. Examples of changed behaviour could include disinterest in things they used to like, seeming very unhappy and/or their sleep and eating is being impacted. Seek professional advice if necessary from a school counsellor, your GP or a psychologist. If your child has particular vulnerabilities, be vigilant about their contacts offline and online. Help them join groups out of school where they can find friends and support. Talk to the school and make sure they are supported.

Kids Helpline provides free online and phone counselling for children and young people.

Visit www.kidshelpline.com.au or call 1800 55 1800.