

# Teens Should Be Careful with Social Media

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## BEFORE YOU READ:

1. Scan the article's title, headings, and images. What do you think this article will be about?
2. What does it mean to "be an example" to your children? Share some ways you are an example to your children or to others in your life.



## Using Social Media Almost Constantly

It's hard to avoid social media. We use it to live, work, and study. But why do we use it so much? According to the U.S. Surgeon General, 95% of youth ages 13-17 report using social media. More than a third say they use it "almost constantly."<sup>1</sup> This is a problem because there are some dangers connected to being on social media a lot.

## Harassment

Who is the most affected? Several studies show that there are some big problems with social media, especially for teens. The most *vulnerable* social media users are children ages 13-17. On social media, they are exposed to *harassment*, *bullying*, sexual content, and other *harms*. All these negative things can cause depression and anxiety.



### Low Self-Esteem

Even if they are not exposed to harmful content, they still might compare themselves to others. Then they feel bad about themselves. They don't sleep well, and they can develop eating disorders. People who spend more than three hours a day on social media tend to feel *low self-esteem*, and it is more prominent in girls.<sup>2</sup>

### Poor Mental Health

All these *harms* can cause poor mental health. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 46% of people admit that they feel worse using social media.<sup>3</sup>

### Be An Example!

If you are a parent, be an example for your children. Stay off your phones. Take your children outside to play. They will be happier and healthier if they have activities outside of social media.

The internet has a lot of educational sites. Let your children use those wisely. But limit the amount of time they spend on social media. People can thrive using the web if they use it with intelligence.

**Notes:** 1. <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/sg-youth-mental-health-social-media-advisory.pdf>; 2. Chen, Y., Wei, M., & Ortiz, J. (2022). How do digital lives affect resident mental health in the digital era? empirical evidence based on the Chinese General Social Survey. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.1085256>; 3. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH). (2023, May 23). *Surgeon general issues new advisory about effects social media use has on Youth Mental Health*. HHS.gov. <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2023/05/23/surgeon-general-issues-new-advisory-about-effects-social-media-use-has-youth-mental-health.html>

### AFTER YOU READ:

1. Note the words in *bold italics*. Use context clues to write definitions. Try using the words in several sentences.
2. To think further about the math, read the article on pp. 10-11.
3. Visit <https://www.mydigitalat2.org/>, an excellent source of materials by and for young people about navigating digital and media literacy.



Maximina Pérez is a student at the Salinas Adult School in California. She has been learning English for a few years and has made good progress. She likes to read and garden in her free time.