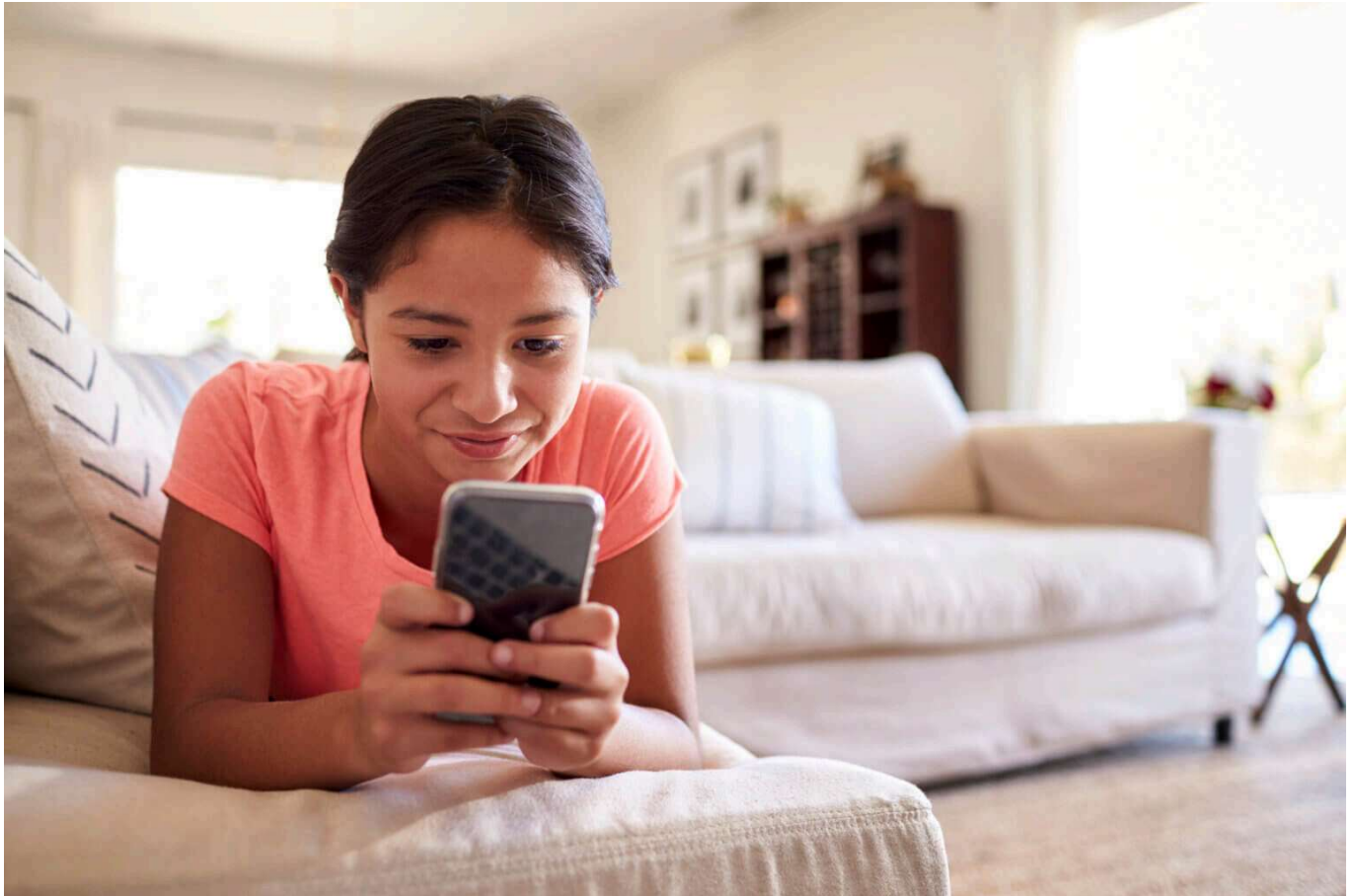


Social media age restrictions: What families need to know



In short:

From 10 Dec 2025, Australians under 16 will be restricted from accessing major social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat

The law aims to reduce online risks and give teens time to build digital literacy and resilience

Parents can support by keeping communication open, validating feelings, and helping teens stay connected through alternative channels

Research shows active social media use with friends is generally positive, while late-night scrolling can harm sleep and mood

What is the social media delay?

From 10 December 2025, new Australian law will be introduced, such that anyone under 16 is not permitted to have a social media account on major social media platforms. These changes are designed to reduce young people's exposure to online risks and give them more time to develop the skills they need to confidently and safely navigate social media spaces.

For many families, this news may bring mixed feelings. Parents/carers might feel relieved, while young people could experience tension, uncertainty, or even anxiety. If your child already uses social media or has been asking for it, you might be wondering what the changes mean, and how best to support them through this transition.

This article explains what's changing, why these regulations are being introduced, what the research says, and practical steps parents can take to help young people develop healthy digital habits.

Which platforms are affected by the social media regulations?

Parents and carers can keep up-to-date with the latest information about which platforms have been age-restricted on the [eSafety website](#).

This list may grow but currently the following platforms are required to restrict access for users under the age of 16.

Swipe or click to view the platforms.



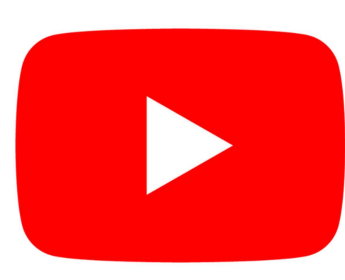
TikTok

A short-form video platform popular for trends, entertainment, and creative content.



Snapchat

A messaging app known for disappearing photos, videos, and visual communication.



YouTube

A global video-sharing platform where users watch, upload, and stream content.



Why are some platforms age-restricted, but others aren't?

For a platform to be classified as 'age-restricted', it has to meet a specific set of conditions. These include things like enabling wide-reaching social interaction, letting users post or share content broadly, and allowing them to connect or engage with large numbers of people.

While popular platforms such as Discord, Roblox, or Messenger do have social features, their core purpose may be gaming, private communication, or smaller-scale interaction, meaning they do not currently meet all of the [conditions](#) required for regulation.

It is also worth noting that this is an evolving list. eSafety will continue to review platforms over time, and platforms currently not restricted might be added at some point in the future if their features change or start to function as a social media platform.

How will social media platforms enforce the rules?

Platforms are expected to use a combination of practical tools and signals to assess whether a user is under 16. This might include looking at:

How long an account has been active

The type of content the account interacts with

Connections with other users who are under 16

Patterns of activity that match school schedules

Photos and videos for facial age analysis

While no system is foolproof, these measures are designed to make it harder for young people to get around the restrictions by using fake details, AI images, deepfakes, or VPNs. Importantly, no one will be made to provide a government-issued ID. It is up to the platforms to offer reasonable alternatives to verify age while respecting privacy.

Why is the social media delay happening?

The aim of the new restriction is to help protect young people from some of the online experiences that can be harder to manage in early adolescence.

Being logged in to a social media account can lead to:

exposure to distressing or misleading content

pressure to keep up with notifications and disappearing messages

disrupted sleep and reduced concentration

the impact of algorithm-driven content that encourages endless scrolling

According to the [eSafety Commission](#), raising the minimum age gives young people extra time to build digital literacy, critical thinking skills and resilience. They also argue that the delay levels the playing field – when everyone under 16 is in the same boat, young people are less likely to feel left out, and parents/carers no longer need to feel like “the only ones” saying no.

What are the likely impacts of the social media delay on young people?

Australia is the first country in the world to introduce this type of legislation around social media access for young people, so the long-term effects are still unknown. Researchers and policymakers will need to closely monitor how these regulations influence adolescent mental health and wellbeing over time. To support this, Black Dog Institute researcher, [Associate Professor Aliza Werner-Seidler](#), is working with the eSafety Commission as an expert adviser to evaluate how the new age-related social media requirements are being implemented and how young people respond over time.

Why this social media delay can feel hard for young people

Insights from Black Dog Institute’s [Future Proofing Study](#) show that 83% of adolescents use social media to stay connected with friends they already know offline. This type of active engagement is linked with stronger social support. Social media is also where many young people learn, discover new interests and keep up with news and world events.

Because these platforms play an important role in daily social and informational life, losing access can feel stressful or unfair. This may be especially challenging for young people who rely on online communities for belonging or who have fewer offline friendships.

What are some practical steps families can take NOW to support young people

Help young people protect their digital memories

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Talk early about staying connected

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Set up alternative communication channels

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Keep community ties alive

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Expect big feelings

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How can parents and carers support their children to develop digital literacy skills LONG TERM?

Changes to social media regulations may help protect young people in the short term, but they are unlikely to remove their desire to connect with others online. Young people will continue to seek out social spaces, and technology companies will continue to create new platforms to meet this demand. Because of this, the most effective long-term approach is to ensure all children learn digital literacy in the same way they learn traditional literacy. Understanding how the online world works, how platforms influence behaviour and how to make informed choices is now an essential life skill for every student.

Digital literacy develops both at home and at school. Below are practical ways families can support this learning at home, followed by the role schools can play and how you can help ensure these opportunities are available.

Strategies families can use at home

Support balance between online and offline life

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Build digital literacy and confidence

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Mentor instead of monitor

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Keep conversations open

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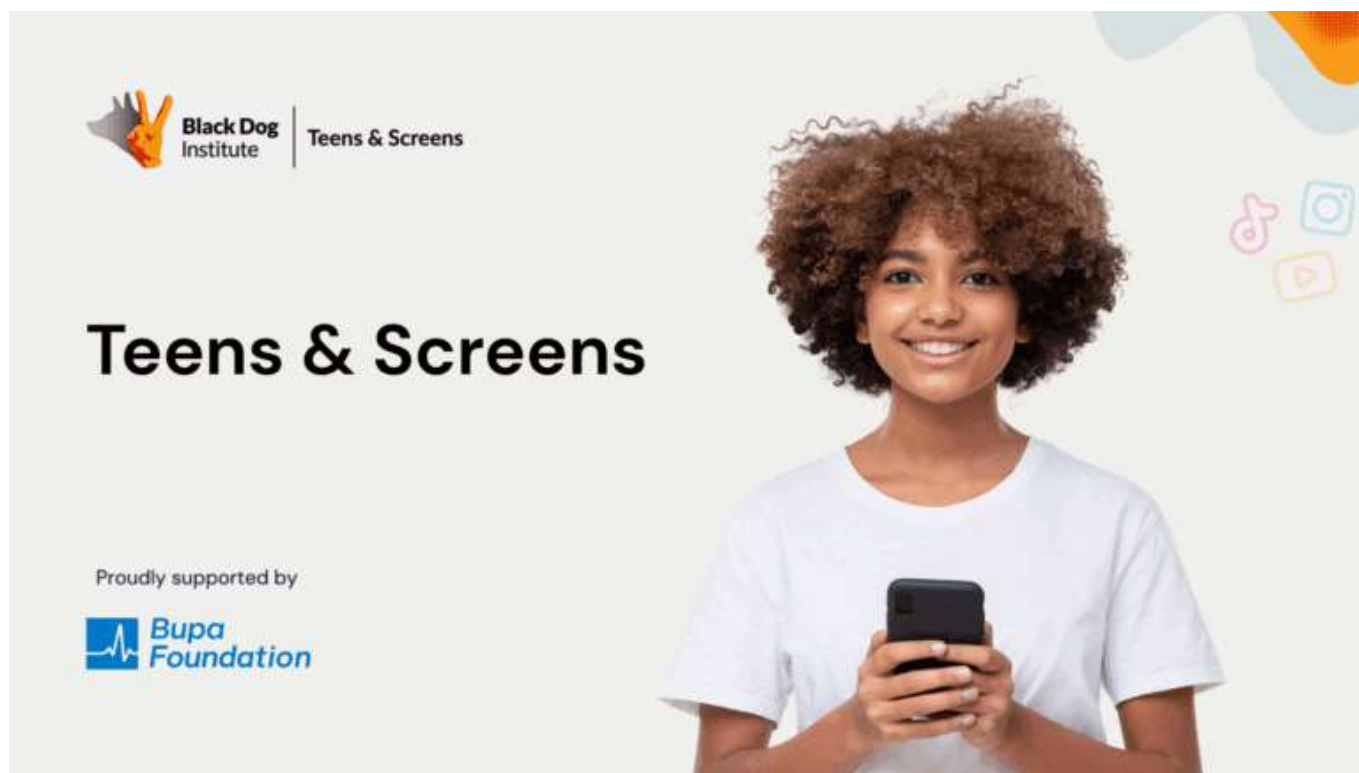
Support digital literacy programs in schools

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Because digital literacy is not yet embedded across the Australian curriculum, Black Dog Institute – supported by the Bupa Foundation – has taken the lead in developing a digital literacy program for school students based on the evidence emerging from our Future Proofing Study. The freely available [Teens and Screens program](#) was co-designed with young people and school teachers and wellbeing staff, and includes practical, ready-to-use lessons for teachers

and wellbeing staff working with students in Years 7–12. It is available now for all secondary schools, and a primary school program is currently being developed.

Parents can help by letting their child's secondary school know that this free program exists and encouraging teachers or wellbeing staff to sign up. Schools can access Teens and Screens directly through Black Dog Institute's website and start using the resources immediately.



Teens & Screens: a free digital literacy program for schools

Help teens develop healthy online habits with the free Teens & Screens digital literacy program. Designed for schools, this evidence-based resource supports students in navigating the digital world safely. Learn more and download your free teaching resources today.

[Learn more >](#)

Quick facts for parents and young people

Which platforms have been age-restricted? Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Threads, TikTok, X, YouTube, Kick and Reddit.

Will my child be allowed to continue using their existing social media accounts? Platforms will be required to remove or deactivate accounts belonging to under-16s.

Will my child be able to reactivate their old account when they turn 16? Possibly, depending on the platform. Young people should not rely on platforms to simply deactivate their accounts and save their data. It's recommended that they download any data they want to save, including connections, posts, chats, photos and videos, before 10 December.

Will young people or parents get in trouble for bypassing the age rules? There are no penalties for young people who access an age-restricted platform, nor for their parents or carers. The responsibility sits with the platforms.

Will my child still be able to see social media content without an account? Yes, young people will still be able to see publicly available social media content that doesn't require being logged into an account.

Where can I find the latest information about the regulations? eSafety Commissioner website <https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/industry-regulation/social-media-age-restrictions>

What does the research say about social media and teen mental health?

The relationship between social media and mental health is complex, and research suggests it's not as simple as screen time causing harm. Some online behaviours, like connecting with friends or accessing educational resources, can support wellbeing, while others, such as passive scrolling, social comparison, or exposure to harmful content, may increase risk.

Researchers at the Black Dog Institute study adolescent mental health, including the impact of screen use, through the [Future Proofing Study](#), Australia's largest and most comprehensive long-term study of teen mental health. Since 2019, more than 6,300 young people from 134 schools have been surveyed and they are helping us understand how everyday experiences shape wellbeing over time. These findings are now informing education and health policy to better support young people and their families.

Key Future Proofing Study findings about screen use

Connection is generally positive: 83% of teens said they use social media to connect with friends. This type of active engagement, communicating with people known in real life, was associated with lower symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Passive scrolling is often reported alongside lower mood or poorer sleep: Teens who primarily scroll or view content without interacting are more likely to report higher symptoms of depression, anxiety, sleep problems, and disordered eating.

Not all social media platforms are equal: Despite common concerns, higher daily use of Snapchat, a messaging-focused app, was not associated with increased depression, anxiety, insomnia, or disordered eating in teens.

Screen use varies among subgroups:

Female, heterosexual, and neurotypical adolescents with higher school connectedness are more likely to use social media to communicate with known peers.

Gender-diverse, sexuality-diverse, and neurodivergent adolescents are more likely to use social media to interact with people they met online.

Some teens are more vulnerable: Teens who are more vulnerable to mental health problems are more likely to seek emotional validation on social media, engage in negative social comparison, or have strong expectations around responsiveness (e.g., likes or replies).

Total screen time is only part of the picture: Teens using screens for more than five hours a day were more likely to report symptoms of depression (22%) and anxiety (21%). In contrast, those using screens for under one hour a day had significantly lower rates (5% and 3% respectively). While it might seem simple, these results are only based on one point in time and do not prove that screen use causes poor mental health, as it could also be the case that those who are already experiencing mental health difficulties are using screens more each day.

Every teen's relationship with the online world is different, and their online experiences are deeply personalised. Still, there are patterns worth paying attention to, and small changes that can make a big difference.

Resources

You don't need to have all the answers. What matters is creating space for open conversations. With the right tools and guidance, parents and carers can help young people build more balanced relationships with screens and feel supported in their mental health.

For more practical tips and expert support, check out:

[Nine strategies to help you support your teen in an online world](#)

[Screen time and teen mental health: Insights & tips for parents](#)

[What does the research say about teens, screens, and mental health?](#)

For resources on the social media ban:



Help teens manage low mood with ClearlyMe

ClearlyMe is a free mental health app for adolescents aged 12–17. It offers bite-sized activities and real-life strategies to help teens manage negative thoughts and build coping skills.

[EXPLORE CLEARLYME](#)



Support healthy sleep with Sleep Ninja

Sleep Ninja is a free, evidence-based app that helps teens build better sleep habits and improve sleep quality. Developed with experts and young people, it's available now on the App Store and Google Play

TRY SLEEP NINJA

Do you need extra support or someone to talk to right now?

[Kids Helpline](#) or call [1800 55 1800](#) (for 5- to 25-year-olds, including 24/7 phone and online support)

[Headspace](#) or call [1800 650 890](#) (for 12- to 25-year-olds, or anyone concerned about a young person aged 12 to 25)

If you are in an emergency or need immediate assistance, contact emergency services on [000](#).

If you need to speak to someone urgently, call Lifeline [13 11 14](#) or Suicide Call Back Service [1300 659 467](#).

You might be interested in these

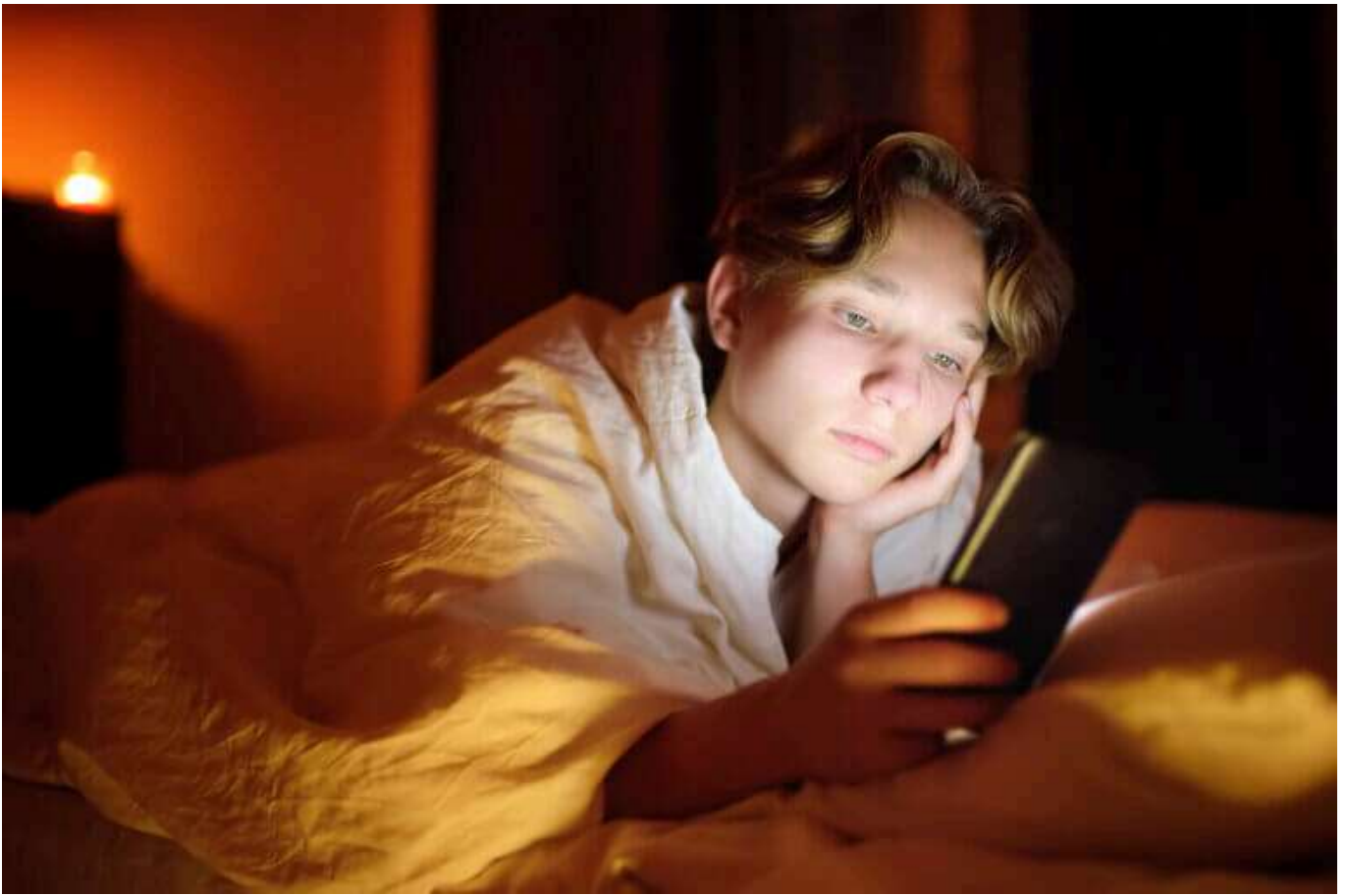


4 February 2026

UNICEF highlights Culture Dose for Kids supporting children through climate-related trauma

Black Dog Institute's Culture Dose for Kids program has been recognised by UNICEF as a global case study for supporting children experiencing climate-related trauma.

[Learn more >](#)



8 August 2025

Sleep, teens and mental health: what parents need to know

Discover why sleep is vital for teen mental health, the common causes of sleep problems, and practical tips for parents to support better sleep habits.

[Learn more >](#)



Thinking of using AI for mental health support? Here's what to consider first

AI chatbots are being used for mental health support, but are they safe? Learn the risks, limitations, and how to use them wisely.

[Learn more >](#)



The Black Dog Institute acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first inhabitants of this nation and the traditional custodians of the lands where we live, learn and work.

We recognise all Australian communities who, through their lived experience, help to guide the research and resources developed at the Black Dog Institute.

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