



Date created: May 9, 2023

APA panel issues recommendations for adolescent social media use

WASHINGTON - A presidential panel of the American Psychological Association has issued recommendations for the use of social media by adolescents, noting that while these platforms can promote healthy socialization, their use should be preceded by training in social media literacy to ensure that youth have skills that will maximize the chances for balanced, safe and meaningful experiences.

“Social media is neither inherently harmful nor beneficial to our youth,” said APA President Thema Bryant, PhD. “But because young people mature at different rates, some are more vulnerable than others to the content and features on many social media platforms that science has demonstrated can influence healthy development.

“Just as we require young people to be trained in order to get a driver’s license, our youth need instruction in the safe and healthy use of social media.”

In an effort to provide guidance to educators, parents, policymakers, mental health and health practitioners, technology companies and youths themselves, Bryant formed an advisory panel to examine relevant scientific literature to formulate recommendations to ensure that adolescents develop healthy social media practices. The result is the [American Psychological Association Health](#)

[Advisory on Social Media Use in Adolescence \(/topics/social-media-internet/health-advisory-adolescent-social-media-use\)](/topics/social-media-internet/health-advisory-adolescent-social-media-use), which contains 10 recommendations.

The report also recommends psychological competencies that youth should possess before using social media, plus periodic booster training to minimize the chances for harm and maximize the benefits that social media can provide.

The health advisory notes that not all findings apply equally to all youth. "Scientific findings offer one piece of information that can be used along with knowledge of specific youths' strengths, weaknesses and context to make decisions that are tailored for each teen, family and community," it says. "Age-appropriate use of social media should be based on each adolescent's level of maturity (e.g., self-regulation skills, intellectual development, comprehension of risks, and home environment)."

Among the report's other recommendations:

- Tailor social media use, functionality and permissions to youths' developmental capabilities; designs created for adults may not be appropriate for children.
- For younger kids, adults should monitor social media use, including discussing and coaching around social media content. This should be balanced with youths' appropriate needs for privacy. Autonomy may increase gradually as kids age and gain more digital literacy skills.
- Minimize adolescents' exposure to social media content that depicts illegal or psychologically maladaptive behavior, including content that instructs or encourages youth to engage in self-harm or high-risk behaviors or those that encourage eating-disordered behavior (such as restrictive eating, purging or excessive exercise).