
Common Sense on YouTube

What is YouTube?

YouTube is the most popular place on the Internet for kids to watch or post their personal videos. You can send videos to YouTube from your computer or your cell phone. More than 25 hours of video are posted onto YouTube every hour. Once a video is put on YouTube, anyone can watch it, unless you set a control to limit the audience. You can also write comments about the videos you've posted or watched.

Why is YouTube important?

You can find all kinds of videos on YouTube. There are a lot of silly videos like people singing or making jokes. There are also videos of sports events, concerts, and animals doing crazy things. But there are many videos that may not be OK for your kids. For example, there are thousands of videos showing people fighting or hurting themselves.

YouTube can be a great place for kids to be creative. But kids need to use the site responsibly if they are going to upload a video or comment on someone else's video.

What can parents do?

- » **Go to YouTube and see for yourself.** You will be able to talk about it with your kids more easily after you have looked at it yourself. YouTube postings are best for kids ages 14 and up. YouTube says that kids 13 to 17 are welcome to use the site with permission from a parent or guardian. But you have to decide when you think your kids are ready for it.
- » **Use the Safety Mode.** At the bottom of every YouTube page, you can check a box called Safety Mode that filters your search results. With the Safety Mode on, when you look for videos, you will get very few results that are not okay with you.
- » **Prepare to talk about the videos.** YouTube can expose your kids to things you may not want them to see. A lot of YouTube videos are just fine for them. But some are not, and you may have to talk to them about those videos.
- » **Check your kids' URL history.** If you think your kids are using YouTube without telling you, you can go to the History section on the Internet bar and look at where they have been. If your kids have been to YouTube, ask them what they like about it. Ask if they have ever posted anything. If they have, ask them what they posted. You should also look at your kid's MySpace or Facebook pages and see if there are links (connections) to any of their YouTube postings.
- » **Make sure they know the rules.** Tell your kids not to share any personal information, like their name and address. Videos should never include images of license plates, your house, your kid's bedroom, or your kid's school. Make sure that none of their "tags" (the online names they give themselves) tell their real names, locations, schools, or anything else that could let people find them.
- » **Watch their videos.** If you allow your kids to post videos, ask that they let you look at a video before they post it. They may not agree, but it never hurts to ask. Remind your kids that posting videos can be really fun, but they never know who is watching. YouTube has millions of viewers all over the world.
- » **Be aware of protecting their privacy.** Tell your kids to mark their videos as "private" so that only friends can watch them. You can learn how to do this by going to the "Safety Tips" link at the bottom of all YouTube pages.
- » **Check in.** Telling older kids that they cannot post videos could make them do it secretly. It's better if they show it to you first — even if they don't think you will like it. You want to make sure your kids will come to you if something or someone on the site bothers them. Make sure kids know to come to you if they see something that is filled with hate, sex, or violence. You can report it if they don't want to. YouTube takes care of its own site by removing questionable videos when people tell them. Help your kids to be part of that group to make it safe for everybody.