

# Common Sense on YouTube and Your Kids

## “Broadcast yourself”

It used to be that if kids wanted to watch a scene from their favorite movie or show, they had to wait for it to come on TV or buy a recording. It also used to be that aspiring filmmakers needed thousands of dollars worth of equipment to record their films, and most films were screened only for their friends in their living rooms. Today, kids can access pretty much any video content instantly online, and they can post a video for millions to see within a few minutes, thanks to sites like YouTube.

## Some facts

YouTube remains the No. 1 online video site, according to Nielsen Online.

24 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube every minute (*YouTube, 2010*).

YouTube launched in 2005, and was purchased by Google in fall 2006 for \$1.65 billion.

Kids are supposed to be 13 years old to use YouTube.

YouTube is a great place to showcase creativity.

## What is YouTube?

YouTube is a site that allows users to upload and share original videos. It's a popular place to go to see the latest silly Internet video that everyone's talking about or your kid's favorite music video. The great majority of videos show concert footage, sporting events, bootlegged (illegally recorded) commercial video, and homemade movies. Posting video is simple, and directions are right on the site.

## Why it matters

YouTube is a bit like Google in that anything — from fabulous to icky — can be uploaded or viewed. There's a lot of mature content on YouTube, but kids will more likely view videos of other kids — sometimes performing with their rock bands or acting out in some way. For example, dozens of videos on YouTube show girl fights.

People can also comment on videos they watch. You don't want your kids posting videos that can get them in trouble or hurt other people. Because it's easy to comment on any video, and users can do so anonymously, the comments on even the cleanest of videos can be cruel and rude.

Bottom line? YouTube can be a fabulously creative medium and a place where kids can showcase their lives. But it's only as responsible as the person uploading or commenting on the videos.

## Parent tips for all kids

- » **Go to YouTube and see for yourself.** You will be able to have a much more open and informed discussion with your children once you've seen for yourself what is on the site. YouTube postings are best for 14 and up. The site says that kids 13 to 17 are welcome with permission from a parent or guardian, but you have to decide when you think your kids are ready for it.
- » **Use Safety Mode.** At the bottom of every YouTube page, you can check a box that filters your search results. When Safety Mode is on, you'll get fewer inappropriate results when you search for videos.
- » **Ask your kids if they've visited the site.** If so, ask what they like about it. Have they ever posted anything? If so, what? If you think you're not getting a straight answer, consider checking their browser history or their Facebook page to see if they've posted links to videos.
- » **Be prepared to talk about what comes up.** YouTube can expose your kids to a huge range of human behavior and activities. Sure there are lots of completely innocent videos, but there are also plenty of "iffy" videos. If your kids come across the latter, you should talk to them about what they've seen.
- » **Make sure they know the safety rules.** Tell your kids to protect their identities. No-nos for videos include license plate numbers, images of your house, their bedrooms, or their school. Make sure that none of their "tags" (search identifiers) reveal their real names, locations, schools, or anything else that could lead people to your door.
- » **Watch their videos.** If you allow your kids to post, tell them you want to check out their videos before they are posted. 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 privacy concerns.** 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.** Forbidding teens to post may force them underground. You want to make sure your kids feel comfortable coming to you if something or someone on the site bothers them. Make sure kids know to check in with you if they see something that's hateful, pornographic, or violent; you can report it, if they don't want to. YouTube is a self-policing site, so encourage your kids to make it safe for others.