



# 10 reasons that your preteen should not be on Facebook:



facebook

- 1. Helping your preteen create a Facebook account is helping them lie** about their age to skirt the 13-year-old age minimum. Not only are you teaching your child that *you* think it's okay to fudge the truth sometimes, you're setting a dangerous precedent that if you think you know better than the rule, you can break it.
- 2. Facebook for youngsters may delay development.** Young kids need unstructured play, outdoor time, hands-on activities, and face-to-face interactions with other kids. It's part of their development. Getting them involved in the addictive world of Facebook too young may stunt their growth in more ways than one. It also opens the door to a more sedentary lifestyle, which contributes to childhood obesity.
- 3. Preteens aren't usually aware of malware.** There are lots of ways for your computer to get infected with viruses, spyware, and other malicious software on social networking sites like Facebook, and kids who haven't even hit their teens yet have little to no understanding of what malware is or how to avoid it.
- 4. Cyberbullying can be particularly devastating to preteens.** Cyberbullying can have very destructive outcomes for kids of any age. But as a general rule: the younger the victim, the less capable they are of handling cyberbullying. Kids in the 6-12 age range in particular tend to take words literally and receive criticism very personally.
- 5. Less mature kids might join in the cyberbullying, too.** Young kids are very susceptible to just going with the crowd, and that goes double when the anonymity of the Internet is involved. Preteens may be more likely to follow the lead of peers who are making rude comments online.
- 6. Facebook can interfere with school and concentration.** In elementary school, kids are developing skills like how to study and do homework. Introducing Facebook during this critical time could disrupt solid study patterns and get them in the habit of trying to social network and do homework simultaneously.

**7. Preteens don't understand the dangers of cyberpredators.** Facebook is one of a child predator's favorite places to troll. Kids who may not have even reached puberty understand very little about the motivations of a child predator, or about the real danger in speaking to online strangers.

**8. Facebook exposes kids to adult content.** The majority of Facebook's users are older teens and adults who may post suggestive photos or use inappropriate language for your under-13 child to see or hear. If your preteen absolutely needs to social network, many parents prefer more child-oriented sites like Togetherville for this reason.

**9. Preteens don't have the judgment to know what's okay and not okay to post.** Knowing what you can and can't say online requires a pretty complex thought process. You have to think ahead (will I want this thought immortalized in the cybersphere?), think about the rest of the cybercitizens of the world (could someone other than my intended recipient find this?), and think about the potential consequences of what you post (is this information personal or identifying in any way?) Most 12-year-olds don't have the capacity to process all these thoughts every time they post.

**10. Friends lists can be difficult for young kids to manage.** Preteens are likely to see the entire world as their "friends," so explaining to a 10-year-old who it's okay (and not okay) to friend online can be tricky. Many preteens would not know how to handle a friend request from someone they didn't know.

As with any age minimum, it's up for debate whether 13 is too low or too high a requirement for joining Facebook. Some children may be mature enough to handle it earlier than others. Some older teens (and even adults) aren't mature enough to use Facebook responsibly. And there is nothing magical about the age of 13 that turns naïve children into Internet-savvy social networkers.

If you think your preteen is ready (and you're okay with helping them lie about their age,) you might get them started on Facebook. But in general, most preteens aren't ready to handle the world of social networking and all its implications. Most parents should make their child wait until at least the age of 13 – and maybe even longer.