



IS YOUR CHILD  
READY FOR



## 1. IS YOUR CHILD 13 YEARS OR OLDER?

The reason children are meant to be aged 13 or over to open a social media account is because of the US Children's Online Privacy Protection Act 1998. Once you hit 13, all those big companies like Snapchat and Facebook (who own Instagram and WhatsApp) can get their hands on your private information which is what they really want, so they can sell our information and/or use it to lure in advertisers. But remember, that age requirement doesn't mean that at 13 years old kids are magically mature enough to handle having social media and smart phones. But 13 is the minimum age required by US law.



## 2. HAVE THEY FOUND THEIR TRIBE?

Your tribe are those people in life who are true friends to you: loyal, kind and trustworthy. These are the friends who love you for who you are and who have your back. Someone who is from your tribe shares your values and treats you with respect. The quality of your online experience is often dictated by the quality of your friendships. If your friends routinely put you down, exclude you and make fun of you in person you can bet that's what will be happening online. And teenagers have a habit (like some adults) of using social media as a vehicle for public shaming. If you have great friends (or even just ONE great friend) it makes all the difference online. Surround yourself with people who share your values and who call forth your best self.



## 3. WHAT DO THEY STAND FOR?

Nothing calls our values and beliefs into question like being online. Are you clear about what your values are as a human being? Do you support racism? Sexism? Homophobia? Are you okay or uncomfortable with seeing people mocked or belittled online? If someone with a disability is being made fun of - is that okay with you? What about sexist comments about women? Or racist jokes? If you see a post where a classmate is being bullied what will you do? Why not make a list of your personal values and stick it up at your desk so you can see it regularly. And think about what you're going to do when someone tags you into a meme or post that goes against your values. Come up with strategies of how to handle those situations NOW before they happen online. Every comment, like and share that you make online tells the world who you are and what you stand for.



## 4. ARE THEY RESILIENT?

Here's something to remember --- jerks and bullies thrive online. One thing is guaranteed when you have a social media account and it's that you'll have some tough moments. You'll log on and see parties you weren't invited to, mean comments will be hurled your way, unflattering photos will be posted of you. If you tend to be a sensitive soul this is going to be hard to take - you may need to wait before you open a social media account. Go in knowing it can be a despair and compare cycle and that you'll be confronted with the 'highlights' reel of everyone else's life. If that's going to leave you feeling left out or blue --- I'd definitely wait another few months and reassess.

