

## Understanding the social media ban.



### Social media age restrictions

As of 10 December 2025, many social media platforms are not allowed to let Australians under 16 have an account. The information on this page will help you understand why, and how you can help young people under the age of 16 through this change.

### Quick facts

- **As of 10 December 2025** [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Kick](#), [Reddit](#), [Snapchat](#), [Threads](#), [TikTok](#), [Twitch](#), [X](#) and [YouTube](#) are required to take reasonable steps to prevent Australians under 16 from having accounts on their platforms. See the [latest list](#).
- Young people under the age of 16 are still allowed to see publicly available social media content that doesn't require logging into an account.
- Most standalone gaming and messaging apps, as well as many services that support health and education, are not affected by the new law.
- There are no penalties for under-16s who access an account on an age-restricted social media platform, or for their parents or carers. This is about making the platforms take greater responsibility for the safety of children – they face penalties of up to \$49.5 million if they don't take reasonable steps to implement the changes.

### Why the change?

The age restrictions aim to protect under-16s from pressures and risks they can be exposed to while logged in to social media accounts. These come from design features in the platforms that:

- encourage them to spend too much time on screens – for example, by prompting them with streams of notifications and alerts, and pressuring them to view disappearing content
- increase the likelihood of exposure to negative, upsetting or manipulative content served up in their feeds by algorithms.

These features have been linked to harms to health and wellbeing – including increased stress levels, and reduced sleep and concentration.

Of course, they are not the only risks on social media. Young people can also be exposed to harmful conduct such as cyberbullying, being asked for nudes and being sent pornography or violent material.

The age restrictions are a delay, not a ban. You don't have to say 'yes' or 'no' to social media accounts, instead you can say 'not yet', knowing other under-16s are also being prevented from having accounts so your child won't be missing out.



The change gives you extra time to talk about online safety and wellbeing with your child, to help them prepare for the risks and pressures of social media when they turn 16. It's a breathing space for them to build digital, social and emotional skills, and to understand the importance of reaching out for help if things go wrong.

### What will happen to the accounts of under-16s?

If an age-restricted platform suspects or knows that a user is under 16, it should stop them using the account on that platform or creating a new one for it. It is meant to do this in a way that is as safe and supportive as possible, as set out in eSafety's [regulatory guidelines](#).

eSafety has suggested that platforms give clear instructions on how under-16s can download, transfer or access their data, like saving their favourite posts, photos and important contacts.

Some platforms could allow under-16s to just deactivate their accounts, so they can start using them again with all their existing data when they turn 16. But young people shouldn't rely on platforms to provide this option. It's best that they download any data they want to save, including connections, posts, chats, photos and videos – as soon as possible.

To find out more about how to prepare, under-16s can:

- visit the 'Help' or 'Support' section on the platform
- check [The eSafety Guide](#) for advice on downloading content and protecting their personal information on common platforms, games, apps and sites
- follow the tips in eSafety's [Get-ready guide and action plan for under-16s](#), including how to save their most precious data and content.

**Note:** Under-16s are still able to scroll social media content that doesn't require being logged into an account. For example, most content is currently available to view on [YouTube](#) without holding an account. Another example is that anyone can search for and view some of [Facebook](#)'s content, such as the landing pages of businesses or services that use it as their host platform.

**If your under-16 is an international student in Australia, they can find advice on [how the social media age restriction will affect them](#).**

### How can users know if a request for proof of age is legitimate or a scam?

Age-restricted social media platforms are asking users for proof of age. But scammers may try to steal money or personal information by sending fake requests to people of all ages. They are likely to create a sense of urgency, threatening to delete an account if the user doesn't act quickly.

Different social media platforms are using different methods to check age, so it's important only to trust the information that each platform provides about:

- the age-check steps their account holders have to take
- the information their account holders have to give
- whether the platform is using another company to do its checks.

**You (or your child) should go directly to each platform's 'Help' or 'Support' section, via your browser or the app. If you (or your child) receive a text, email or any other message about proving your age, stop and think carefully. Warn**



**your child not to click on links or download any attachments or apps unless they're from a verified source.**

We will also update [The eSafety Guide](#) with relevant links to age assurance information when platforms provide them.

### **Someone has offered to help my child get around the age restrictions. Is that a scam?**

Yes, it could be a scam.

The scammer may be after money or personal information. Or they may want to send nudes or get sexual online – this can be '[grooming](#)' by a sexual abuser, or a set up for '[sextortion](#)' by someone who plans to blackmail over the sexual content.

If someone says they will give your child a fake ID or direct access to an age-verified account, the advice is:

- DO NOT PAY
- DO NOT send them nudes or get sexual with them online
- DO NOT send personal information that could be used to access your accounts or steal your identity.

It's unlikely they will give your child what they've promised, or they may give them access to an account or 'proof of age' that doesn't work. Even if they do give them something that works, they may threaten to report them unless they send more money or content.

### **Won't under-16s move to other types of platforms that are just as dangerous?**

No online platform or service is risk-free, especially for children.

Online harms can also happen on the alternative sites and apps that are not age-restricted. Under-16s may move to these for connection, expression, information and entertainment after losing social media accounts. This includes messaging and gaming platforms.

To combat this, Australia has enforceable [Online Safety Codes and Standards](#) that require a broad range of online services to implement safety protections to prevent and remove the most harmful illegal content and activity, including sexual abuse of children and encouragement of terrorism. The codes and standards also require the online industry to prevent children from accessing or being exposed to age-inappropriate material such as pornography, and to ensure that all users have effective tools, information, and options to limit access to harmful content.

In addition, eSafety is continuing to watch out for and assess technological changes, updates to online tools and features, and the emergence of new services. If a platform experiences a significant increase in users under the age of 16 or a change in the way it's being used, it must report this to eSafety as part of its self-assessment process. Under our industry compliance activities, eSafety will also actively monitor for signs of user movement from age-restricted platforms to alternative apps and services. This means platforms that are not age-restricted as of 10 December 2025 may become age-restricted later.



## How can under-16s be stopped from finding a way around the age restrictions?

We know that some under-16s may find their way around the age restrictions, like some get around restrictions on cigarettes and alcohol.

But age-restricted platforms have to take steps to stop under-16s getting around the law. This includes having ways to prevent under-16s from faking their age by using false identity documents, AI tools or deepfakes. It also means trying to stop under-16s from using VPNs to pretend to be outside Australia.

Platforms may assess age-related signals which can help work out if someone is under 16. These signals can include:

- how long an account has been active
- whether the account holder interacts with content targeted at children under 16
- analysis of the language level and style used by the account holder and the people they interact with
- visual checks, such as facial age analysis of the account holder's photos and videos
- audio analysis, such as age estimation of the voice of the account holder
- activity patterns consistent with school schedules
- connections with other users who appear to be under 16
- membership in youth-focused groups, forums or communities.

Platforms may also use location-based signals which can help work out if an account holder usually lives in Australia and could be using a VPN to pretend they don't.

These signals can include:

- IP address(es)
- GPS or other location services
- device language and time settings
- a device identifier
- an Australian phone number
- app store or operating system or account settings
- photos, tags, connections, engagement or activity.

Evidence of these age and location signals is expected to trigger the age assurance process, or review of an account if it has already been checked.

**If your child is asked to pay a fine for being on social media while they're under-16 it's a scam. They should NOT PAY. Check [Scamwatch](#) External link for more information.**

## Can I report an under-16 for being on social media?

Reports can be made to the platforms.

Age-restricted social media platforms should provide easy pathways for people to report that they believe an account holder is under 16, to trigger an age check. But platforms should also provide a way for users who are 16+ to appeal if they are flagged or removed by mistake or due to a false report.



If an under-16 has an account on an age-restricted social media platform, they are not breaking the law and no criminal charges or fines apply to them or their family because of this. It's only age-restricted social media platforms that face penalties if they fail to take reasonable steps to stop under-16s creating or having accounts.

**This means that if your under-16 receives a request to pay a fine for being under 16 or for not having a verified account, it's a scam – DO NOT PAY.**  
(See [ScamwatchExternal link](#))

There's no mandatory reporting of users under 16 – for parents, educators or police. However, reporting use by an under-16 may help the platform to understand how they're getting around age checks, so it can tighten safety protections for all.

### **My child still has an account. Does that mean they won't ever lose access to it?**

**No, their account could still be removed or deactivated at any time.**

There are various reasons why under-16s may lose account access. These are some examples:

- Implementing fair and accurate age check processes may take platforms several days or even weeks.
- Age-restricted platforms are expected to re-check the age of an account holder if there are signals that it's likely the user is under 16 – even if they have already passed an age check.
- Other people can report to the platform that a user is under 16, which may trigger an age check.
- A platform that's not currently age-restricted could be reassessed if there's a change to its features or the way it's used.

Some of the signals that platforms may check include:

- whether the account holder interacts with content targeted at children under 16
- analysis of the language level and style used by the account holder and the people they interact with
- visual content analysis (such as facial age analysis performed on photos and videos uploaded to the platform)
- audio analysis, such as age estimation of the voice of the account holder
- activity patterns consistent with school schedules
- connections with other users who appear to be under 16
- membership in youth-focused groups, forums or communities.

**If your under-16 still has any social media accounts, you don't have to wait for the platforms to act. You can:**

- **have a conversation with your child about the age restrictions, explaining they're designed to help protect people their age**
- **follow the steps in the next FAQ 'How can I help my child prepare for losing social media accounts?'**
- **delete the apps with your child.**

### **How can I help my child prepare for losing social media accounts?**



If your under-16 still has any accounts on age-restricted social media platforms, they may still lose access to them before they turn 16. (For more information, see the previous FAQ: My child still has an account. Does that mean they won't ever lose it?)

As a parent or carer, you can support your child by talking calmly and openly about the age restrictions. Aim to make them feel heard by asking what they have seen happening among their friends and classmates and how they feel about it. You can use our [conversation starters](#) as a guide.

Empowering under-16s to take practical actions to prepare can also help reduce stress.

**Step 1:** Ask them which platforms, people, groups, communities and services are most important to them and help them work out alternative ways to stay connected. This may include swapping phone numbers with close friends.

**Step 2:** Help them download and save their digital data for each platform, including contacts and memories, in case their platform deletes their account instead of just deactivating it until they turn 16.

**Step 3:** Discuss how they can begin winding back their social media use now – and make this a family effort by role-modelling the shift.

**Step 4:** Let them know there are ways to get more support if they need it – suggest they bookmark eSafety's page for young people [I need help: Something has happened online](#).

### **I'm worried the change is going to cause a lot of conflict. How should I handle it?**

You're not alone. Many parents and carers are worried about how under-16s will react to no longer having access to social media accounts.

It's common for tensions to rise when people are coping with change – especially if they don't want it to happen. Boredom can cause stress and irritability, too.

Also, it's likely that many under-16s have siblings, friends or classmates who are older and still using social media accounts – or know other under-16s who are trying to get around the law. This may cause resentment and conflict within social groups and families.

It can be even more complicated if there are different approaches and rules in different homes or settings where your child is cared for, or in their friends' homes. It's important to keep the focus on your child's wellbeing, remembering that conflict can be stressful for them too.

### **You don't have to work this out on your own.**

You can try the suggestions in these FAQs: 'What can I do now to help my family prepare?' and 'I don't think my child will cope with losing important connections and support. What should I do?'

You can also check in with other parents, your own friends, the communities you belong to and your child's school. It may even be possible to come up with ideas together that ease the pressure for everyone.



For example:

- talk with other parents or carers about the age restrictions, including their expectations, how they feel about the change and how they're approaching it with their own children
- share the information you've learnt from eSafety, to help others understand what's happening, why, and what they can do
- set clear agreements – for example for sleepovers or shared device use
- organise joint activities or events to help relieve the boredom for under-16s withdrawing from social media accounts
- check in with each other regularly to stay aligned and discuss what to do about problems.

**If things become too difficult to manage, there's help available** – for your child, your family, and for you.

**If you or your child are at risk of harm right now call Triple Zero (000).**

These are some other options:

- [Counselling and support services](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)External link
- [Parentline](#)External link
- [Raising Children Network](#)External link
- [Family Relationships Advice Line](#)External link
- [A family mediation service](#)External link
- Your child's school counsellor
- Your local doctor or community nurse

**It may be useful to seek professional help as a parent** – [ReachOut](#)External link has advice (including talking with someone you trust, a counsellor or online support service, or a community forum). It also has [coaching for parents and carers of teens](#)External link and advice on [dealing with family conflict](#)External link and [helping young people cope with change](#)

**I don't think my child is coping with losing important connections and support. What should I do?**

**If your child is at risk of self-harm right now call Triple Zero (000).**

Like most of us, young people have been using social media in many different ways – including connecting with friends, keeping up with their interests, expressing themselves, learning about things and being entertained.

They've also been able to use it to explore who they are (or want to be), find a community, connect with a support network and express their identity.

**Some under-16s are likely to find losing account access harder than others** – especially if they've been using social media as their main way of connecting and getting support. For example, it may not be easy to socialise with others in person because of distance, disability, language barriers or feeling uncomfortable about being themselves in public.

They may find it helpful to explore these platforms:



- [My CircleExternal link](#) is a free, private, safe and confidential social forum for 12- to 25-year-olds that supports mental health.
- [Beyond Blue forumsExternal link](#) are open to under-16s – there's even one where they can [discuss how they're feeling about the social media age restrictionsExternal link](#).

They can also check these ReachOut pages for lists of national, state and territory-based services and ways to connect:

- [Support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peopleExternal link](#)
- [Ways to connect with community if you're a First Nations young personExternal link](#)
- [Yarn upExternal link](#) – a space where young First Nations people access wellbeing resources and support
- [Support services for culturally and linguistically diverse young peopleExternal link](#)
- [Culturally diverse LGBTQIA+ support services and groupsExternal link](#)
- [LGBTQIA+ support servicesExternal link](#).

eSafety also has information for young people on [Being out, transgender or gender diverse online](#).

It may be hard to talk about the impacts of the age restrictions with your child, so you could try using eSafety's sample [conversation starters](#) to raise the issue. There's also a [Get-ready guide](#) you can use to help under-16s make practical preparations for the change, or they can fill out their [own action plan](#) with alternative ways to stay in touch with important people, communities and services.

**Let them know it's always OK to reach out for help if they're struggling.** Keep in mind they may not be comfortable about telling you, so together you could agree on other adults they can trust. You could also show them where to look up the free, confidential services listed on eSafety's '[I need help](#)' page for young people.

Some behavioural changes are a normal part of growing up, but they could also be a warning that you need to check how your child is coping:

- Sudden changes in mood
- Avoiding conversations about their online activity
- Becoming secretive with devices
- Reduced participation in their usual interests or activities
- School performance dropping
- Tiredness, sleep disturbance, headaches, eye strain
- Changes in eating patterns
- Reduced personal hygiene
- Obsession with particular websites or games
- Extreme anger when being asked to take a break from online activity
- Appearing anxious or irritable when away from the computer
- Becoming quieter or withdrawn from friends and family

**[What if something goes wrong and my under-16 is on an age-restricted platform?](#)**



No matter how old your child is, if they have a harmful experience online they should reach out for support – even if they're under 16 and it happens on an age-restricted social media platform. They won't get into trouble for being on the platform.

eSafety's focus is on ensuring young people are safe online, and that harmful material is removed or threats against them are stopped. If we receive a report of [cyberbullying](#) or [image-based abuse](#) (sharing, or threatened sharing, of intimate images or videos) and it happened on an age-restricted platform, we will not alert the platform that the account is held by an under-16 and that action should be taken to comply with the age restrictions. The onus is on the platforms to take reasonable steps to identify and remove or deactivate accounts of under-16s.

There's a chance that an age-restricted platform may find out the age of the people involved through engagement with eSafety or through their own enquiries and remove or deactivate accounts of any under-16s. But we strongly urge parents to encourage under-16s to [report harm](#) anyway, so they can be protected.

eSafety's '[I need help](#)' page for young people has more detailed information and guidance on what your child can do if something goes wrong online. You can suggest they bookmark the page, in case you're not around to help them.

If they're nervous about reporting to eSafety, they can speak first with a free, confidential support service like [Kids HelplineExternal link](#) (24/7, for 5- to 25-year-olds) or [headspaceExternal link](#) (for 12- to 25-year-olds), [Beyond BlueExternal link](#) (24/7, for all ages), or choose another [counselling or support service](#).

### **Can under-16s access YouTube using their school email address?**

Google is responsible for preventing under 16s from having their own accounts for purposes of accessing [YouTube](#), regardless of whether or not those accounts are 'condoned' or 'filtered' by schools.

Some learning management systems allow teachers to embed public video content from other platforms, such as YouTube. If the content is publicly available and does not require the student to log into an age-restricted social media platform, students are still allowed to watch this content.

### **How are accounts handled when they're used for several services, including one with age restrictions?**

In these circumstances, it is up to the companies to determine how to deal with accounts that are used to log into multiple services. eSafety's focus is on ensuring companies are preventing under-16s from using their accounts to log into age-restricted social media platforms, as opposed to removing accounts that are used to access a broader range of services.

### **How can people 16+ prove their age?**

Various technologies can be used to check age, when someone is signing up for an account or later. The methods used by age-restricted social media platforms have to meet the [regulatory requirements](#) and respect privacy laws and digital rights.



To reduce the risk of scams, platforms should clearly communicate the age-check steps account holders have to take, the information they have to give, and whether the platform is using a third-party age assurance provider – their ‘Help’ or ‘Support’ sections are a good place to look for latest details. We will also be updating [The eSafety Guide](#) with relevant links.

It’s important to know that platforms can no longer just rely on a user providing a birthdate at account sign up. The platforms are expected to have ways to stop users faking their age using false identity documents, AI tools or deepfakes. They are also expected to try to stop under-16s from using VPNs to pretend to be outside Australia.

No Australian will be forced to provide a government-issued ID or use an Australian Government accredited digital ID service to prove their age. Age-restricted social media platforms must offer reasonable alternatives to users.

Platforms have to comply with the Online Safety Act and the Privacy Act (including the Australian Privacy Principles) in handling any personal information they collect to check that a user is 16 or older. Personal information collected for this purpose can only be used for other purposes (like marketing) in certain circumstances, such as with the consent of the user. The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner has provided [guidance on privacy](#)[External link](#).

There is a chance that some users who are 16+ may have their accounts removed or deactivated in error. Age-restricted platforms are expected to have processes to correct errors if someone is mistakenly missed by or included in the restrictions, so no one account is removed or deactivated unfairly. Platforms should provide clear instructions about how to request a review if a user has been age-restricted by mistake, as well as easy ways for people to report underage accounts.

**If someone offers to sell your child a fake ID or direct access to an age-verified account, it’s probably a scam. They should NOT PAY or give them personal information. Check [Scamwatch](#) for more information.**

#### **My under-16 isn’t on social media. Could the changes still affect them?**

If your child doesn’t currently have any social media accounts, they won’t be directly affected by the age restrictions. However, 2025 [research](#)[External link](#) by eSafety shows some under-16s access social media services without a parent knowing. One in 10 (10%) children aged 8 to 12 said their parent or carer didn’t know about at least one of their social media accounts.

Also, your child could be affected by the impacts of age-restrictions on friends and classmates.

This means it’s still a good idea to talk with your under-16 about the social media restrictions, what it means for them, and the ways young people can stay connected or get help if they’re not coping with the change. Check eSafety’s [Get-ready guide for parents and carers](#) for more tips.

#### **My child has built a significant social media presence that provides them with income. How will this change impact them?**



Age-restricted social media platforms are required to prevent under-16s from having accounts.

The onus is on the platforms to comply with the legislation and not on children, or their parents. If a platform considers that an account is held by a user under 16, the account may be removed or deactivated.

Many online services also have their own rules, guidelines, and terms of use about account management and user behaviour. These may include rules about running accounts for other people. You can check these rules directly with the platform to see if they allow parents or guardians to manage accounts on behalf of children who are too young to hold their own accounts.

The age restrictions are not aimed to punish or silence under-16s, but to protect them from the pressures and risks that come with having social media accounts. Under-16s can still share their perspectives in meaningful ways in alternative spaces both online and offline.

#### **My child uses an account in my name. Will it be removed or deactivated?**

There are cases where accounts for under-16s are managed by a parent or adult, often to help build a profile for activities such as sport or music.

Age-restricted platforms are required to take reasonable steps to prevent under-16s from having accounts, so if a platform is satisfied that an account is held by a user under 16, and not their parent or another adult, the account should be removed or deactivated.

Many online services also have their own rules, guidelines, and terms of use for account management and user behaviour. These may include rules about running accounts for other people. You can check these rules directly with the platform.

#### **Information sourced from**

- [www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)
- <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/resources/esafety-kids/>
- [www.scamwatch.gov.au](http://www.scamwatch.gov.au)