

Empowering young people with additional learning needs to connect safely online.

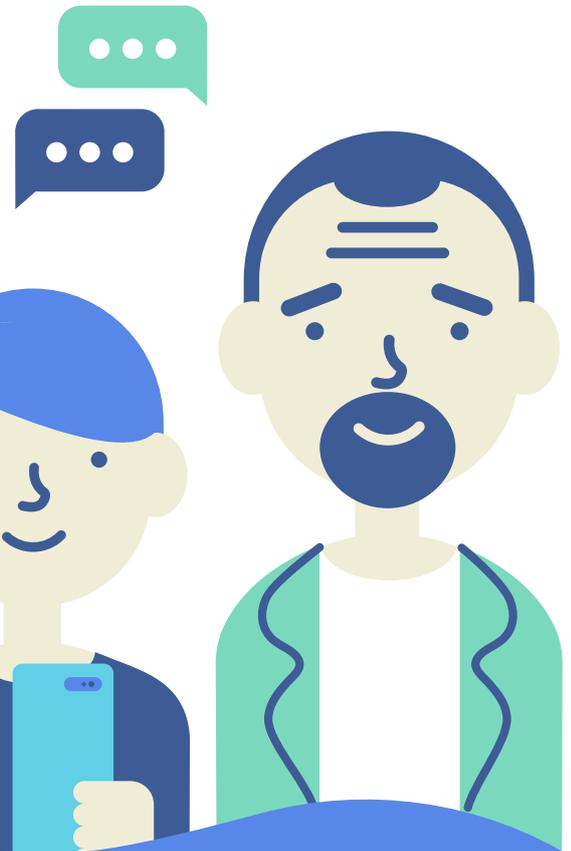
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# 5 things to consider before your child creates a social media account

Connecting online with others can offer children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) an opportunity to find their tribe online and share their own experiences.

If your child is asking to create a social media account, you may have mixed feelings about saying yes or no. Before you make a decision, here are 5 things to consider.



## 1. Minimum age

### Are they old enough to use the app?

Check the minimum age of the app they'd like to use. You'll find that the minimum age of most apps is 13 years old. However, it's estimated that half of 11-12-year-olds from the UK have access to their own social media accounts.

If your child's **developmental age** makes it hard for them to understand how to deal with potential risks, consider safer social apps made for children under 13.

## 2. Intentions

### Why does your child want to create an account?

Ask them why they'd like to connect with others online and consider:

- Is it because **they find it hard to talk to people face-to-face**?
- Are they **feeling isolated or lonely**?
- Do they find it **easier to communicate** by text or video?
- **Do they have physical barriers** that make it harder to get out and make friends?
- Do they want to keep in touch **with friends that may live far away**?
- Is it because **they feel the pressure** to do what other children are doing at their age?
- Are they looking to **raise awareness of a good cause**?
- **Do they want to chat** with others while gaming online?
- Are they **keen to share their talents** with others?
- Do they want to connect with their friends **like everyone else**?

Getting a better understanding of the reasons why they want an account will help you give them the right support and guidance if you decide to say yes.



## 3. Managing risks online

### Is your child well prepared for the risks they may face?

**Our research shows that children and young people with SEND are more likely to experience risks online.** One way to think about those risks is to consider who they will be coming into contact with – and what those potential strangers may ask of your child.

#### Think about:

- Whether they have the **ability to understand the risks** they may be exposed to?
- **Can they learn what steps to take** if they encounter risks and how to deal with them?
- Are they **emotionally mature**?

Although your child may be old enough to have a social media account, they may lack the emotional maturity and ability to deal with these potential risks.

