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Advice for
young people:

Addressing the pressure to be perfect toolkit



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Foreword

By speaking to thousands of children and young people across the UK each year, we are in the unique position of hearing what excites, inspires, challenges and worries them about their online lives. For many young people we listen to, knowing how to use and navigate social media is a life skill. Yet, it is not one that is innate and young people are also asking for support, guidance and reassurance. The challenges that they face are varied, from meanness or bullying online, but also the pressures on them to present themselves in a particular way.

For Safer Internet Day 2020 we decided to focus on this issue of online identity. How free are young people to be themselves and what limitations do they feel in their self-expression?

By surveying over 2000 8-17-year-olds for our Safer Internet Day research, we learnt that online identity is crucial to how young people understand themselves. Almost half of the 13-17s (47%) we surveyed said that their online identity and experience is an essential part of who they are offline. However, a third of 13-17s said in the last month they had felt pressure to show the best version of themselves online. Overall 61% of 8-17s we surveyed said that the internet puts pressure on people to come across as perfect.

In our work with children and parents over the last 25 years, we know that parental engagement leads to the best outcomes,

and we have developed tips, conversation starters and family agreements to help support parents and carers in turn to support their children. Similar to how you might talk to your child about resisting pressure offline, these conversations can be had about their online lives too.

You don't need to be an expert in everything to do with social media but understanding the online environment that your child is in will help you support them. You can use this guide from Instagram and the Jed Foundation as a starting point to explore how children and young people are using Instagram and what they can do to support others as well as report when something goes wrong.

Will Gardner, Childnet CEO, Director of UK Safer Internet Centre

Advice for
young people:

Make Instagram work for you

*Use these tips and Instagram
tools to customise your experience
and keep things positive.*



Follow your feelings and stay positive

Check in with yourself after you've been online for a bit. If you're thinking about all the things you need to change – your hair, your body, the way you dress – maybe you need to adjust the way you are experiencing Instagram. Look for people and accounts that connect you to new and existing interests, and make you feel good about yourself.

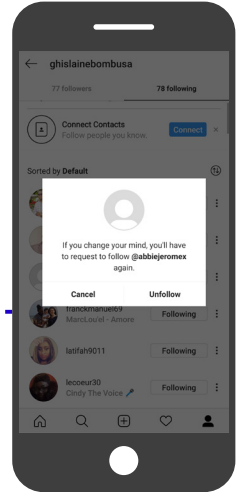
Perform routine maintenance

Try going through the list of accounts you follow every once in a while and edit. **Trimming down your follow list every now and then**, can open up space for new people who lift you up.



How to follow/unfollow

- On your profile, click **“Following.”**
- Scroll through and tap the **“Following”** button next to anyone’s name you want to unfollow.
- The button will turn blue. You can also go to someone’s profile and tap **“Unfollow.”**



Find new follows

You can enrich your experience by regularly looking for new and interesting people to follow. The Explore page is one way to browse through accounts and topics – tap the magnifying glass when you open the app and try searching on a tag for something you enjoy like #baking, #bookstagram, #photography, or #nailart.

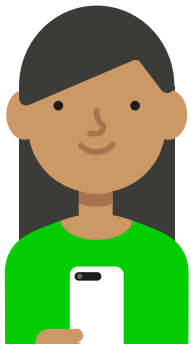
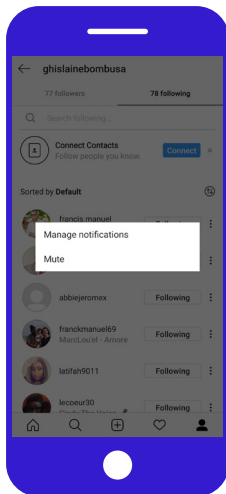


Mute people you don't want to unfollow

If you need to take a break from someone but **you don't want to hurt their feelings by unfollowing**, mute them. They'll never know, and you can relax.

How to mute an account

Tap the **“...”** menu in the corner of one of their posts. **You can choose whether to mute feed posts, story posts or both from an account.** You can also mute someone by pressing and holding on a story.

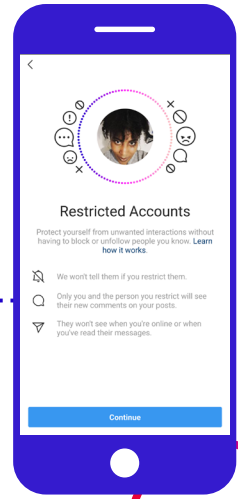


Use “Restrict” to moderate comments

Restrict is a new way to protect your account from unwanted interactions. If someone is being aggressive or negative in your comment section, you can put them on a “Restricted” list. Comments from people you restrict will only be visible to them unless you approve them. Restricted people also won't be able to see when you're online or when you've read their messages.

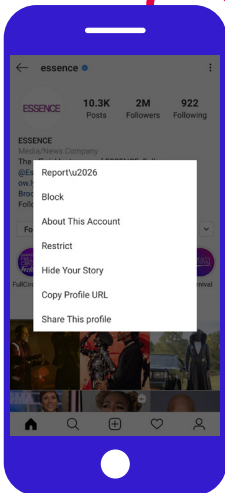
How to restrict an account

- You can restrict someone by swiping left on a comment, through the Privacy tab in Settings, or directly on the profile of the account you intend to restrict.
- Tap “Restrict” to add the account to your restricted list.



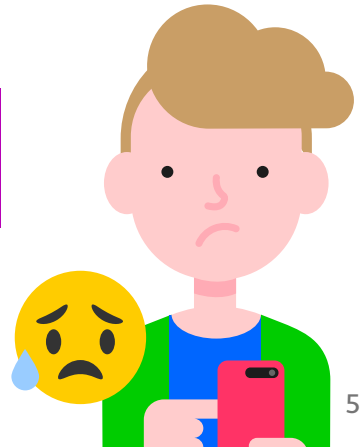
Block when necessary

If someone's behaviour is impacting you negatively and muting isn't enough, **block them**. It's the best way to stop drama in its tracks. They won't be able to view your posts or find you in search, and they won't be notified that you did it.



How to block an account

- Tap “...” on their profile
- Tap “Block.”



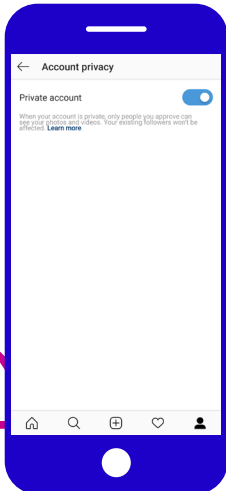
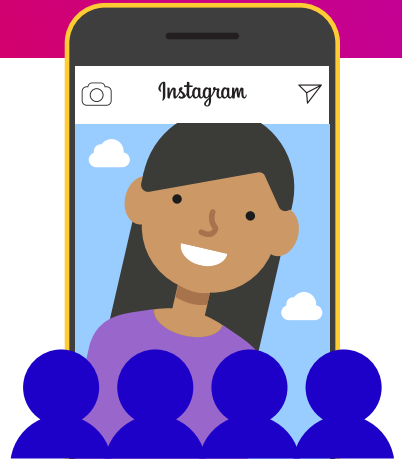
Make connections, not comparisons



You want to get inspired to make changes and explore new things, but not get into a space where you feel like you can't win because you are lacking something someone else has. Try to keep in mind that you're just seeing one part of their life, one that they've perfected and polished.

Choose your audience

Being public on Instagram is public in the true sense of the word. **Anyone can see what you post** – and once something is out there, it's pretty much impossible to get it back. You might want to make your account private so the only people who see your posts are the people that you want to see your posts.



How to make your account private

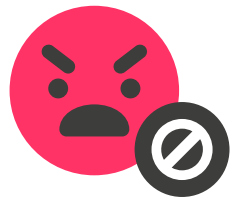
- Tap **“profile button”** on the bottom right and then go to settings.
- Tap **“Privacy”** then tap **“Account privacy”**
- Move the slider to the right. The slider will turn blue once the account is private.

The accounts following you will still be following you – new followers will have to request access.

If there is someone following you on private that you want to exclude, go to your followers list and tap to the right of their handle to remove them.

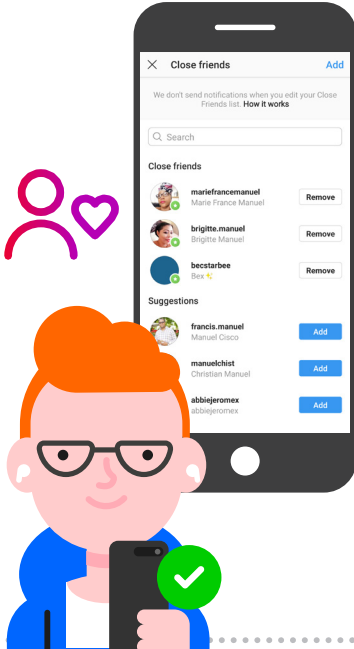
Avoid extreme stans

It's cool to link up with the people in your fandom – it's how many great friendships are made. **It's probably best though, to stay clear of the toxic side of fan culture**, where people gang up on others and bully or harass them. Who wants to be a part of that?




Fine-tune your story sharing

Remember that – even if you have a private account – there are ways to post that are even more selective. **You can use the “Close Friends” setting** on stories so that only certain people see them. People who are unable to see the story won't know that they are missing something.




How to create a Close Friends list

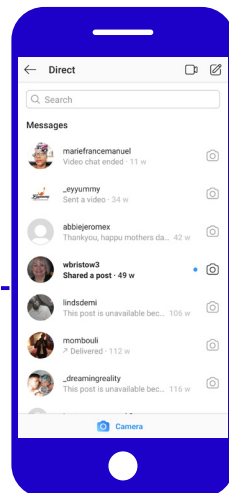
- Create a “Close Friends” list by tapping  in your profile, then tapping “Close Friends.”
- Then, when you create a story, **choose “Close Friends”** at the bottom of the screen instead of “Publish to your profile.” You can also create a specific list for individual stories.

Be direct

Sometimes you really just want to share with a few people. That's smart! When things are really personal, you can feel really vulnerable. **Instagram Direct is the most private way to share on Instagram**, so consider using it in these situations.

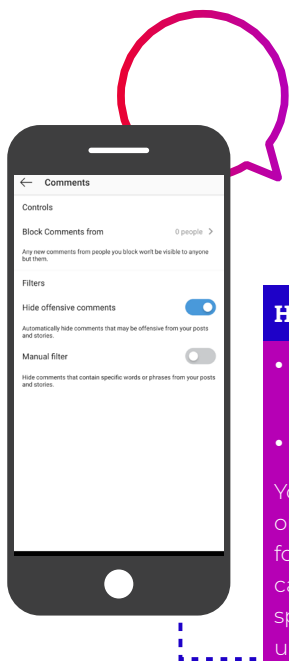
How to send a direct message

- Send a direct message (text, image or video) **click the  icon** at the top right of your Feed and choose who to share it with (up to 15 people).
- You can also message someone by **clicking that same icon** from their profile.



Control comments

There's the option to **only allow certain people to comment**. This can be a great compromise if you want to stay public but don't want to let the entire world weigh in on what you're up to.



How to control comments

- Tap **“profile button”** on the bottom right and then go to settings.
- Tap **“Privacy”** then tap **“Comments”**

You can choose to allow comments from only your followers or only the people you follow or turn off comments entirely. You can also filter out comments that use any specific words or phrases that you find upsetting or prefer not to see.



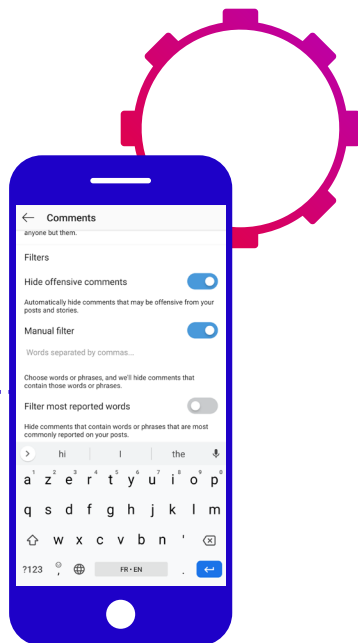
Calm down conflict

If you're uneasy with a conversation going on in your comments, you can try letting people know by saying something like “Hey, I think this has run its course. Let's move on.” If that doesn't work, **you can also delete comments** or change your comment settings.

How to turn comments on or off

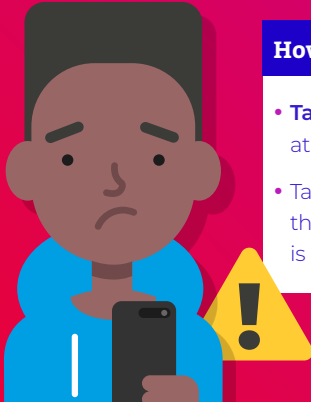
- Go to settings then tap **“Privacy”**
- Tap **“Comments”**

You can choose to allow comments from only your followers or only the people you follow or turn off comments entirely. You can also filter out comments that use any specific words or phrases that you find upsetting or prefer not to see.




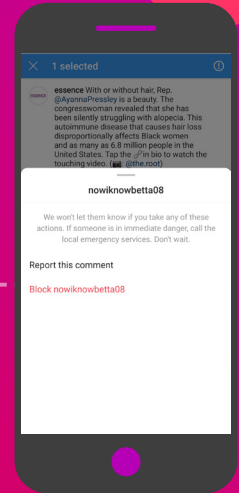
Report bullying

If someone is being aggressive online, **consider if and how you want to respond.** You can mute, unfollow, or block them using the tools on this page, or set your account to private. **You can also report posts and profiles** that are engaging in abusive or harassing behaviour. If bullying is affecting your wellbeing, try reaching out to a friend or family member to talk about it.



How to report an account

- Tap  above the post or at the top right of the profile.
- Tap **"Report,"** and follow the instructions. Reporting is anonymous.



Cyberbullying support organisations

Ditch the Label

Ditch the Label is an international anti-bullying charity, working to end bullying.

<https://www.ditchthelabel.org/>

Childnet

Childnet International is a non-profit organisation working with others to make the internet a safer place for children.

<https://www.childnet.com/>

Childline

Childline is a free, private and confidential service where you can talk about anything.

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Kidscape

Kidscape provides children, families, carers and professionals with advice and training to prevent bullying.

<https://www.kidscape.org.uk/>

Cybersmile

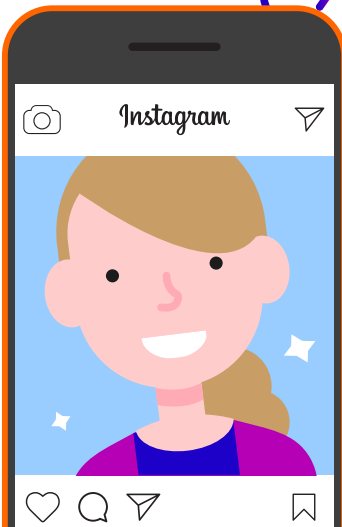
The Cybersmile Foundation is an international non-profit organisation providing support to victims of cyberbullying and online hate.

<https://www.cybersmile.org/>



Advice for
young people:

The balancing act of screen time



The quality of the time you spend online is incredibly important to your wellbeing, so is the quantity. Too much screen time could mean you are neglecting other important things in your life.

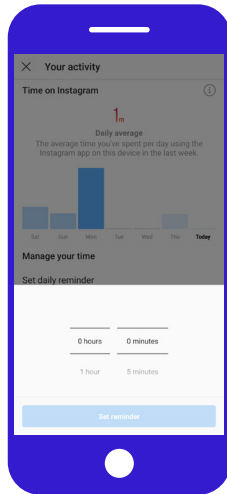
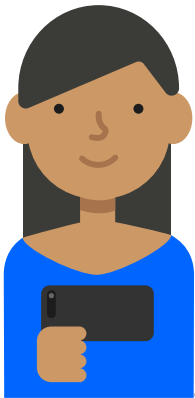
Use this guide to consider what the right amount of Instagram use is for you, and explore some tools to help you set limits.

The goal is to make the most of all of your time, online or off.

Using digital wellbeing tools

Check your measurements


Check in with yourself after you've been online for a bit. If you're thinking about all the things you need to change—your hair, your body, the way you dress—maybe you need to adjust the way you are experiencing Instagram. Look for people and accounts that connect you to new and existing interests, and make you feel good about yourself.



Set a reminder to log off

If you want to cut back on your screen time, you can set a daily reminder that will alert you when you've been on for a certain amount of time. **Try shaving off ten minutes a day.**

Tip Bonus:

- When you set a time limit, you might find yourself being more thoughtful about what you do on Instagram.
- To set up a reminder, go to your profile and tap . Then tap **Your Activity > Set Daily Reminder**. Choose the amount of time and tap **Set Reminder**.

Be in the moment

Sometimes having your phone around can distract you from really experiencing and enjoying what's going on around you. Remember, you don't need to post in real-time real time. Try taking a few photos and then putting your phone away so you can really be present, then sharing them later with your thoughts.




Tip Bonus:

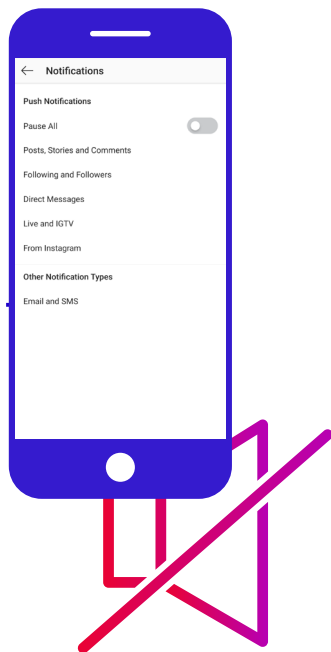
You're less likely to make a typo.

Mute notifications to help you focus

If you have trouble ignoring notifications, turn them off. Try muting notifications during times that you want to be offline. It can also be helpful to physically put your phone away in a drawer or another room during meals, hangouts or study sessions.

How to mute notifications

- To mute notifications, go to your profile and tap , then tap **Your Activity**.
- Tap on **Notification Settings**, then tap **Pause All**, and select how long you want to mute them. You can also mute specific types of notifications.



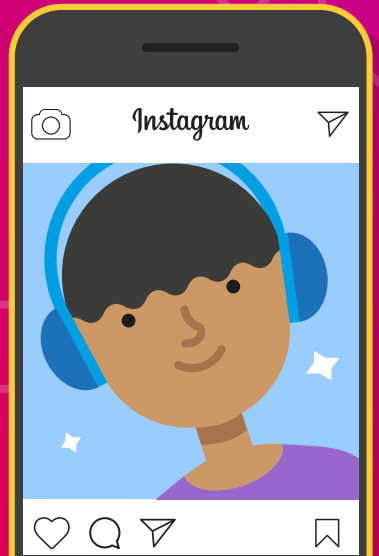
Give your phone a bedtime

If you have trouble falling asleep, it could be because you use your phone too much late at night. Your brain needs time to rest. Try putting your tech to bed about an hour before you go to sleep.

Advice for young people: Supporting your friends online Help for hard conversations

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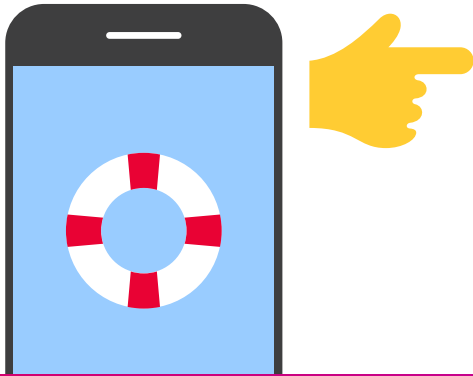
An important part of addressing the pressure to be perfect is being kind and supportive to others, in the same way, you expect others to be kind and supportive to you.



There might be times when you notice someone on Instagram who seems to be feeling sad or angry almost all of the time. It can be really difficult to know what to say or do in those moments. **Here are some ideas.**

Always take care of yourself first

If **you** are the person who is feeling sad or angry or bullied, talk to someone. If you don't have an adult or a peer you feel comfortable with, there are a number of organisations that can offer you one-to-one support.



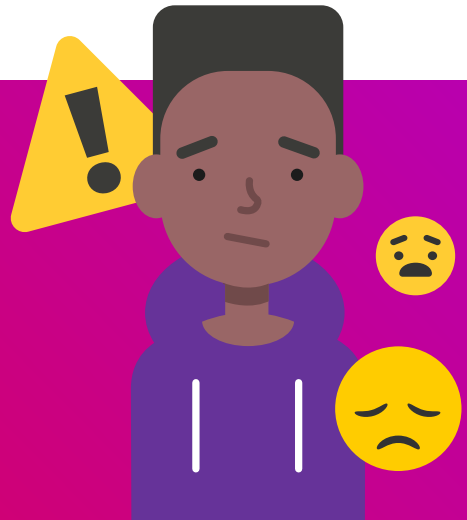
Support and counselling services

- **Childline** – a free, private and confidential service where you can talk about anything ☎ **0800 1111**
- **Shout** – available 24/7 and totally anonymous unless they need to contact emergency services to keep you or someone else safe. Text **SHOUT** to **85258**.
- **The Mix** – offers a range of advice and support for under 25s ☎ **0808 808 4994**
- **Papyrus** – Charity dedicated to the prevention of young suicide ☎ **0800 068 41 41**
- **Samaritans** – 24 hour confidential listening and support ☎ **116 123**

Know the signs to watch for in others

People may communicate their feelings in different ways, **but there are things that can give you clues to their emotional state**. Here is a list of things you could look out for:

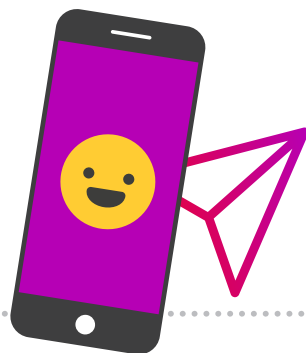
- They're **not acting like themselves**
- They are **taking more risks than usual**
- They talk about **feeling hopeless**
- They're taking **more drugs** or **drinking more**
- They are **harming themselves**
- They **don't feel like hanging out** as much
- Their mind seems to be **somewhere else**
- They are **so anxious they can't relax**
- They've gotten **negative about life**



Everyone has some bad days, but if you notice someone exhibiting any of the above behaviours repeatedly, **the tips below can help you figure out what to do.**

Reach out

A phone call, text or DM **telling someone that you care about them can mean a lot.** You don't have to have all the answers – just letting them know that they aren't alone and that you care about them is a kind thing to do.



What to say

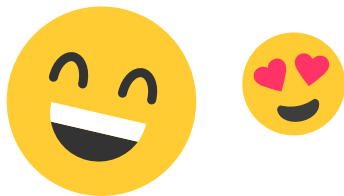
It's best to keep it casual. Try things like, "I've noticed you posting a lot of sad memes lately, are you OK?" or "I'm checking in on you because you seemed really upset the other day, how are you?"

Don't assume someone else will do it

You might think that a person has a lot of other friends or that you don't know them well enough to talk to – but you never really know. **It's likely better to check in and find out they're fine** than to ignore something that's worrying you.

If they open up, listen


Avoid offering advice or talking about yourself – keep the focus on the other person and how they are feeling. Asking questions like "Have you talked to anyone else about this?" can be ways to see if they have support in the other parts of their life. [Childline has some good guidelines](#) for this.



Encourage them to get help

Sometimes we can **get so caught up in our feelings that we don't see a way out.** You can suggest that your friend talks to their parents or another responsible adult or share resources like the Shout free text line.

Report concerning content

If you believe that someone may be thinking about hurting themselves, [report this to Instagram](#) so they can help connect them to information and resources. There are teams all over the world working 24 hours a day, seven days a week to review these reports. The poster will not know who made the report, but they will get help the next time they open the app. To make a report, tap  above the post, then tap Report. Select **"It's Inappropriate > Self injury."**

When to tell someone

If the person you've reached out to doesn't show any signs of feeling better, if you start feeling uncomfortable with what you are asked to keep secret, or if their behaviour gets more extreme, **talk to an adult or a friend you trust**



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