

San Leandro Police Department

Safe Social Networking

MySpace, Facebook, Friendster, Xanga, Twitter — they are all forms of social media where people go online to chat with their friends, make new friends, and exchange information. Social networking sites are easy to use and understand. Their purpose is to bring people closer together. They let users create personal profiles, add photos, write in a public journal or blog, send messages to others, and invite people to become their online friends — all with just a few clicks of the mouse. When used responsibly, these sites present wonderful social opportunities.

Parents and children can stay safe by following the tips below:

- ✦ Some social networking sites require that users be at least 13 years of age, and sometimes even 18, to create an account. Don't let your child pretend he/she is older than he/she really is.
- ✦ Be careful about posting your current location or your upcoming plans. You may not want everyone in your network to have that information.
- ✦ Don't post any identifying information on a social website. This includes full name, telephone number, and address.
- ✦ Investigate and understand the privacy options of the social network you intend to use or are using. Make sure they work the way you think they do.
- ✦ Most social networking websites let users set their profiles to private so that only their friends — usually defined as people who know their full name or email address — can contact them. Make sure your profile is set to private.
- ✦ Just because you are using privacy settings, you should still be careful with your personal or financial information. You cannot be sure with whom your friends might share this information.
- ✦ Do not accept requests or messages from people you don't know. They might be scam artists.
- ✦ Never post pictures of a sexual nature of yourself or someone else online.
- ✦ Be aware that online information lives forever. Be careful about what you post. College admissions personnel and job recruiters often check out personal information on social websites while weighing their decisions. One day, this will be very important.
- ✦ Some people you may meet in social websites may not be who they say they are. They may pretend to be someone else. You should never meet face-to-face with someone you have met online.
- ✦ Children should never give out their password to anyone but a parent or guardian.
- ✦ Children should always tell a parent/guardian when they see something online that makes them uncomfortable, or if anything happens online that hurts or scares them.



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