

# Psychologists' group issues first guidelines on teens' use of social media

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It is easy for children to get drawn into Instagram, Snapchat, or TikTok,

and a leading U.S. psychologists' group warns they need some training in social media literacy beforehand.

The American Psychological Association on Tuesday issued 10 science-based recommendations for teen and preteen social media use, the first time it has done so. The APA compares training in social media to getting a driver's license. Teens cannot just hit the road without learning the rules. There are certain psychological competencies children should have before they use social media. These are tailored to strengths and the level of maturity that individual children possess, the report noted.

"We do know that there are some benefits particularly for those from underrepresented groups. There's a real source of social support and helping to find others with similar identities or interests that social [media](#) can offer," Mitchell Prinstein, the APA chief science officer, told *HealthDay*. "And we wouldn't want to take that away from youth of color or youth with gender and sexual identities that might not match their families or most people in their school and communities."

The [guidelines](#) were compiled by a panel of experts in various types of child mental health, ranging from clinical child psychologists to school psychologists.

"I think they did a really good job at highlighting both how to use it well and the benefits, and then also calling out the risks," Ariana Hoet, executive clinical director for the [children's](#) mental health organization [On Our Sleeves](#) based in Columbus, Ohio, told *HealthDay*. She was not involved with the report.

"In terms of the health care world that I'm a part of, it's a reminder that just like we're screening for things like depression and anxiety, we should be asking kids about their [social media](#) use and the impact. How many hours are you spending on it? How do you feel after you use it? Is

it impacting your sleep?"

The amount of research dollars dedicated to child mental [health](#) is small compared with investments in other areas of science, Prinstein said. "It's just time for that to change. We need a [mental health](#) moonshot, in the same way that [President] Biden talks about a cancer moonshot," he added.

**More information:** [\*Health Advisory on Social Media Use in Adolescence\*](#)

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