

Advice on Supporting Teens with Changes to Social Media Platform Access

Source: Safe on Social [Preparing Teens for Under-16 Social Media Ban](#)

Many of you will be aware of the changes being implemented by the Australian government in response to growing global concerns about online harms on major social media platforms; they will need to have age-verification measures to restrict access for users under 16 from accessing these platforms in Australia by the end of this year.

Without preparation, teens risk losing access to connections, content, or communities they love, with little notice.

The Safe on Social team offer the following advice to help plan *with* your child, not just *for* them, preserving their agency, digital memory, and online wellbeing.

1. Map Their Online World

Sit down with your teens and suggest they do a quick audit of their digital presence:

- What platforms do they use daily?
- Which chats, groups, or creators are most important to them?
- What digital spaces help them feel seen, supported, or inspired?

Use this as a respectful, non-judgmental starting point.

2. Create Safe, Private Chat Alternatives

Help teens stay connected with trusted friends by:

- Creating group chats on age-appropriate platforms with parental visibility. This is a great opportunity to discuss the basics of cyber safety again.
- Setting ground rules together for respectful use (e.g., no screenshots, no forwarding without consent).
- Encouraging smaller, opt-in friend circles over large open groups.

3. Back Up Digital Memories

Many teens store important photos, videos, or messages within apps that they might lose access to. Encourage them to:

- Download or screenshot meaningful chats, photos, or creative content.
- Create a secure offline folder or shared cloud drive where they can preserve this material.
- Treat digital memory like emotional memory—it matters.

4. Follow Creators Safely Off-Platform

If your teens follow supportive influencers or identity-affirming content:

- Check if the creator has a newsletter, blog or podcast that's safe and age compliant.
- Subscribe together, using a parent-controlled email if appropriate.
- Encourage them to keep a short list of "good spaces" they want to continue engaging with—safely, responsibly, and with boundaries.

5. Set Up a Family Re-Entry Plan

Prepare for re-entry at 16:

- Discuss what "readiness" looks like: emotional maturity, digital literacy, algorithmic literacy, and privacy skills.
- Consider using this in-between time to build stronger media literacy habits: fact-checking, blocking/reporting, resisting pressure to overshare.

Use tools like screen agreements or digital literacy check-ins to promote reflection, not restriction.

6. Create a Safe Space to Speak Up

One of the most powerful protections you can offer is an open-door culture at home. Teens need to know they can talk about what they see, feel, or regret online, without fear of punishment or shame. By normalising conversations around digital stress, peer pressure, and mistakes, you give them the confidence to come to you when it really matters. Make it clear: you're not here to monitor, you're here to mentor. As an example, make short car rides device-free so you can talk.

7. Focus on Offline Self-Worth

Helping your teens build a solid sense of identity *before* they re-enter social platforms at 16 is a massive parenting win. Invest time in:

- Offline activities that grow confidence, creativity, and purpose
- Encouraging hobbies, peer circles, and community spaces where they feel valued
- Conversations that centre on who they *are*, not how they're perceived

The stronger their internal compass, the less sway external validation will have when they return to online life.

Support for Neurodivergent Teens

Neurodivergent young people, such as those with autism, ADHD, or sensory processing differences, often form deep attachments to online spaces that feel safe, structured, or interest aligned. Losing access can feel disorienting, even threatening to their sense of routine or identity. Support them by:

- Pre-warning about possible platform changes well in advance, using clear, non-alarmist language.
- Recreate social scenarios offline to rehearse conversations, rebuild friendships, or name emotions they might otherwise bottle up.
- Providing structured alternatives: joining a moderated fan community, a special-interest newsletter, or a safe online space with inclusive norms.
- Using visual or written planners to help them track online/offline activities.
- Respecting that online friendships are real friendships to them, even if you don't always recognise the format.

Affirming their need for connection, predictability, and control will ease the transition and build trust for future digital decisions.

Watch for Emotional Withdrawal or Shame

Losing access can feel like exclusion, rejection, or punishment. Be alert to:

- Sudden withdrawal or anxiety
- Mood changes linked to online disconnection
- Feelings of being "left behind" or "cut off"
- Respond with empathy, not panic. Remind them this is about age, not failure and that you're on their team.