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**GRADE 11**

# How Young Is Too Young for Social Media?

At what age should people be allowed to use social media?



PRIVACY & SECURITY

*We care about  
everyone's privacy.*

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## OVERVIEW

Kids have to be at least 13 to sign up for most social media platforms. But we know that many tweens work around the restriction. In doing so they can connect with peers and have fun, but they're also vulnerable to a number of risks -- mainly overuse and challenges to their social-emotional health. Reflecting on age-appropriate content and behaviors can help students think through social media's effects on all of us, regardless of our age.

### Students will be able to:

- Explain why websites that collect personal information have an age requirement of 13.
- Identify the risks of targeted advertising, especially when it is targeted to children.
- Explain what age they think is best for beginning to use social media, and support their argument with specific reasons and examples.

### Lesson Snapshot

**Estimated time: 50 mins.**

Consider:	Collection Protection	15 mins.
Analyze:	'Ad' It Up	15 mins.
Create:	Letter to My Younger Self	20 mins.

## What You'll Need

Spanish-language student and family resources available soon!

- **Lesson Slides**
- Video: When Is Your Brain Ready for Social Media? **Watch**
- Student Handout: Letter to My Younger Self **Student Version**
- Lesson Quiz **Student Version Answer Key**

## Take-home resources

- **Family Tips**
  - **Family Activity**
  - **Family Engagement Resources**
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## LESSON PLAN

### Key Vocabulary:

#### targeted advertising

advertisements that are shown to you based on information that has been collected about you (location, browsing history, interests, age, etc.)

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Consider: **Collection Protection**

15 mins.

1. **Ask:** *Do you think there should be an age requirement for being on websites like Snapchat or YouTube or Twitch? If so, what should it be?*

Invite students to share out. They may say *yes, because sometimes there's inappropriate content on those sites.*

2. **Explain** that there is an age requirement for social media, and that they're going to watch a short video that talks about what it is and why. Have students think about the following two questions as they watch:
  - *What are the arguments for and against having an age requirement?*
  - *Which side do you agree with?*

Show the KQED Above the Noise video "**When Is Your Brain Ready for Social Media?**" (Slide 4)

3. **Invite** students to share out their responses. Highlight that the **Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)** is a federal law in the United States that restricts websites from collecting information about users who are younger than 13. You can also explore laws in different countries.

Capture arguments for and against an age requirement. Example answers include: (Slide 5)

Arguments for an age requirement	Arguments against an age requirement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Companies collect data about users, like location, purchases, etc., and children are more vulnerable to sharing sensitive information.</li> <li>- Children are more vulnerable to criminal activity, like online predators, identity theft, cyberbullying, etc.</li> <li>- Children are more sensitive to acceptance and rejection, and their self-esteem and emotional well-being could be impacted by trolls or other mean things said online.</li> <li>- Children are more vulnerable to inappropriate content.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some research shows social media can be good for self-esteem and confidence.</li> <li>- Younger teens can find support and community, especially during difficult times.</li> <li>- Social media can also help young people organize around causes, both personal and social or political.</li> </ul>

Analyze: **'Ad' It Up**

15 mins.

1. **Ask:** *One of the arguments for an age requirement is that kids are more at risk when companies collect data about them (such as age, location, school, likes/dislikes, what they post). Why do you think that is? Why does data collection represent a problem for kids?*

Invite students to share out their ideas. Explain that one of the major risks associated with data collection is that it is used for targeted advertising. Define **targeted advertising** as *advertisements that are shown to you based on information that has been collected about you (location, browsing history, interests, age, etc.)*. (Slide 6)

2. **Ask:** *Is targeted advertising more of a risk when it's directed at children? Why or why not?*

Invite students to share out their ideas. Capture student responses, which may include: (Slide 7)

- Kids have little to no experience with budgeting or spending money, so they're more likely to buy things impulsively.
- They are more vulnerable to being manipulated into wanting to fit in or into buying products that they think will make them look a certain way.
- They are more vulnerable to products that have immediate benefits or give immediate enjoyment, but which have questionable long-term effects, like junk food or violent video games.

Create: **Letter to My Younger Self**

20 mins.

1. **Say:** *So now that you've seen some of the arguments for and against children being able to use social media, you're going to take a position on the topic.*

Distribute the **Letter to My Younger Self Student Handout** and read the directions aloud. (Slide 8)

2. **Allow** students 15 minutes to work independently on brainstorming and writing their letter. If time allows, have them share their work with a partner.
3. **Have** students complete the **Lesson Quiz**. Send home the **Family Activity** and **Family Tips**.

#### **Extension Activity:**

In the "Create" activity, students took a position on a topic and prepared their strongest reasons and evidence. If time allows, or in a subsequent class period, have students form debate teams according to their position and hold an in-class debate. Check out **this article** for some easy high school debate formats.



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