

Common Sense Tips YouTube and Your Kids

Some facts

- > Kids ages 3-11 streamed more video content than their parents in the first half of 2008
- > YouTube launched in 2005, and was purchased by Google in fall 2006 for 1.65 billion dollars.
- > YouTube videos account for 10 percent of all Internet traffic, according to analysts Ellacoya Networks.
- > Kids are supposed to be 13 to use YouTube (according to their site)
- > YouTube is a great place to showcase creativity

Everything is on YouTube – and we mean everything.

YouTube is a bit like Google in that anything – from fabulous to icky – can be uploaded or viewed. There's lots of mature content, but kids are more likely to see videos that other kids have made of their rock band performances or skateboard tricks. Yet everyone loves an audience, which means all sorts of acting out is available at the click of a mouse.

What is it?

YouTube is a site that allows users to upload and share original videos. It's a popular place to go to see the latest silly Internet video that everyone's talking about. The great majority of videos are of concert footage, sporting events, bootlegged commercial video, and homemade movies. Posting video is really simple. And directions are right on the site.

Why it matters

Kids spend huge amounts of time on YouTube, and nothing is rated, so you never know what you're going to get. For example, there are more than 33 pages of videos showing girls fighting. As for posting, you really don't want your kids posting videos that can get them in trouble or hurt other people. Because it's easy to comment on any video, kids can see all sorts of nonsense. Bottom line? YouTube can be a fabulously creative medium – a place where kids can showcase their lives. But it's only as responsible as the person uploading videos.

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Common Sense says:

- > **Go to YouTube and see for yourself.** You will be able to have a much more open and informed discussion once you've seen for yourself. YouTube postings are best for 14 and up. YouTube says kids 13 to 17 are welcome with permission from a parent or guardian – but you have to decide when you think your kids are ready for it.
- > **Check your kids' URL history.** See if they've been visiting the site. If so, ask them what they like about it. Ask your kids if they've ever posted anything, and if so, what? You should also check your kids MySpace pages and see if there are links to any of their YouTube postings.
- > **Make sure they know the rules.** Tell your kids to protect their identities. No-nos for videos include license plate numbers, images of your house, their bedrooms, or their school. Make sure that none of their "tags" (search identifiers) reveal their real names, locations, schools, or anything else that could lead unsavory types to their doors.
- > **Watch their videos.** If you allow your kids to post, ask that they let you check it out their videos before they go live. They may not agree, but it never hurts to ask. Remind your kids that posting videos can be really fun, but they never know who is watching. YouTube has millions of viewers all over the world.
- > **Be aware of privacy concerns.** Tell your kids to mark their videos as "private" so that only friends can watch them. You can figure out how to do this by going to the "Safety Tips" link at the bottom of all YouTube pages.
- > **Check in.** Forbidding older teens to post may force them underground. You want to make sure your kids feel comfortable coming to you if something or someone on the site bothers them. Make sure kids know to check in if they see something that's hateful, pornographic, or violent; you can report it, if they don't want to. YouTube is a self-policing site, so encourage your kids to make it safe for others.

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