

Five ways social media can be good for teens

By **Caroline Knorr**

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From [sexting](#) to [cyberbullying](#) to [FOMO](#), social media has its share of negatives. But, if it's all bad, [how did 2,000 students protest their school system's budget cuts?](#) [How are teens leading the charge against cyberbullying?](#) How did they [organize a national school walkout day to protest gun laws?](#) Easy: savvy use of social media. For a few years, [many teens have been saying that social media — despite its flaws — is mostly positive](#). And new research is shedding light on the good things that can happen when kids connect, share and learn online. As kids begin to use tools such as [Instagram](#), [Snapchat](#), [Twitter](#) and even [YouTube](#) in earnest, they're learning the responsibility that comes with the power to broadcast to the world. You can help nurture the positive aspects by accepting how important social media is for kids and helping them find ways for it to add real value to their lives. For inspiration, here are some of the benefits of your child being social-media-savvy:

It lets them do good. Twitter, Facebook and other large social networks expose kids to important issues and people from all over the world. Kids realize [they have a voice they didn't have before](#) and are doing everything from [crowdfunding social justice projects](#) to [anonymously tweeting positive thoughts](#). Check out [these sites that help kids do good](#).

It strengthens friendships. Studies, including Common Sense Media's "[Social Media, Social Life: How Teens View Their Digital Lives](#)" and the [Pew Research Center's "Teens, Technology and Friendships"](#) show that social media helps teenagers make friends and keep them.



It can offer a sense of belonging. While heavy social media use can isolate kids, a study conducted by Griffith University and the University of Queensland in Australia found that [although American teens have fewer friends than their historical counterparts, they are less lonely than teens in past decades](#). They report feeling less isolated and have become more socially adept, partly because of an increase in technology use.

It provides genuine support. Online acceptance — whether a kid is interested in an unusual subject that isn't considered cool or is grappling with sexual identity — can validate a marginalized child. [Suicidal teens can even get immediate access to quality support online](#). One example occurred on a Minecraft forum on Reddit when [an entire online community used voice-conferencing software to talk a teenager out of committing suicide](#).

It helps them express themselves. The popularity of fan fiction (original stories based on existing material that people write and upload online) proves how strong the desire is for self-expression. Producers and performers can satisfy this need through social media. Digital technology [allows kids to share their work with a wider audience](#) and even collaborate with far-flung partners (an essential 21st-century skill). If they're really serious, social media can provide essential feedback for kids to hone their craft.



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