raising children network
the australian parenting website

Teenagers creating online content

Suitable for

9-15

Years

Creating content for websites is a key way for teenagers to communicate, socialise and explore their creativity. You can encourage your child to develop online content in a safe and creative way.

What you need to know

Teenagers are increasingly creating and publishing online content as a key part of their communication, networking, creative and social activities.

The content teenagers create and upload includes text, images, videos and blogs. They create it at interactive websites such as Facebook, MySpace, Flickr, Blogger, and YouTube.

Creating and uploading content – and being part of and sharing content with online communities – can have a significant role in your child's developing sense of identity and community. You can support your child's creative online activities by:

- letting him work through different ways of conveying an idea or expressing his creativity
- encouraging your child to show you what she and others are creating, such as content she thinks is funny or clever
- making suggestions for improvement only if he asks for your opinion or advice.

❋ Viewing and enjoying your child's online creativity together can be a great way for you and your child to connect.

did you know ❓

- A survey found that 42% of young people age 8–17 have their own content on the internet (uploaded either by themselves or someone else).

- The number of children posting web content increases with age, from age 8 (3%) to age 14 (80% of girls, 65% of boys), where it stabilises.

What teenagers get out of creating content

When teenagers create online content, they are being creative. Creating content, whether it involves remixing someone else's material or making something original, boosts your child's sense of creativity and personal achievement. Publishing work online is a form of self-expression, so it can also increase her sense of confidence and help her learn about her strengths.

Creating online content is also a way of connecting. Most teenagers post their work where others can access it, and they enjoy the interaction and discussion about their work. Sharing creative

content can have positive effects on young people's sense of community, belonging and connection.

Creative online activities can also increase your child's computer literacy and enable him to learn how to use a wide range of software programs, online services and applications. Teachers are beginning to harness teenagers' content creation skills and literacy at school.

Safe ways to create online content

Any content uploaded onto the internet is permanent. Anyone with the right skills and technology can access and view it. They can also download, edit and upload it in a different form elsewhere on the internet. Talking with your child about these issues can help keep her safe.

Considering the following points might also be useful:

- Personal content: what personal information and images does your child want to make public and available for the world to see and potentially 'remix'? Has she considered what good cybercitizenship is?
- Content that's appropriate to upload and download: it's a good idea to set some ground rules here. This includes talking about privacy, sexually explicit content, getting permission from people you photograph or video before publishing online, and respecting other people. It's also worth remembering that some phones and cameras add data to photos that can identify where it was taken.
- Content created by others featuring your child: what is he happy for other people to publish? Discuss some scenarios that might upset or offend your child, and talk about how he would deal with them.
- Copyright: encourage your child to use 'open content', or content that has a 'creative commons' license that allows free not-for-profit use.
- Keeping content backed up on the computer and other devices that are used to create content. It can be upsetting for your child to lose her creative efforts. Content that's been uploaded can usually be downloaded again, but you can save time and energy by doing regular backups.

> For more tips on how to be safe online, read our articles on sexting, social networking and cyberbullying.

Common teenager-generated content

Here are some types of content commonly generated by teenagers:

- Photos and videos can be uploaded from a camera to a computer and then onto the internet. This content can also be uploaded 'on-the-run' from a mobile device such as a web-capable mobile phone, like an iPhone. Content can be edited on these devices quickly and easily – many come with image-editing software. Teenagers are also increasingly uploading video to sites such as YouTube.
- A profile on a social networking site such as Facebook or MySpace might include photos, personal information and descriptions, such as details on things the user likes.
- A blog is a daily or weekly diary or commentary on a person's life or topic of interest. A blog can be based on text, photos, video (vlog) or mobile content (moblog). Blogging is

a popular way for teenagers to share ideas or aspects of their lives.

- Twitter is a real-time messaging network that allows users to send and receive moment-to-moment 'tweets' (messages) via their mobile phone or computer. Messages are often 'what are you thinking about?' or 'what's happening?' updates sent by friends, coworkers or celebrities. It's common to follow someone's tweets, which means you're alerted every time that person sends a tweet.

- Remixing involves editing existing content (text, images and audio) – for example, creating a mobile phone ringtone by mixing MP3 tracks. Another example is downloading and editing images or graphics from the internet then uploading them to decorate a personal profile, blog or webpage.

- Fan fiction and collaborative writing involves the creative rewriting of, or experimentation with, existing genres, storylines and characters from popular movies and novels.

- Game modding is creating online game add-ons or modifications – for example, creating alternative worlds or new tools that can be used in an existing online multiplayer game.

Creating content: facts and stats

Nearly three-quarters (72%) of 14-year-old Australians have their own material on the internet. More than three-quarters (78%) of 17-year-old Australians have their own material on the internet.

More than 9 in 10 US teenagers aged 12-17 use the internet. Of these:

- almost two-thirds (64%) create their own online content
- more than a third (39%) share their own artistic creations online, such as artwork, photos, stories or videos
- a third (33%) create or work on webpages or blogs for others, including for friends, or for school projects
- more than a quarter (28%) have created their own blog
- more than a quarter (27%) maintain their own personal webpage
- more than a quarter (26%) remix content they find online into their own creations.

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GLOSSARY

Facebook

A website that allows users to build an online profile with personal details, photos, videos and other information. Users can add friends, send them messages, and let friends know what they are doing via 'status updates'. Users can also comment on their friends' status updates, photos and videos. These activities are called social networking.

MySpace

A website that allows users to create an online profile with information about themselves, their interests and their moods. Users can upload music, photos, videos and blogs. They can receive comments from other users. Myspace has a group feature, which allows users with common interests to share a page. Activities like these are called social networking.

Flickr

A website where users can upload, store, organise and share images and videos. Other users and viewers can comment on images and videos. Activities such as sharing and commenting on videos are called social networking.

Blogger

Blogger: A website that allows users to write and publish a blog (weblog). Users can post text, images, videos and other kinds of content on their blogs. Readers can leave comments on the blog, and become 'followers' of blogs they really like. Activities such as publishing and commenting on blogs are a form of social networking.

YouTube

A website that allows users to upload, view and share videos. Videos on YouTube include clips from TV shows and movies, as well as home-made videos and videoblogs.

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