AGE RESTRICTION 13+

Instagram is an image and video sharing app that allows users to share moments with the world. The app has a live streaming feature and additional add-ons, such as 'Boomerang,' 'Hyperlapse' and 'Layout,' which can be used to enhance their feed. Users can choose to add filters and make adjustments, such as brightness / contrast to their photos. To make their content more 'searchable,' users can include hashtags in their uploads to make them easier to find.

What parents need to know about INSTAGRAM

LIVE STREAMING TO STRANGERS

The live stream feature on Instagram allows users to connect with their friends and followers in real-time. Followers can comment on the video during the broadcast (which can be turned off in the settings). If your child has a private account, only their approved followers can see their story. It is important to note that they still may have followers that they do not know, which means they could be live streaming to strangers. A public account allows anybody to view their story. We suggest that your child goes through their followers list and blocks anyone they do not know. An additional risk with live streams is that your child may do something that they regret. This could be captured by a viewer taking a screenshot and then shared around the Internet.

IN-APP PAYMENTS

Instagram allows payments for products directly through the app. It operates under the same rules as Facebook Payments, which state that if you are under the age of 18, you can only use this feature with the involvement of a parent or guardian.

DAMAGE TO CONFIDENCE, BODY IMAGE & MENTAL HEALTH

When people use filters on their photos on Instagram, it can set unrealistic expectations and create feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem in children. Children may strive for a comparable number of 'likes' to a realistically edited with the risk of drastically lowering your child's confidence or sense of self-worth.

PHOTO / VIDEO SHARING

Posting photos and videos is Instagram's biggest selling point, but with sharing images comes risks. A photo which includes landmarks in the area, their school uniform, street name, house and even tagging in the location of the photo uploaded to Instagram can expose the child's location, making it easy to locate them. If their account is not set to private, anyone can access their account and see their location.

LOCATION TAGGING

Public locations can be added to a user's photos/videos and also to their stories. While this may seem like a good idea at the time, it can expose the location of your child. This is particularly more of a risk if it is on their story, as it is real time.

HIJACKED HASHTAGS

Like Twitter, hashtags are also an extremely prominent tool in Instagram and with that comes dangers for your child. One person may use a seemingly innocent hashtag with one particular thing in mind, and before you know it hundreds of people could be using the same hashtag for something inappropriate or dangerous that your child certainly shouldn't be exposed to.

INSTAGRAM TV

Instagram TV works similarly to YouTube. Users can watch videos from their favourite accounts on the platform, or create their own channel and post their own videos. It's important to note that anyone can create their own Instagram TV channel and you don't have to be friends with a person to follow an account and watch their videos. Ultimately, features are encouraging users to spend more time on the app, therefore it's important to set time limits and ensure their devices are not disturbing their sleep and performance at school.

Top Tips for Parents

REMOVE PAYMENT METHODS

If you are happy for your child to have a card associated with their Instagram account, we suggest adding a PIN which needs to be entered before making a payment; this will also help prevent unauthorised purchases. This can be added in the payment settings tab.

RESTRICT MESSAGES

If your child's account is not set to private, anybody can message them and reply to their stories. If they do wish to keep their account public, we strongly recommend changing the message reply settings to restrict who can message them.

USE A PRIVATE ACCOUNT

By default, any image or video your child uploads to Instagram is visible to anyone. A private account means that you have to approve a request if somebody wants to follow you and only people you approve will see your posts and videos.

FILTER INAPPROPRIATE COMMENTS

Instagram announced on 1st May that they now have an 'anti-bullying' filter on the app. This new filter hides comments relating to a person's appearance or character, as well as threats to a person's wellbeing or health. The filter will also alert Instagram to repeated problems so they can take action against the user if necessary. This is an automatic filter, but it can be turned off. Make sure this is turned on in the app's settings.

TURN OFF SHARING

Even though this feature will not stop people from taking screenshots, it will stop others being able to directly share photos and videos from a story as a message to another user. This feature can be turned off in the settings. We also recommend turning off the feature which automatically shares photos and videos from a story to a Facebook account.

National Online Safety

A whole school community approach to online safety

www.nationalonlinesafety.com

Email us at hello@nationalonlinesafety.com or call us on 0800 368 8061