



## FACTSHEET

FOR  
TEACHERS IN  
SECONDARY  
SCHOOLS

# SCROLLSAFE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

### AT A GLANCE:

- The experiences students have online can impact their friendships, attention in the classroom, and overall academic performance.
- It is important to be open minded, use non-judgmental language, and remain curious when discussing online experiences with students.
- Problematic social media use is when a young person is excessively and uncontrollably online. Be sure to notice signs early and check-in with students who may be problematically engaging with the online world.

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Social media is a big part of everyone's lives, and it is so intertwined in our day to day. We take our experiences of social media with us everywhere, and so do students. With 97% of young people using social media daily, they aren't leaving social media at the door when they come to school.(1)

Phones may not be allowed in your classroom, but we know that schools are an important place to influence behaviour and create safe, positive online habits. The reality is social media follows students into the classroom. Whether it's online interactions affecting friendships or harmful content impacting self-esteem, social media influences students' emotions, concentration, and readiness to engage in learning.

It is important that we don't work in silo of this issue. Encouraging conversation and discussing how we can critically engage in social media can be a great way to empower young people to take control over their social media use.

The below information will support you to have conversations in your classroom that encourage positive youth mental health in the online world.

### Quick facts: Australian young people

- 97% of young people use social media daily, with 38% spending three or more hours online per day.(1)
- 44% of young people report having negative online experiences in the past 6 months, with almost one-third of these related to bullying that occurred at school.(2)
- 90% of young people sought out positive experiences, interactions and relationships online.(2)
- Young people on average access 3 - 4 social media platforms, with Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok being the most popular.(2,3)
- Almost one third of young people feel like they need to continually use social media more.(3)

## CREATING A SAFE SPACE FOR CONVERSATION

It is important to remember that while we all can experience the mental health harms associated with using social media, many young people find a sense of safety and community in online spaces. Likewise, while some young people are not allowed to use social media, many will still find ways to be connected online.

Most young people using social media will turn to friends, family, and even the internet when they need help with important issues in their life.<sup>(1)</sup>

Therefore, when talking to students about social media and how they use it, it is crucial to stay open-minded and use non-judgmental language. It's important to remain curious and explore the young person's thoughts and feelings collaboratively. You can do this by using open-ended questions and encourage dialogue in a safe and comfortable environment. This will help young people to explore the potential impacts of social media on their own health and wellbeing (both positive and negative!).



### Some key tips to create a safe space for young people to discuss social media:

- Be clear and direct in your language
- Be honest
- Address unsafe language or gestures
- Let them know about support services and resources that can help
- Leave the conversation on a calm and supportive note.

Try to stay up to date with popular social media platforms to understand the students' experience better. You can also provide them with other information and resources such as Orygen's ScrollSafe for teens ([www.orygen.org.au/Training/Resources/digital-technology/ScrollSafe](http://www.orygen.org.au/Training/Resources/digital-technology/ScrollSafe)) or the eSafety Commissioner's website (<https://www.esafety.gov.au>).



## SIGNS OF PROBLEMATIC SOCIAL MEDIA USE

More problematic social media use may arise when a young person is excessively and uncontrollably online. Young people who report high social media use, also report worse mental health and wellbeing.<sup>(1)</sup> Often their social media use will impact their day-to-day life, including academic performance, interpersonal relationships, social activities, hobbies, and general health and wellbeing.

Common signs of more problematic social media use can be found below.<sup>(3,4)</sup> These can be exacerbated by other factors in the young person's life that may be impacting their mental health, and vice versa. It is important to consider the young person holistically, thinking about the interplay between their offline environments and digital experiences.<sup>(1)</sup>

| IN THE CLASSROOM                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | ACADEMIC & BEHAVIOURAL                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenges with focus or frequently checks their phone, even when not allowed.</li> <li>Seems constantly exhausted, possibly due to late-night scrolling.</li> <li>Becomes anxious or irritable when unable to access their phone.</li> <li>Declining engagement in class discussions or activities, especially if related to social interactions.</li> <li>Frequently distracted by social media drama or online conflicts affecting friendships.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mood changes after being on their phone or computer (e.g., more withdrawn, upset, or agitated).</li> <li>Increased sensitivity to peer interactions – may seem more excluded, insecure, or reactive.</li> <li>Talks about pressure to be available 24/7 or worries about missing out (FOMO).</li> <li>Shows signs of cyberbullying (e.g., sudden changes in friendships or avoiding certain topics).</li> <li>Struggles to set boundaries, feeling responsible for constantly supporting friends online.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homework and assignments are frequently late or rushed.</li> <li>Declining academic performance despite previous effort and ability.</li> <li>Avoids offline activities they once enjoyed, prioritising social media over other interests.</li> <li>Expresses feeling overwhelmed by the online world but unsure how to take a break.</li> </ul> |

## WHEN AND HOW TO INTERVENE

It is important to spot early signs of problematic social media use and check in with students when you're noticing a decline in their wellbeing. Here are some things you can do when you want to check in:

- Be curious, non-judgmental, and collaboratively explore the young person's social media use, including what motivates them to be online.
- Encourage other pathways of online engagement that may be more supportive or helpful.
- Think about the broader context around the young person – are they experiencing other things that may be contributing to poor mental health and wellbeing.
- Empower the young person to reflect on their experience, recognise what or who online may be impacting them negatively, and support them to seek out support when they need it.
- Discuss who the young person's key supports are and who they would like to involve in receiving further support.

If you are concerned about the safety of a young person, you can consult your school's wellbeing team.



## ORYGEN'S SCROLLSAFE GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

### Download and print Orygen's ScrollSafe for teens!

ScrollSafe for teens takes young people through 10 tips, tricks, and advice to create safe social media environments that support their mental health and digital wellbeing.

ScrollSafe for teens can be printed and displayed in school wellbeing hubs, libraries, and other common areas.



[www.orygen.org.au/  
Training/Resources/  
digital-technology/  
ScrollSafe](http://www.orygen.org.au/Training/Resources/digital-technology/ScrollSafe)



## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RESOURCES

Mental Health and Wellbeing Toolkit for schools  
[www.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-toolkit](http://www.vic.gov.au/mental-health-and-wellbeing-toolkit)

Policy and Advisory Library:  
[www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal)

Digital learning Policy:  
[www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/digital-learning/policy](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/digital-learning/policy)

Acceptable Use Agreement Template:  
[www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/digital-learning/resources](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/digital-learning/resources)

Safe Socials:  
[www.vic.gov.au/safe-socials](http://www.vic.gov.au/safe-socials)

## RELATED ORYGEN RESOURCES

ScrollSafe for secondary school teachers.  
[www.orygen.org.au/Training/Resources/digital-technology/ScrollSafe](http://www.orygen.org.au/Training/Resources/digital-technology/ScrollSafe)

Social media & young people report:  
[www.orygen.org.au/Orygen-Institute/Policy-Areas/Social-and-environmental-factors/Social-Media-and-Young-People](http://www.orygen.org.au/Orygen-Institute/Policy-Areas/Social-and-environmental-factors/Social-Media-and-Young-People)

Chatsafe for educators: [www.orygen.org.au/chatsafe/Resources/chatsafe-for-educators](http://www.orygen.org.au/chatsafe/Resources/chatsafe-for-educators)

## OTHER INFORMATION

eSafety Commissioner:  
[www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)

PROJECT ROCKIT In Real Life:  
[www.projectrockit.com.au/irl](http://www.projectrockit.com.au/irl)

Reach Out for schools:  
<https://schools.au.reachout.com>

## REFERENCES

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2. eSafety Commissioner. The digital lives of Aussie teens. 2021 Feb.
3. Dockery M, Duncan A, Mavisakalyan A, Sanchez Arenas V, Twomey C, Loan Vu L. Youth in focus: Navigating Wellbeing in a Changing World [Internet]. Perth, Western Australia: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre; 2025 Mar [cited 2025 Mar 19] p. 1-168. (Focus on the States Series). Available from: <https://bcec.edu.au/assets/2025/03/BCEC-State-Report-Youth-in-Focus-2025-WEB.pdf>
4. Dumitrescu M, Dumitrescu N, Turliuc S. The Social Media Addiction: What Have We Learned So Far? – A Review. BRAIN. 2023 Mar 9;14(1):117-37.

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