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SOCIAL MEDIA AND TEENAGERS



*A Talking Points lesson for
English reading & speaking*

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Introduction

Give some examples of social media.

Which ones are good and provide a useful service? Which ones are not so useful and maybe unhealthy?

In your country, is there a problem with teenagers using social media too much?

Social Media and Teenagers

Social media has become a keystone in our daily lives.

Not a day goes by when most people do not check their updates on social media platforms, such as Facebook or Instagram.

And for teenagers, this is very true.

Except, their social media app of choice is more likely to be TikTok.

Teens cannot go one day without using one of their preferred social media apps. Look at any teenager on the street, on a bus or simply idling time waiting for a friend, and you will see them with their head down, facing the screen of their smartphone.

Teenagers have always had secrets.

Long before social media, teenagers liked to chat with their friends after school, catching up on all the news and gossip going on in their circle of friends. All the juicy details kept far away from the eyes and ears of their parents.

Teenagers kept diaries and journals — little notebooks where they wrote their darkest secrets and thoughts and stored them in private places.

Under their beds, on top of a wardrobe. Somewhere where their mothers could not find them.

But now social media allows teenagers to chat with their friends all the time.

They no longer have to wait until after school and gather at the school gates to catch up on the latest piece of news.

They can make videos of their deepest and darkest thoughts on social media apps, share them with select groups of people, and not have to worry if these thoughts can be discovered by one of their parents.

Phone passwords or hidden folders on their phones can hide the apps away from the prying eyes of grown-ups.

There are benefits to social media for teenagers.

It can help them practice and improve their social skills. This can help them later in life when they join the workforce and for life as an adult.

It can help them maintain better relationships with their friends.

What parent doesn't want that for their own children? The thought of their own son or daughter being alone and isolated is not something any parent wants to bear.

They can also learn about current affairs.

Every parent wants their child to be up-to-date with the news and what is going on in the world.

But then there are the downsides to social media and teenagers.

Despite being always connected, always communicating, many teenagers are spending large amounts of time alone.

They are chatting with their friends, updating their social status, but all alone in their room with no one else around them. Just them and their phone.

Then there are the risks of their reputation being tarnished through immature games or the spreading of rumours.

A harmless photograph is sent around the school and within minutes a teenager can become a laughingstock — or worse.

There are now reports of several teenagers committing suicide or suffering from depression. Certain images or messages circulated around that are not suitable for a young mind.

Girls gaze at the perfect bodies of Instagram influencers and then have negative opinions of their own bodies.

If fashion magazines were not bad enough many years ago, social media presents a far more sinister threat.

And, of course, the social media giants like Instagram or TikTok shirk all responsibility.

They wash their hands of any blame.

Reading Comprehension Questions

What is the article about?

What three social media apps does the article mention at the beginning?

Which social media app do teenagers prefer?

Where can teenagers be seen looking at their phones?

Do teenagers have secrets according to the article?

How did teens catch up with social news and stories before social media?

Where did teens keep accounts of their lives before social media?

Where did they hide their diaries?

How do teens today hide their social media information?

What are two advantages of social media for teenagers?

What are the disadvantages?

What mental health harm can social media cause in teens?

How can social media affect young girls' minds?

Do social media companies accept any responsibility?

Essential Vocabulary

social media	keystone	updates
platforms	Facebook	Instagram
TikTok	preferred	idling time
secrets	gossip	juicy details
diaries	journals	darkest
gather	discovered	passwords
hidden folders	prying	grown-ups
benefits	social skills	workforce
maintain	isolated	to bear
current affairs	up-to-date	downsides
despite	connected	communicating
reputation	tarnished	immature
rumours	harmless	laughingstock
committing suicide	suffering	depression
circulated	suitable	gaze
influencers	negative	opinions
sinister threat	giants	shirk
responsibility	wash their hands	blame

Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

Social Media — *websites or apps that people can use to create and share content with friends, family or others.*

“Old people rarely use social media.”

Keystone — a central part of a principle or ideology that joins all the other parts together.

“Student learning is a keystone principle in the school.”

As you do this for all the new vocabulary, you will find that your English level will improve in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Fill In The Blanks

Using the following vocabulary, fill in the blanks in the paragraph below.

social media	platforms	updates	preferred	secrets
gossip	grown-ups	downsides	isolated	rumours

_____ is used by many people online today. These apps and _____ have become ubiquitous in our lives and are the _____ means of communication for many. While these platforms provide a constant stream of _____ from friends and family, they also have their _____. They are often used to spread _____ and _____, which can lead to harm and hurt feelings. Additionally, relying too heavily on social media can lead to spending too much time alone. This can make people feel _____, as people spend more time online and less time interacting in person. Teenagers may want to keep some things as _____ to themselves, but social media makes it all public. While social media can be a great way to stay connected, it's important for _____ to be mindful of the potential negative

impacts and to balance their online and offline interactions.

You can check your answers at the end of the lesson plan!

Match The Words

Match the words below with the correct definition.

- a. Keystone
- b. Preferred
- c. Idling time
- d. Secrets
- e. Juicy details
- f. Gossip

- i. Chit-chat or casual conversation about other people
- ii. Time spent doing nothing in particular
- iii. A favourite or desired option
- iv. Small pieces of information that are intriguing and often not true
- v. Personal information kept hidden
- vi. Something that holds all other parts in place

You can check your answers at the end of the lesson plan!

Write Your Own Sentences

You can do this alone at home or in your class with other students.

Split into pairs of small groups. Each team has to come up with a sentence for each word below.

The best sentence wins!

- a. Keystone
- b. Preferred
- c. Idling time
- d. Secrets
- e. Juicy details
- f. Gossip

- a. The keystone of our group is our friendship.
- b. Chocolate is my preferred flavour of ice cream.
- c. I try to avoid idling time by reading a book or doing a puzzle.
- d. She kept her love life a secret from everyone.
- e. The juicy details of the celebrity's scandal made headlines.
- f. The office was buzzing with gossip about the new hire.

Show your sentences to your teacher. They can decide which

sentences are the best!

Also, check at the end of the lesson plan for example sentences...

What Does It Mean?

Look at the words below. Choose the correct definition for each word.

- a. Gather
- b. Discovered
- c. Passwords
- d. Hidden folders
- e. Prying

- a. A location on a computer where files or information are kept concealed
- b. To investigate or inquire in an intrusive or meddling manner.
- c. To bring together or collect
- d. A secret combination of characters used to access a computer or online account
- e. To find or come upon something by chance or effort

You can check your answers at the end of the lesson plan!

Discussion Questions

What social media platforms are popular in your country? Why are they popular? Which ones do you use?

Are teenagers obsessed with social media, as the article says? Why are they?

What role does social media play in the lives of teenagers today?

What other benefits can you think of for social media? Is there a real need for social media in modern society?

Is it a good idea that teenagers can communicate with their friends 24 hours a day? Why?

How has social media changed the way teenagers communicate with their friends and peers?

What other downsides can you think of for social media? What can be done about it?

How can a teenager's reputation be at risk through social media? If you have any examples, tell the class.

Should social media platforms hold more responsibility towards the effect they have on teenagers' lives? What should they do?

How has social media changed the way teenagers consume and

share news and information?

What do you think of the influencers on social media? Is this acceptable or not? Give your reasons to the class.

To what extent do social media platforms contribute to the pressure teenagers feel to present a perfect image of themselves online?

How can social media both positively and negatively affect teenagers' mental health? Give three positives and three negatives.

Should parents have access to their children's social media accounts? Why/why not?

At what age should a child's social media account be entirely private? Why do you think this?

How has the use of social media impacted the privacy and security of teenagers' personal information?

What steps can be taken to ensure that teenagers use social media responsibly and safely?

How can parents and educators effectively guide and educate teenagers about the use of social media?

What is the future of social media? Do you think there will be a big change in the next few years?

Role Play

This is a role play exercise.

There are two characters in this role play:

a teenager

a parent

The Situation

The teenager in the role play spends too much time on social media. They spend hours of every day on apps, looking at videos and sharing their views online.

It has got to a point that the teenager has now started to neglect their studies. Their school work and studies are suffering.

Also, they are not communicating as much with family members and others.

The parent of the teenager is very concerned about this. They have noticed a change in their personality and the way they communicate.

Of course, the parent is worried about their son/daughter's life at school.

So the two of them sit down to talk about it.

- What kind of feelings and views does the teenager have about their use of social media?
- What about the parent's views of the teenager's use of social media?
- How can they resolve this issue?
- What steps can they take to solve it?

Or...

Maybe they totally disagree.

Get into pairs and take some time to prepare your role play.

When you are ready — show the class!

Debate

This is a debate activity.

Divide the class into two teams of equal number. Also, choose one person to act as the chairperson. The chairperson should make sure that everyone has a chance to speak.

They also need to ensure there is order during the debate.

Team A

You are opposed to social media. You don't think teenagers should have access to it and you think it can only damage their lives.

It is known that social media can affect teenagers' studies in a very bad way. Their grades and school work will all go down.

And social media also has a very negative effect on teenagers' mental health. Some studies show increasing rates of depression and anxiety among teenagers who spend too much time on social media.

Team B

You think social media — if used correctly — can be a good thing for teenagers.

Social media is here to stay and you cannot remove it. You think teenagers should be allowed to use social media as it can help them with their social skills — plus it can help them make friends.

They can join groups of things they are interested in and talk with others.

They can also use social media to help with their studies, too.

If you deprive teenagers from using social media, this could isolate them from other people.

In your teams, spend some time discussing your views and ideas.

When you are ready — begin the debate!

Writing

This is a writing exercise.

Write an article about your views on social media and teenagers.

Express your ideas clearly, no matter if they are positive or negative.

When you have finished your article, read it out loud in front of the class. Ask your classmates for feedback.

Or you can give the article to your teacher for review.

Fill In The Blanks — Answers

Check the paragraph below. This is how it should look.

Social media is used by many people online today. These apps and **platforms** have become ubiquitous in our lives and are the **preferred** means of communication for many. While these platforms provide a constant stream of **updates** from friends and family, they also have their **downsides**. They are often used to spread **rumours** and **gossip**, which can lead to harm and hurt feelings. Additionally, relying too heavily on social media can lead to spending too much time alone. This can make people feel **isolated**, as people spend more time online and less time interacting in person. Teenagers may want to keep some things as **secrets** to themselves, but social media makes it all public. While social media can be a great way to stay connected, it's important for **grown-ups** to be mindful of the potential negative impacts and to balance their online and offline interactions.

Match The Words — Answers

These are the correct answers below.

- a. Keystone — vi. Something that holds all other parts in place
- b. Preferred — iii. A favourite or desired option
- c. Idling time — ii. Time spent doing nothing in particular
- d. Secrets — v. Personal information kept hidden
- e. Juicy details — iv. Small pieces of information that are intriguing and often not true
- f. Gossip — i. Chit-chat or casual conversation about other people

Write Your Own Sentences — Some Example Answers

The following are some good examples of using the words in the exercise.

- a. Keystone
- b. Preferred
- c. Idling time
- d. Secrets
- e. Juicy details
- f. Gossip

- a. The keystone of our group is our friendship.
- b. Chocolate is my preferred flavour of ice cream.
- c. I try to avoid idling time by reading a book or doing some exercise.
- d. She kept her love life a secret from everyone.
- e. The juicy details of the celebrity's scandal made the headlines.
- f. The office was buzzing with gossip about the new member of staff.

What Does It Mean? — Answers

Check the right answers below...

- a. Gather — c. To bring together or collect
- b. Discovered — e. To find or come upon something by chance or effort
- c. Passwords — d. A secret combination of characters used to access a computer or online account
- d. Hidden folders — a. A location on a computer where files or information are kept concealed
- e. Prying — b. To investigate or inquire in an intrusive or meddling manner.

Credits

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