

Social Networking Safety Tips

Having a Facebook or other social networking site profile (Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) is a good way to make plans with American friends and for the students to keep in touch after they return to their home country.

These simple safety tips can protect everyone from creating problems.

- Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat are public. The way everyone is presented on hundreds can see social media of people. For the students: every time that something is posted, be sure to decide whether they are representing themselves in a positive way: themselves, their home country, family, YFU, and host family well. Every year a few students lose their host families because of what they have posted on social media. **Don't Let this happen!!** "Friend" each other: host parents, host siblings, and Local Coordinator; it's a great way to help everyone communicate better. Many YFU fields have closed group pages on social media. Encourage students to join a group to share your experience with others and stay informed about what is happening in their area.
- Students should limit social media activity with their home country. While they are on exchange, social media should be used in English to communicate with their local American friends. Excessive communication with friends and family at home makes it harder to settle into the USA. If this becomes a problem for the student, YFU and their host family will ask them to limit their time on social media.
- Students should post pictures from their American life. It's fun for others to see what is happening, and this creates a photo album for the students when the exchange year is over.
- Keep the profile private - viewable only by people they know! Ask them not to share phone numbers, addresses, or emails with anyone! Set these limitations in their privacy settings.
- Delete inappropriate comments from friends. It's OK to delete things that embarrass them or that they would not be proud of later in life. If a friend tags them, they can delete tags or themselves in any pictures that they don't want others to see. Even if the profile is private, the photos can be accessed publicly if they have been "tagged." Again, a few students lose their host family every year because of an inappropriate photo or post from their friends.
- Don't harass or threaten others. Passing along rumors or unkind jokes or stories, or even false stories about someone on social networking sites is called cyberbullying. Host families must also be mindful not to complain about their students on social media. Students should tell a host parent, teacher, or YFU representative if they become the target of cyberbullying.
- Join YFU groups and other groups associated with interests. This will help students learn about American culture. But don't join groups that might offend or embarrass a host family or students' natural parents.
- Universities and employers are looking at social media more and more. Remember that all

posted information and pictures can become part of a school or job application later in life and are part of their YFU application now!

- YFU staff and volunteers will be viewing their social media. Any information contained in students' social media posts by the student or by others that violate the host family's trust or YFU rules may result in disciplinary action, including sending the student home.
- Don't friend anyone they don't know personally. It's OK to ignore friend requests from Strangers.