



<http://theparentcue.org/5-rules-we-gave-our-13-year-old-when-she-joined-instagram/>

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I've said it before and I'll say it again, I had a whole lot of ideas about raising a teenager in a social media world right up to the moment that I actually had a teenager in a social media world.

When my 13-year-old daughter wanted to join Instagram, we didn't treat it like a casual experience. It was to be her first foray into the world of social media. I knew the potential for fun and the peril for mistakes that using a social media app represented.

But I also don't believe the Internet is an evil devil machine designed to ruin our kids. All too often the media only hypes that bad moments, completely ignoring the great things that happen when you teach your kid a healthy approach to technology.

In order to help L.E. with Instagram, we gave her five simple rules:

1. THE ACCOUNT STAYS PRIVATE.

There are a lot of points that can be argued about social media, but this one feels very clear to me. There is absolutely zero reason for a 13-year-old to have a public Instagram account. Unless the 13-year-old is a cutting edge tech startup CEO running a million dollar business, they aren't using social media to build a platform. They are using it to connect with friends. The account stays private.

2. THE PASSWORDS ARE SHARED.

Whenever I hear a friend say, "My son won't give me his Instagram password" or "My daughter won't let us follow her" I giggle. Unless your kid is paying for their own phone, own data plan and while we're at it, own room and board, that's your phone. Imagine if you came home one day and your kid had installed a new lock on their bedroom door. You'd laugh and then immediately remove the lock. The passwords are shared with Jenny and I.

3. ONLY FRIENDS CAN FOLLOW YOU.

Sometimes parents think that if they follow rule 1 and have the account private they're all set. But that only covers one side of the street, social media goes both ways. I love that L.E. has friends from school, church and her neighborhood who follow her, but she doesn't need a bunch of strangers monitoring her visual life. Every time someone random requests to follow her, we talk about it. Only friends can follow you.

4. PRIVATE INFORMATION STAYS PRIVATE.

You'd be surprised at how many teens post their phone numbers, addresses and even screenshots of their driver's license online. Unless we're on vacation, we also don't tag our location in the photo. It might seem like a minor thing but the risks of sharing private information online far outweigh any possible benefits. Private information stays private.

5. BATHING SUIT PHOTOS DON'T GET POSTED.

This one might be unique to having a teenage daughter, but as we work toward understanding modesty, we make decisions like this. It's not about being ashamed of your body or trying to live up to a certain standard of beauty. It's about realizing that a photo you post can never be deleted. Even if you remove it, it's now on servers you'll never have access to. Modesty matters. Bathing suit photos don't get posted.

Are these all the issues you should think about with Instagram? Of course not, but hopefully they will start the conversation.

Don't turn your kid loose online and just hope for the best.

Be deliberate. Be involved. Be curious.