



Media Literacy for Parents

Media Literacy 101: Terms You Might Hear

 Meta + **NAMLE** National
Association
for Media
Literacy
Education

Terms You Might Hear

Sometimes, navigating social media can feel like speaking an entirely different language.



New words and phrases crop up all the time, and teenagers often use their own slang or shorthand references for the technology in their lives.

Knowing how to “speak the language” of social media empowers parents and caretakers to better understand different types of interactions their teens might be having online, what their teen’s social media footprint might look like, and how best to account for concerns over safety and privacy. After all, we can’t help our teens navigate a DM, follow request, or mention if we don’t know what those are.

While social media features will certainly evolve over time, knowing key concepts will empower you to better understand your teen’s online experience. Understanding and using the key terms and features described below can improve your social media experience while also providing an opportunity to think more critically about how messages are created and shared. From the fun and interactive—like hashtags—to the serious and consequential—like doxxing, being media literate online relies on core social media knowledge.



Learn more: meta.com/familycenter

Flex Your Knowledge

Terms You Might Hear

Mention/Tag — Most social media platforms offer ways to directly name-drop another user in your own media message. By tagging a person’s username or using an “@” symbol before their username, you can often directly notify that person that they are referenced in your content or post. Mentions and tags can be used to encourage collaboration around a discussion or even indicate credit for an idea, message, or visual. Depending on your individual privacy settings, mentioning or tagging another user could allow users who are not your own social media followers to see your content. Sometimes, tagging and mentions are used to criticize or call out other social media users. You can also use mentions or to connect with brands or companies for customer service support.

DM — DM is an abbreviation for the phrase “direct message.” Direct messaging is a way for a social media user to privately contact another user. All major social media platforms have their own direct message channels where only the sender and recipient can view messages sent directly. If someone “slides into your DMs,” it means you received an unexpected or unsolicited direct message from someone, often in a flirtatious way. Being cautious about unexpected direct messages from people you don’t know is an important media literacy skill—scammers will often use direct messages as a way to initiate contact.

Doxxing — While we love the power of social media to connect, create and inspire, we know that not all social media interactions are positive. Doxxing is when a person uses social media to reveal personal and often embarrassing information about another user, sometimes to the point of blackmail. Doxxing is a kind of harassment that should be taken seriously.

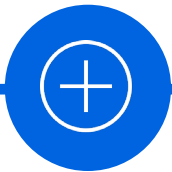
Catfishing — Not all social media users are authentic in the way they communicate or in their intentions. “Catfishing” is when a person creates a fake identity or fictional persona in order to lure people into romantic, friendship or business relationships. In this situation, the “catfish” is really an online predator who, like scammers, seeks to deceive but does so over time by developing a relationship with the target of their catfishing.

Hashtag — A hashtag is a word or phrase preceded by the pound symbol (#). On social media, hashtags act as a keyword or phrase that categorizes content and makes it easier to find and connect similar messages. For example, searching the hashtag #whatsfordinner might pull up recipes and ideas for your next evening meal. In an Instagram post, clicking on a hashtag that says #yoga will show you top and recent posts that also include the hashtag #yoga.

Talk It Out

- **Guide the discussion:** Building healthy relationships with your teens around social media requires open-minded discussion that is aimed first at understanding and learning about their online worlds.

Consider these starting points for conversation:



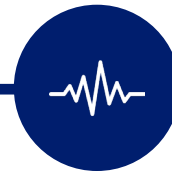
Discuss what strategies your teen can use if they receive a direct message or message request from someone they don't know. What type of message might mean they should block that person from future contact? What kind of messages are worth reporting to the social media platform?



Ask your teen how they decided whether to connect with strangers in social media spaces. Sometimes, requests to connect through social media from strangers are a way for potential doxers to get access to your teens account and their personal information, or those requests might be the start of catfishing. What decision process do they use to protect themselves from people who might have malicious intentions online?



Ask your teen how they feel when others mention or tag them online. Do their friends and followers know what their preferences are for being tagged and mentioned?



Make a point to directly discuss doxxing with your teen, even if it is uncomfortable at first. Have any of their friends ever been doxxed? Have they? What would they do if someone was sharing personal or embarrassing information about them online? What kind of personal information is best kept offline? Make a plan just in case.

Action Steps



Use your favorite search engine to update yourself on what hashtags are trending online. This is a great way to keep tabs on the topics of conversation that are popular for any age group.



Use mentions and tags to keep your family connected on social media. Make a point to share content with your teen they might enjoy, and tag them or mention them in social media messages you want them to see.



Not all teens want to interact with their parents or guardians directly online, so develop shared expectations of what tagging or mentions would look like first. For instance, they might not want you tagging them in inspirational messages subtly designed to encourage them to clean their rooms. But, they might love it if you mention them when you share delicious recipes you find online or posts about exciting upcoming events in your city.



Practice good digital security by making sure passwords are strong, changed regularly, and not shared among accounts.

