

CTRL SHIFT

**Parent & Carer Guide:
The Australian Social Media Minimum Age Law
16+ Age Delay**



From 10 December 2025, social media platforms must take reasonable steps to block or remove accounts belonging to Australians under 16. This includes existing and new accounts.

Platforms must:

- notify users clearly,
- allow young people to download their photos or data, and
- provide a simple appeal or review option if a mistake is made.

The rule applies to social media services whose primary purpose is to let people interact, follow, and post content (for example: Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook, YouTube, X/Twitter, and similar apps).

Private messaging apps (like WhatsApp or iMessage) or gaming chats (like Minecraft or Roblox) are not included unless they start operating like social networks.

Platforms can use age-checking systems such as age estimation, age inference, or verification but they cannot force government ID as the only option.

They must offer a non-ID choice and protect personal data.

How to prepare young people for the change

1. Start early, stay calm

Begin conversations now. Ask open questions:

- “What do you like most about your apps?”
- “What will be hardest to let go of?”
- Stay curious, not critical. It’s about understanding what social media means to them before helping them transition.

2. Make the plan with them

Let kids help shape the plan. For example, they can:

- choose favourite photos to print or keep,
- decide the order in which apps are wound down,
- help design what replaces those hours online.
- Shared decision-making builds trust and resilience.

3. Taper, don’t cut

Reduce screen time gradually, one app at a time. Predictability helps kids stay steady.

4. Name the feelings

For some, this will feel like a loss. Acknowledge sadness and anxiety. Validate what mattered to them and reassure them that new ways to connect will come.

5. Replace — don't just restrict

Social media met real needs: belonging, identity, creativity, and expression. Those needs still exist. The key is to fill the space with positive, human alternatives — especially offline first.

What you can do now:

Help your child download and save data from social apps before 10 December 2025.

- Make the shift gradual — replace time online with new offline habits.
- Support privacy — remind them platforms can't demand government ID only.
- Coordinate with schools — create device-free spaces, lunchtime clubs, and shared routines.
- Stay connected — especially with quiet kids who may retreat instead of react.

Why this matters

The goal of Australia's Social Media Minimum Age is child protection, not punishment. It gives young people time to grow, learn, and connect safely before stepping into systems built for adults.

This isn't a ban on technology. It's a pause to protect development, create healthier habits, and build real-world connections.

Digital but not social

Encourage digital creativity without social feeds:

- Video, photo, or music editing apps (share privately or offline).
- Creative coding tools
- Learning platforms
- Streaming or reading apps with no comments or public posting

Avoid any service that lets kids collect followers, post publicly, or build a profile; those are treated as social media and will be covered by the law.

Myth-busters

Myth 1: “This is a government Digital ID. My child will have to upload their passport or licence.”

Fact: This is not a Digital ID scheme and not government surveillance. Platforms cannot require government-issued ID as the only way to check age, and they cannot force you to use an accredited Digital ID provider without offering a reasonable non-ID alternative (for example, facial/voice age estimation, in-app review, or other options). Privacy laws still apply and age checks must be data-minimising.

What parents can do:

- If an app asks for ID, look for the alternative option. It must be offered.
- Expect clear, plain-English explanations of what’s collected and for how long.

Myth 2: “A VPN will get around the 16+ rule.”

Fact: A VPN won’t be a reliable workaround. Platforms are expected to use multiple location signals and VPN-detection (IP reputation, device and network clues) to work out if someone is ordinarily in Australia, and to act on suspected circumvention.

What parents can do:

- Talk with your child about why the rule exists (harm reduction, not punishment).
- If you spot circumvention, report it in-app services must offer easy underage account reporting and investigate.

Myth 3: “I can just make a parent account and let my child use it.”

Fact: That’s not what the law allows, and platforms are expected to detect and deter account hand-overs (for example, sudden profile/device changes, multiple accounts from one device, or behaviour that looks under-16). Providers should prevent these transfers and may deactivate accounts used by under-16s, even if an adult opened them. Also, remember if the child sends an inappropriate image or bullies someone from that account, the adult that owns it could be held accountable.

What parents can do:

- Don’t share your login. Use device-level parental controls and family settings instead.
- If an account is mistakenly flagged, you (or your child) can appeal via the platform’s review process—without being forced to use government ID.

Myth 4: “Kids won’t be able to watch YouTube anymore.”

Fact: The rule is about accounts, not banning the open internet. Under-16 accounts on covered social platforms must be removed or deactivated, but the law does not prohibit watching videos without signing in. Many services also offer child-specific experiences (e.g., a kids app or supervised mode) that do not give the child a social media account. Whether the main service is covered depends on the legal test above; if it’s a social platform (users post, interact, connect), under-16 accounts will be turned off in Australia.

What parents can do:

- Use a TV app or browser to view videos without signing in, or use the service’s kids experience where available.
- Remember: features like subscribing, commenting, posting or going live require an account and won’t be available to under-16s on covered platforms.

Myth 5: “Platforms will delete everything and my child will lose memories.”

Fact: Services should handle under-16 accounts with care, clear warnings, kind language, ways to download photos and posts, and links to support. Review/appeal options must be easy to find.

What parents can do:

- Help your child export their data in time.
- If your child is close to 16, some services may suspend rather than immediately remove, so the account can resume at 16 (platform choice; privacy rules still apply).

Myth 6: “Everyone will have to verify with ID immediately.”

Fact: The guidance is risk-based and proportionate. Platforms are not required to age-verify every user with ID checks. They can combine light-touch methods (estimation/inference) with targeted checks and must keep data collection to what’s necessary.

Quick timeline & who does what

- Law passed: 2024. Preparation: 2025. Enforcement begins: 10 Dec 2025.
- Platforms: prevent under-16 accounts; remove existing ones with care; offer appeals; provide non-ID options; mitigate VPN and other workarounds.
- Parents/Schools: set expectations, support data download, use device/app-store parental controls, and guide kids toward safer online activities.
- Penalties: up to \$49.5m for systemic non-compliance.

Safe, non-social online activities for under-16s

(All listed options are designed for children/families and, at the time of writing, do not provide open social networking features like public posting + connecting with strangers. Still, check settings and privacy info for your child's age.)

Watch & learn (no account required or kids modes available)

- Service's Kids app or supervised mode (e.g., kids versions of major video platforms).
- ABC Kids / ABC Education (AU public broadcaster learning & wellbeing content).

Read & listen

- Library apps (e.g., Libby / Sora) — free eBooks & audiobooks via your library/school.
- ABC Kids Listen / curated kids podcasts (ad-free options available).

Create

- Stop Motion Studio, GarageBand (music), Sketchbook/Tayasui Sketches (art).
- Book Creator (offline projects) or device notes/photos tools for journalling.
- Vimeo for video creators.

Online gaming is not included in the age delay. Roblox is introducing age verification by the end of the 2025.

Tip: For younger children prefer offline or local-only modes in apps.

Avoid enabling any feature that allows public posting, open chats, or follower systems.

Ideas to fill the gap

Move & play

- Team sports, parkrun, or surf lifesaving
- Skate, dance, martial arts, climbing, or yoga
- Local park challenges frisbee, cycling, trail running

Create & perform

- Music, theatre, film, art, or dance classes
- Build a podcast or short film with friends (share privately)
- Start a drawing challenge or zine club
- Learn photography, sewing, or pottery

Make & build

- Coding with Scratch or Minecraft Creative Mode (offline)
- Build a veggie patch, bike, or DIY project
- Try woodworking, electronics kits, or baking challenges

Connect & belong

- Scouts, youth groups, debating or chess clubs
- Join a local community centre or youth council
- Host a board-game night or trivia session
- Volunteer with an op shop, library, or animal shelter

Outdoors & nature

- Bushwalks, geocaching, birdwatching, camping
- Beach clean-ups or landcare
- Astronomy or star-gazing nights

Calm & wellbeing

- Journalling or gratitude notebooks
- Mindfulness, puzzles, or art therapy
- Family movie nights, reading corners, or cooking together

Learn & grow

- Learn an instrument or a trade skill
- Budget for a goal, open a savings account
- Try a short course barista, first aid, coding
- Start a micro-business: pet-sitting, lawn care, tutoring

Parent checklist (5 steps)

Plan the change - Sit with your child, explain why the rule exists (to reduce harm), and decide together what will replace any social media time.

Export memories - Use each platform's download tool before deactivation and save content to family storage.

Choose safe alternatives - Pick a few options above and pin them on the home screen. Enable kids modes where offered.

Lock in controls - Turn on app-store age limits, disable installing unknown apps, and review screen-time settings.

Know the help paths - If an account is wrongly flagged, use the platform's appeal/review flow; if an app demands government ID, choose the non-ID option.

Privacy issues can also go to www.oaic.gov.au

For further updates on the delay visit www.esafety.gov.au

Disclaimer: This information is accurate as of November 2025. It is provided for general awareness and should not be taken as legal advice. We've done our best to make sure it's correct and up to date when published, but laws and platform practices may change. We can't accept liability for any loss or action taken based on this information.

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