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**DEBATE KIT:**  
THAT SOCIAL MEDIA  
SHOULD BE RESTRICTED TO  
PEOPLE AGED 16 AND OLDER

**TEACHING RESOURCE**

**DEBATING**

# DEBATE KIT: THAT SOCIAL MEDIA SHOULD BE RESTRICTED TO PEOPLE AGED 16 AND OLDER

## TEACHING RESOURCE

### Introduction

In June 2024, there were growing calls for a ban on children aged under 16 accessing social media, with support on both sides of politics. Concerns were raised about the potential harm of social media including emotional distress, excessive screen time and heightened anxiety among young users. There was also concern about children seeing content that is not appropriate for their age.

Supporters of an age restriction argue that this measure would protect young children until they are equipped to navigate social media responsibly. Similar legislative considerations are underway in other countries including the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France and New Zealand.

People who didn't like the idea said it would be hard to make sure children followed the rules. They also said social media is good for young people to make friends and learn things.

To help consider the affirmative and negative arguments, this debate kit provides key points and website references about the debate topic to assist as starting points for research and debate planning. This kit is designed to accompany the *Debating guide for classroom teachers* booklet available at [seriouslysocial.org.au](https://seriouslysocial.org.au).

## Example arguments

### Debate topic: That social media should be restricted to people aged 16 and over

#### Affirmative arguments

Using social media can make young people feel bad about themselves. Banning it until they are older would allow their brains to develop so that they can cope better when they see bad things online.

Social media can hurt children emotionally, so it is not right to let them use it knowing it can be bad for them.

Age restrictions would make it easier for parents to manage their children's online presence and behaviours.

Studies around the world show that social media can make stereotypes about boys and girls worse. It can also affect what girls choose to do for work and how they learn.

Other comparable nations, including New Zealand, France, UK and USA are also currently debating social media bans for younger children.

Social media platforms use features designed to be addictive, meaning that the younger a person starts using social media, the earlier they will be hooked.

Spending too much time looking at screens, like on social media, is reducing children's physical health and overall abilities. Australian teens were found to be some of the least active in the world in a study.

#### Negative arguments

Putting age restrictions on social media use could cause young people to go online in secret and in doing so, they may be too scared to ask for support or assistance if they experienced trouble while online.

A social media age ban would be difficult to enforce given current levels of technology.

An age ban could result in young people not developing the skills required to navigate social media spaces safely.

Children use social media to talk to family and friends, find people who like the same things, feel like they belong, form likeminded communities and participate in learning. If they can't use it until they're older, they'll miss out on these good things.

Banning social media for children under 16 would take away parents' choice to decide if their kids are ready to use it.

The responsibility for making social media spaces safe should be with the company that provides the platform.

Parents should be more responsible in monitoring their children's social media use and restricting it if needed.

## Web links

### That social media should be restricted to people aged 16 and over

Topic	Web link
E-Safety Commissioner Infographics on young people's online behaviours <i>How young Australians deal with the challenges they face online</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/465LJZd">https://bit.ly/465LJZd</a>
E-Safety Commissioner Infographics on parental awareness of teenagers' online experiences <i>Mind the gap: Parental awareness of children's exposure to risk online</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/3zEkLfg">https://bit.ly/3zEkLfg</a>
E-Safety Commissioner Infographics on children's online experiences <i>Children's online lives: the positives and negatives</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/4cSGv5g">https://bit.ly/4cSGv5g</a>
The Conversation News article <i>140th out of 146: Australian teens do close to the least physical activity in the world</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/3Y5tLZj">https://bit.ly/3Y5tLZj</a>
The Guardian News article <i>Social media age restrictions may push children online in secret, Australian eSafety commissioner says</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/3WkdOJh">https://bit.ly/3WkdOJh</a>
ABC News News article <i>Social media age limits might be popular with politicians and parents, but experts warn they aren't simple</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/4cWFER1">https://bit.ly/4cWFER1</a>
E-Safety Commissioner <i>Information guide for parents: When are they ready for social media accounts?</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/4cHhIH9">https://bit.ly/4cHhIH9</a>
The Conversation News article <i>Tech solutions to limit kids' access to social media are fraught with problems, including privacy risks</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/4cEUgVy">https://bit.ly/4cEUgVy</a>
Newshub (New Zealand) News clip <i>How young is too young for social media? Calls to lift age limit to sixteen</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/3Y2fsOO">https://bit.ly/3Y2fsOO</a>
Amnesty International Video explainer <i>Is TikTok safe? Algorithm reveals the truth</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/3Wi0lBo">https://bit.ly/3Wi0lBo</a>

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Topic	Web link
ABC News News article <i>6 News anchor Leonardo Puglisi slams bi-partisan under 16 social media ban</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/3W8kClG">https://bit.ly/3W8kClG</a>
7AM Podcast <i>Why did Albanese back banning under-16s from social media? Interview with Leo Puglisi</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/4bzMHy4">https://bit.ly/4bzMHy4</a>
The Educator News article <i>Not so fast on social media ban, say experts</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/4bzMOcY">https://bit.ly/4bzMOcY</a>
The Educator News article <i>Social media having a negative impact on girls: research</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/4eY8gLG">https://bit.ly/4eY8gLG</a>
Behind the News News clip (0.00-144) <i>Social Media Ban for Kids &amp; Teens in SA?</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/4eWKwrj">https://bit.ly/4eWKwrj</a>
Behind the News News clip and vox pop (0.00-2.43) <i>Should Kids Under 16 Be on Social Media?</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/463xuUF">https://bit.ly/463xuUF</a>
36 months Website/petition Online petition and info hub calling for the raising of the age limit on social media use from 13 to 16	<a href="https://bit.ly/3WheKhN">https://bit.ly/3WheKhN</a>
Kids News News article <i>Tech expert warns kids shouldn't have a phone till they are 14</i>	<a href="https://bit.ly/4eRrO4e">https://bit.ly/4eRrO4e</a>



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An initiative of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia.  
Published August 2024.

Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia Pty  
ABN: 59 957 839 703

3/95 Northbourne Ave Turner ACT 2612  
GPO Box 1956, Canberra, ACT 2601

(02) 6249 1788  
[info@socialsciences.org.au](mailto:info@socialsciences.org.au)  
[socialsciences.org.au](http://socialsciences.org.au)

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