

# A guide for young people to help you think about social media and your future



**We have all said or done things we regret or wish we could take back – that's totally normal and part of growing and learning.**

Social media can make this more complicated though, as what we do and say can stick around and be taken out of context.

Think of cringey posts we made when we were younger, pictures or videos other people take of us and put online, or screenshots that circulate and are saved in places we can't even see.

Some employers are really good at respecting boundaries and acknowledging that people grow and change over time. What we say and post when we are in our early teens is different to how we will think and act in our 20s and 30s. But some employers think that everything online is fair game when making hiring decisions, so we need to be aware of the reality. Up to 90% of employers use social media to vet job applicants. How do we best prepare for this?

## Tips from young people and employers:

1

### **Check your privacy settings!**

Each platform has a number of different privacy settings that all users should learn about, and check on every now and then (as the default settings can change). Check to see who can see what, and make use of functions like Instagram's 'close friends list' to share stories with smaller groups. If your account is private, every now and then review your followers list too.

2

### **Think carefully about what you are using social media for:**

Just for friends? Building a business or portfolio of work? Aspiring influencer? To stay in touch with family? You can have multiple profiles and use different platforms for different purposes, and modify your privacy settings and your sharing strategies for each.

3

### **Social media moderation and curation:**

We have to take control over our social media, not just time spent on apps (although this can be helpful) but things like unfollowing or muting people or content that is distressing, nudging or training algorithms to show more of or less of the kind of content you want to see, and going back to archive, delete, or edit old posts and tags from time to time.

4

### **Be data conscious:**

Be aware of the personal information you post, such as any addresses, the school you go to, where you work, and other identifying information. Also explore what data of yours social media companies collect and use – take a look for instance at Facebook's ad preferences they have for you (Settings > Ad Preferences).

5

### **Remember things can be taken out of context and screenshot.**

**Look after your friends**, and point out when you think things they have posted are not okay, might come back to haunt them, or might upset someone else. Be respectful of the privacy of people you follow too.