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## Social media bans for under-16-year-olds?



Source: Adobe Stock/master1305, balintandreea

7 a

### Speaking

#### Warm-up: talking about social media use

Get into small groups and talk about the following:

1. Which of the social media platforms below do you know and use?
2. How important are social media in your life? How much time do you spend on them?
3. What negative or even disturbing experiences have you had on social media?
4. Could you imagine life without social media? Why / why not?
5. What have you heard about Australia's ban on social media for under 16-year-olds?



Source: Adobe Stock/  
Ilchenko Oleg

7 b

### Vocabulary

#### Social media vocabulary

Match the definitions in A with the words in B. Put the number in the boxes provided.

### VocabBooster

	A		B
using the internet to send threatening or nasty messages	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	to follow
a person who tries to make people buy a certain product	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	to block
to subscribe to a page / account	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	to go viral
to become extremely popular	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	influencer
to prevent sb from accessing a particular account	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	cyberbullying
to move up and down on a screen	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	algorithm
to delete sb from one's contact list	7	<input type="checkbox"/>	to scroll
mathematical formula used by social media when displaying content	8	<input type="checkbox"/>	to unfriend

7 c

### Vocabulary

#### Social media idioms / collocations

Fill in the correct word(s) to form meaningful phrases (idioms / collocations). Sometimes more than one option is possible.

1. to add
2. to meet someone face
3. to send a(n)
4. to update one's
5. to log
6. to  time on social media
7. to get hooked
8. to get addicted

7 d

## Banning social media

### Reading

Read the text about a law that is supposed to ban all under-16-year-olds from using social media. Then answer the questions below.

AE

## Australia bans social media for kids under 16

Australia approved the ban on 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2024. Australia's communications minister introduced a world-first law into Parliament that bans children under 16 from using social media, saying online safety was one of parents' toughest challenges.

Michelle Rowland said TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, Reddit, X and Instagram were among the platforms that would face fines of up to 50 million Australian dollars (US\$ 33 million) for systemic failures to prevent young children from holding accounts. "This law seeks to set a new normative value in society that accessing social media is not the defining feature of growing up in Australia," Rowland told Parliament. "There is wide acknowledgement that something must be done in the immediate term to help prevent young teens and children from being exposed to streams of content

unfiltered and infinite," she added. X owner, Elon Musk, warned that Australia intends to go further, posting on his platform: "Seems like a backdoor way to control access to the internet by all Australians."

The law has found wide political support. Once it has become law, the platforms will have one year to work out how to implement the age restriction. "For too many young Australians, social media can be harmful," Rowland said. "Almost two-thirds of 14- to 17-year-old Australians have viewed extremely harmful content online including drug abuse, suicide or self-harm as well as other violent material. One quarter have been exposed to content promoting unsafe eating habits."

Government research found that 95% of Australian care-givers find online safety to be one of their "toughest parenting challenges," she said. Social media had a social responsibility and could do better in addressing harms on their platforms, she added. "This is about pro-

tecting young people, not punishing or isolating them, and letting parents know that we're in their corner when it comes to supporting their children's health and wellbeing," Rowland said.

Child welfare and internet experts have raised concerns about the ban, including isolating 14- and 15-year-olds from their already established online social networks. Rowland said there would not be age restrictions placed on messaging services, online games or platforms that substantially support the health and education of users.

"We are not saying risks don't exist on messaging apps or in online gaming. While users can still be exposed to harmful content by other users, they do not face the same algorithmic curation of content and psychological manipulation to encourage near-endless engagement," she said.

The government announced that a consortium led by British company Age Check Certification Scheme has been contracted to examine various technologies to estimate and verify ages. In

addition to removing children under 16 from social media, Australia is also looking for ways to prevent children under 18 from accessing online pornography, a government statement said.

Age Check Certification Scheme's chief executive, Tony Allen, said on Monday the technologies being considered included age estimation and age inference. Inference involves establishing a series of facts about individuals that point to them being at least a certain age.

Rowland said the platforms would also face fines if they misused personal information of users gained for age-assurance purposes. Information used for age assurance must be destroyed after serving that purpose unless the user consents to it being kept, she said.



in one's corner:  
an jemandes  
Seite

fine: Geldstrafe

normative: eine  
Norm setzend  
defining  
feature:  
entscheidendes  
Merkmal

curation: Pflege  
(von Online-  
Inhalten)

infinite: endless  
consortium:  
Gruppe (von  
Expertinnen/  
Experten)

to implement:  
umsetzen

chief executive:  
Geschäftsführer/in

inference:  
Schlussfolgerung

1. What reason did communications minister Michelle Rowland give for the ban?
2. What sanctions do platforms like TikTok or Snapchat face if they don't comply with the law?
3. What should kids and younger teens be protected from?
4. How does the public view the law?
5. What do people sceptical of the law say?
6. What exceptions are there?
7. What do social network sites have to do?

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## Language in use

AE

to indicate:  
hinweisen auf

surreptitious: done  
without anyone  
knowing or noticing

### To ban or not to ban?

Read the text about social media bans for teens. Some parts are missing. Choose the correct part (A–N) for each gap (1–11). There are two extra parts that you should not use. Write your answers in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.

#### Why youth social media bans are a bad idea

A teenage boy is scrolling through his Instagram account one night. He notices that a friend has posted a (0) \_\_\_ message indicating depression and suicidal thoughts. The boy is (1) \_\_\_ and tells his father who contacts the depressed child's parents. The situation is addressed and the child's mental health (2) \_\_\_.



If the boy was banned from using Instagram or a similar app, either by his parents or (3) \_\_\_, this situation could have ended quite differently. He might have been less likely to approach his father with his worries for fear that he would get in trouble (4) \_\_\_ a banned social media platform. He might be afraid that his friend would also get in trouble. And the friend may not have received the support he (5) \_\_\_.

As with most bans, they not only don't work but they can also make the continued use of a prohibited product (6) \_\_\_.

There have been increasing calls (7) \_\_\_ youth social media usage, arguing that social media is damaging to children's mental health and overall well-being. In March 2023 the governor of Utah (8) \_\_\_ laws that require parental consent for social media usage for children under the age of 18, and prohibit those under 18 (9) \_\_\_ social media between 10:30 pm and 6:30 am. Rather than preventing social media use (10) \_\_\_ and teens, these new Utah laws will lead them underground to use social media in more surreptitious, and less safe, ways. This is (11) \_\_\_ prohibitions in general.

- |                          |                  |           |
|--------------------------|------------------|-----------|
| A by children            | F from accessing | K needed  |
| B by the state           | G gets worse     | L signed  |
| <del>C</del> distressing | H improves       | M true of |
| D for banning            | I less expensive | N worried |
| E for using              | J less safe      |           |

Test format  
Banked gap-fill

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
C											

Source: Adobe Stock/atichat

Source: [fee.org/articles/why-youth-social-media-bans-are-a-bad-idea/](https://fee.org/articles/why-youth-social-media-bans-are-a-bad-idea/) — Kerry McDonald

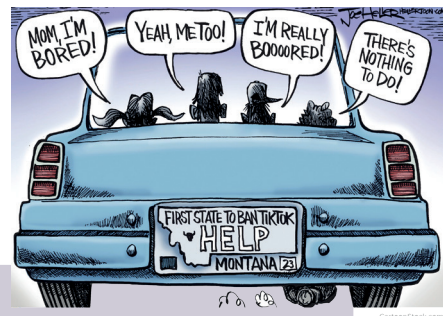
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## Speaking

### Analysing a cartoon

Get into pairs and look at the cartoon.

- » Describe the situation.
- » Explain the message of the cartoon.
- » Discuss if you agree with it.



Source: CartoonStock/Joe Heller

The US state of Montana banned TikTok in 2023 from the state to protect the privacy of its users as TikTok is owned by a Chinese company. Experts doubt if such a ban will work technically.

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## Listening

### Track 1



First Amendment:

1. Verfassungszusatz – “Lawmakers must not restrict certain freedoms.”

Big Tech: big internet companies like Google or Amazon

### Test format Note form

funnel: (hier:) Anlass, Grund  
to allay: beschwichtigen

### Banning social media for under-16-year-olds

You are going to listen to a debate about opposing views on social media bans. First, you will have 45 seconds to study the task below, then listen to the recording twice. While listening, answer the questions (1–7) using a maximum of four words. Write your answers in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.

In March 2024 Florida passed a law to restrict social media access for under-16-year-olds.

0	What do kids under 16 need to go onto a social media app?	parental consent
1	What negative effects can the overuse of social media have? (Name <u>two</u> .)	
2	What are Natasha's arguments against the ban? (Give <u>one</u> answer.)	
3	According to Natasha, how should things be within families? (Give <u>one</u> answer.)	
4	What makes things difficult for parents? (Give <u>one</u> answer.)	
5	What benefits of social platforms are mentioned? (Give <u>one</u> answer.)	
6	What could the new law do for parents? (Give <u>one</u> answer.)	
7	Who should be restricted and made responsible?	

Gail Clark is from the Ethics and Public Policy Center.  
Natasha Singer is from the Civil Liberties Group Trespass.

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## Lead-in

### Collecting arguments for and against social media bans

Opinions on a social media ban for under-16-year-olds are divided. Sum up some pros and cons you have come across here.

pros



cons



Source: Adobe Stock/antto

**7i**

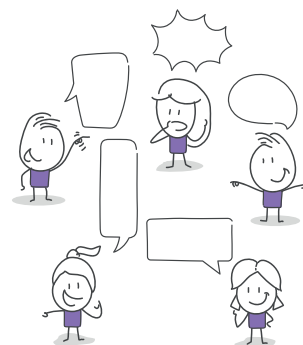
### A role-play activity

#### Speaking

Get into groups of five and hold a debate about banning access to social media. Each person now picks of the following roles:

- » a concerned parent who supports such a law
- » a teenager who uses social media to organise their social life
- » a tech expert who advocates stronger regulations for Big Tech
- » a teacher who sees the distractive as well as the learning potential of social apps
- » a host

Think of at least two arguments / examples for your role.



Source: Adobe Stock/lines of life