



South Australian Debating Association Inc

Junior B, Round 3

“that the minimum age to have a social media account should be 18 years”

1. Type of Topic

Topics that require teams to argue that something should or should not be done, or in this case that a person must, or must not, be 18 years of age or older to have a social media account, are a normative (model) debate. This means that the affirmative team should propose a ‘model’ (which provides a policy that defines the method or way of how this idea would be implemented). The model should clearly outline what changes the affirmative team will make to the *status quo*¹, and how these changes will be enacted. The negative team can either support the status quo or propose a counter-model. The counter-model must be different from the status quo, but also different from the model the affirmative team is suggesting. The negative team should ensure they clearly identify whether they are supporting the status quo or proposing a counter-model.

2. Background / Context

Social media applications/services are a communication tool popular with young people of all ages. Unlike a face-to-face communication, social media communication is about one to many with the ability to communicate information that can be permanent.

Currently, the minimum age for a person to have a social media account is 13. At this age, and not before, they can legally have accounts to use and access Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and other social media platforms.

The reason most social media platforms use an age limit of 13 or over is in part because of a law in the USA. The COPPA (Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act) law requires that any organisations or people operating online services (including social media services) are not allowed to collect the personal information of anyone under the age of 13 without parental permission.

To avoid the necessity of obtaining parental permission for any user under the age of 13, most services have instead chosen to place an age restriction of 13 to their services. They write this

¹ *Status quo* is a Latin term meaning the current state of affairs or how things currently stand.

rule into their Terms and Conditions – which users must agree to when they initially sign up and some services may ask users to declare their age during the sign up process.

In 2018, WhatsApp account users in Europe, changed its age limit to 16 in response to the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) coming into effect, however, this only applies in the European region, and not elsewhere in the world.

While the user does not pay to use a social media platform such as Facebook, businesses and organisations, and other persons pay the social media platform to show their advertisements targeting specific groups of people based upon the personal data stored by the social media platforms.

The rules around age relate to privacy, but also are relevant to safety.

Social media use by under-age children surged during Covid lockdowns, according to an annual online safety survey. More eight to 12-year-olds than ever are using social media apps, despite being younger than the minimum age restrictions that are meant to apply.

3. Specific Questions for consideration

- Why is an age restriction necessary?
- Is the age restriction relevant in today's society?
- What is significant of the age of 18 years?
- How is the age limit enforced, who is responsible for the enforcement, what are the penalties if any, if age restriction is breached?
- What are the advantages/disadvantages of access at a particular age?
- What are the positive and negative impacts of social media particularly in relation to age?

Please note that this Topic Resource Guide is a guide only and should not take the place of your own research and discovery.

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