

1. Mark your confusion.
2. Show evidence of a close reading.
3. Write a 1+ page reflection.

What's Changing for Teens on Instagram and Facebook

Meta agreed to set more time limits and enhance protections in its platforms for young users, but was short on some specifics.

Source: Cecelia Chang and Eli Tan, *New York Times*, August 26, 2026

Meta on Wednesday reached a landmark settlement with 47 states, the District of Columbia and U.S. territories, agreeing to pay up to \$17.1 billion in penalties and make major changes to its products over claims it endangered children with addictive social media platforms.

In a dramatic capitulation, the owner of Facebook and Instagram agreed to the financial penalties for violating federal child privacy and states' consumer protection laws, the states announced. Meta also agreed to limit how long teenagers can spend on its platforms and to bans on features that stoke mental health issues, striking at the heart of the company's business of engagement for advertising.

"The focus of this case was to protect our kids: stopping notifications and alerts at night and when they are in school, encouraging them to take breaks from social media, protecting them against harmful features," said Colorado's attorney general, Phil Weiser, in a statement. The agreement exceeded what most courts might order, he added.

Snap and YouTube, which is owned by Alphabet, declined to comment. TikTok did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Meta said on Wednesday that it would change how teenagers use Instagram and Facebook as part of a landmark settlement with 47 states, the District of Columbia and U.S. territories over social media addiction claims.

Instagram and Facebook currently allow anyone 13 or older to open accounts. Users under 18 are automatically directed into Teen Accounts, which are set to private by default and limit certain types of harmful content.

The settlement is expected to alter the apps further. Meta said new features will be introduced in the next six months, while other changes, like how the company verifies user ages, could take up to a year. In the last year, Meta had already started to introduce some changes mentioned in the settlement.

Here's a guide to what to expect.

Time Limits

Teenagers will be limited to just two hours a day on Instagram and Facebook, unless a parent goes into their settings to give permission for more time. Young users will also be automatically restricted from using the apps overnight, between midnight and 6 a.m.

In addition, Instagram and Facebook notifications will be silenced during school hours of 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Turning Features Off

For the first time, young users will be able to turn off "autoplay," a feature that automatically plays content while a user watches. They can instead elect to tap or swipe to see the next photo or video on the app. Until now, users were not able to turn that feature off.

Teenagers will also gain the ability to switch off a setting that gives them an algorithmic, personalized feed. Instead, they can choose to be shown content that is not personally catered to them. This is another option that did not previously exist.

And every time a user under 18 is on Instagram or Facebook for 15 consecutive minutes, that person will receive a prompt on the screen, though Meta did not detail what it would say. The prompts will also appear after 60 minutes and 90 minutes of use, the company said.

Meta said it would also disable “like” counts, which some people have said can cause anxiety, and block teenagers from using “extreme makeup filters” and filters that mimic cosmetic surgery.

Extra Protections

Meta said it would roll out stronger protections against “unwanted contact from strangers,” including restricting adults from messaging teenagers or viewing their content. The company did not explain how the protections and restrictions would work.

Meta also promised to give teenagers a new way to report harmful content and pledged to respond to 90 percent of those reports within six hours.

Meta agreed to maintain and improve the tools it offered parents to see how much time their children spent on the apps, what content they were searching and the kinds of contact they made with adults. Parents will be alerted when their children create new accounts or have interactions with accounts the company deems suspicious.

Age Verification

Social media apps have long struggled to figure out how old their users are, and Meta and others have been developing tools to confirm the ages of new users. Last week, OpenAI announced “ChatGPT for Teens,” a new mode for the chatbot with more protections for young users, and said it tracked more than 2,000 signals to detect whether a user was under 18.

As part of Wednesday’s settlement, Meta said, it will invest more in age verification technology to identify which users are teenagers and remove those who it believes are younger than 13.

Possible Response Questions

- What are your thoughts about Meta’s settlement and rule changes? Explain.
- Did something in the article surprise you? Discuss.
- Pick a word/line/passage from the article and respond to it.
- Discuss a “move” made by the writer in this piece that you think is good/interesting. Explain.