

‘Sharenting’

A new baby. A toddler taking their first steps. A child’s first day at school. A teenager getting their driver’s licence or securing their first job.

They are all amazing milestones in a young person’s life – worthy of much celebration!

And often, proud parents will try to capture these precious moments on video or in photographs. Some will even choose to keep their friends and family in the loop by sharing the exciting news over social media.

But children and young people do not always enjoy featuring in their parents’ online status updates.

Not another post about me...

More than a quarter of 10, 11 and 12-year-olds who took part in a 2017 survey said they felt ‘embarrassed, anxious or worried’ when their parents posted pictures of them online.

Equally, two in five felt ‘sad, anxious or nervous’ and nearly a quarter felt unhappy when friends, siblings or other relatives shared something about them without asking their permission first.

Not asking another person’s permission before posting something about them online breaches common social media etiquette.

I meant no harm!

It may also have psychosocial impacts on children and young people, particularly if parents overshare in a way that undermines the image or persona a young person is trying to create. Or if they share something that the young person would prefer to keep private.

Ignoring the “unspoken rules” of social media that young people must follow can also put them at risk of cyberbullying or isolation from their peer group. And even seemingly harmless posts can cause significant distress, resulting in young people feeling frustrated or betrayed by their parents.

Experts further worry that sharenting may trigger self-esteem issues if a young person measures their self-worth by how many ‘likes’ or positive comments a post about them receives. Or that they are placing themselves under extreme pressure to always be “on show” for the camera so their parents can post a “perfect” image.

These wellbeing issues sit alongside the cybersafety issues and concerns about identity theft or future impacts on job prospects that are more commonly associated with the sharenting debate.

sharenting

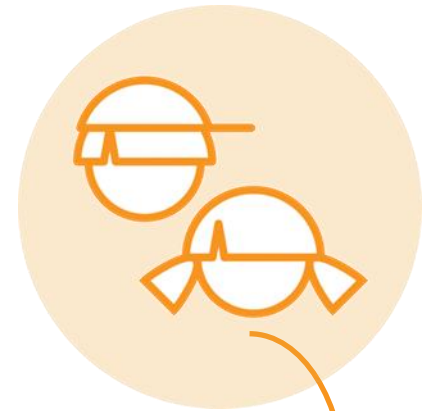
(noun)

the habitual use of social media to share news, images, etc. of one’s children

(origin)

blend of sharing + parenting

collinsdictionary.com



‘I look terrible in that photo!’

‘You might have found that funny. But I didn’t. Not cool! Don’t post that kind of stuff.’

‘I can’t believe you put that on Facebook! What will everyone at school say?’

‘If I miss out on that job because of your post, I’ll never forgive you!’

So, is it all bad?

Absolutely not!

Sharenting is a great way for people to keep in touch. A quick and easy way for parents to seek [external support](#) or [validation](#) about any parenting concerns they may have. And a practical way to document a child's growth and development using digital technology – something that many schools and childcare centres are beginning to do.

And it is a popular pass time.

One [survey](#) found that 84 per cent of Australian mothers with children under the age of two had posted images of those children online, while 41 per cent had uploaded pictures of their newborn.

And international research suggests that an average child appears in about [195 shared photographs](#) each year, which equates to a portfolio of approximately [1,000 photographs](#) by their fifth birthday!

Different people, different perspectives

But, despite the popularity of sharenting, the opinions about its acceptability are extremely [diverse](#).

Some people cannot get enough “cute kid” photographs in a day. They [love](#) hearing the little snippets of information about their friends' children and watching them grow and develop over time.

Others feel slightly [awkward](#) in knowing so many intimate details about their acquaintances' children. And still others find the “baby spam” infuriating, threatening to [unfriend](#) anyone who “clogs up” their news feed with stories or images about children.



COMPETING RIGHTS

Privacy v freedom of expression

When a parent posts something about their child or children online, their [right to share information](#) starts to [overlap](#) with the child or young person's [right to privacy](#). Both rights are equally important. But getting the balance right can be tricky! It can also create a lot of [tension](#) if that balance cannot be established.

Key points

- There are many benefits to sharenting.
- But children and young people do not always enjoy featuring in their parents' online status updates.
- To minimise any friction, parents are encouraged to speak with their children [openly](#) and frequently about safe online practices.
- They are also advised to [stay active](#) with their children on social media but to model [respectful behaviour](#) when setting (and adhering to!) boundaries about social media usage.

CASE STUDY

France

Publicising private information about another person without their consent – including children – is now [illegal](#).

Anyone caught doing so could spend up to a year in prison or be fined up to €45,000!

[Sharing + Parenting] = Sharenting



CLICK

to capture the moment

1

Consider *disabling location settings* on your camera & *deleting the metadata* before posting images online.



PAUSE

before you post

2

Create *clear personal boundaries* about what you are willing to share...& stick to them!

3

Consider creating a *personal checklist* to help guide your decisions about what to share online.



DECIDE

whether to share or keep private

4

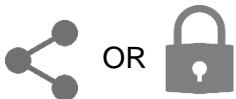
Ask your child's permission before sharing anything about them & *respect their decision*, even if you disagree with it.

5

Consider *restricting* who can see your *posts* or using *private photograph sharing sites* to maintain greater control.

6

Consider *sharing anonymously* when discussing your children on open sites.



7

Communicate your *social media preferences* to others with confidence.

8

Know & regularly *review* the *privacy settings* on your social media accounts.

9

Consider *creating an alert* to monitor if child's name is appearing on any websites.

10

Know how to *get help* if you think a post is inappropriate or violates the wishes of you or your child.



ENJOY

the memory

- 1 Location settings & metadata

When location settings are turned on, exact information about where a photograph was taken is recorded. That information can then be accessed if the metadata is not **deleted** before an image is posted online.
- 2 Personal boundaries

Some parents are willing to disclose a lot of information about their children online. **Others** refuse to share anything at all. Everybody is different, which is why establishing **personal boundaries** and communicating them to others is so important.
- 3 Personal checklist

A checklist may help parents validate their decisions about what to post online about their children. Understanding the reasons for wanting to post something; how other people – including the featured child – may feel if the information is made public; whether permission to post the information has been granted; and whether enough precautions have been taken to keep the featured child safe provide a good starting point.
- 4 Permission & respect

Children **mimic** the actions of those around them. It can be a really valuable lesson for children and young people to see their parents have an **active** but **respectful** social media presence.
- 5 Private photo sharing sites

Once photographs are shared online, **controlling** who can access those images or how they are **used** becomes almost impossible. Private photograph sharing sites, such as **Google Photos** or **Storypark** may provide a good alternative for some families.
- 6 Sharing anonymously

Parents share information online for a **variety of reasons**. Before sharing anything, it may be useful to consider whether sensitive information can be shared anonymously to help protect the child's privacy.
- 7 Social media preferences

Sometimes people other than parents share images or information about children online. This can become quite awkward if the parties have different beliefs about what is appropriate to share. Being upfront about personal boundaries; having some **strategies** in place for managing unauthorised posts; and always checking with other parents before posting anything about their children may help.
- 8 Privacy settings

Social media sites continually **evolve**. Experts recommend that all users review the privacy settings on their accounts regularly and update their preferences whenever required.
- 9 Alerts

Parents can sometimes feel anxious about the type of information that is out there about their children. **Creating an alert** that sends a notification whenever their child's name is mentioned on the web may provide some peace of mind.
- 10 Help

Help can be difficult to obtain. Social media sites will typically only remove images that violate their **terms of service**. The police can only get involved if an offence occurs. And the **Office of the e-Safety Commissioner** can only act on cyberbullying complaints in certain situations. The best approach is to establish clear personal boundaries and communicate them firmly to other people.