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Continuing to Make Instagram Safer for the Youngest Members of Our Community

March 16, 2021

Protecting young people on Instagram is important to us. Today, we're sharing updates on new features and resources as part of our ongoing efforts keep our youngest community members safe. We're also providing an update on our work to understand age in a way that helps keep people — especially young people — safe. We have dedicated teams focused on youth safety, and we work closely with experts to inform the features we develop.

Supporting parents and teens with new resources

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We want parents to have the information to help their teens have a safe and positive experience on Instagram. In the US, we've collaborated with The Child Mind Institute and ConnectSafely to publish a new Parents Guide. It includes the latest safety tools and privacy settings, as well as a list of tips and conversation starters to help parents navigate discussions with their teens about their online presence. This updated Guide has launched with expert partners in other countries including Argentina, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico and Singapore, and will continue to be rolled out in more countries soon. This also complements our existing Parents' Guides which provide support for parents in the UK, France, Italy, Germany and Spain, and which were developed in partnership with local safety experts.

"Instagram can provide young people the opportunity to strengthen connections, practice social skills and find supportive communities. It's important that teens and parents are equipped with information on how to manage their time on the platform so that it's thoughtful, safe and intentional. The new Parents Guide we've worked on does a great job of distilling what parents should know about how to support their teens as they navigate social media."

Dr. Dave Anderson, Clinical Psychologist, Child Mind Institute

Improving our work to understand people's real age

We require everyone to be at least 13 to use Instagram and have asked new users to provide their age when they sign up for an account for some time. While many people are honest about their age, we know that young people can lie about their date of birth. We want to do more to stop this from happening, but verifying people's age online is complex and something many in our industry are grappling with. To address this challenge, we're developing new artificial intelligence and machine learning technology to help us keep teens safer and apply new age-appropriate features, like those described below.

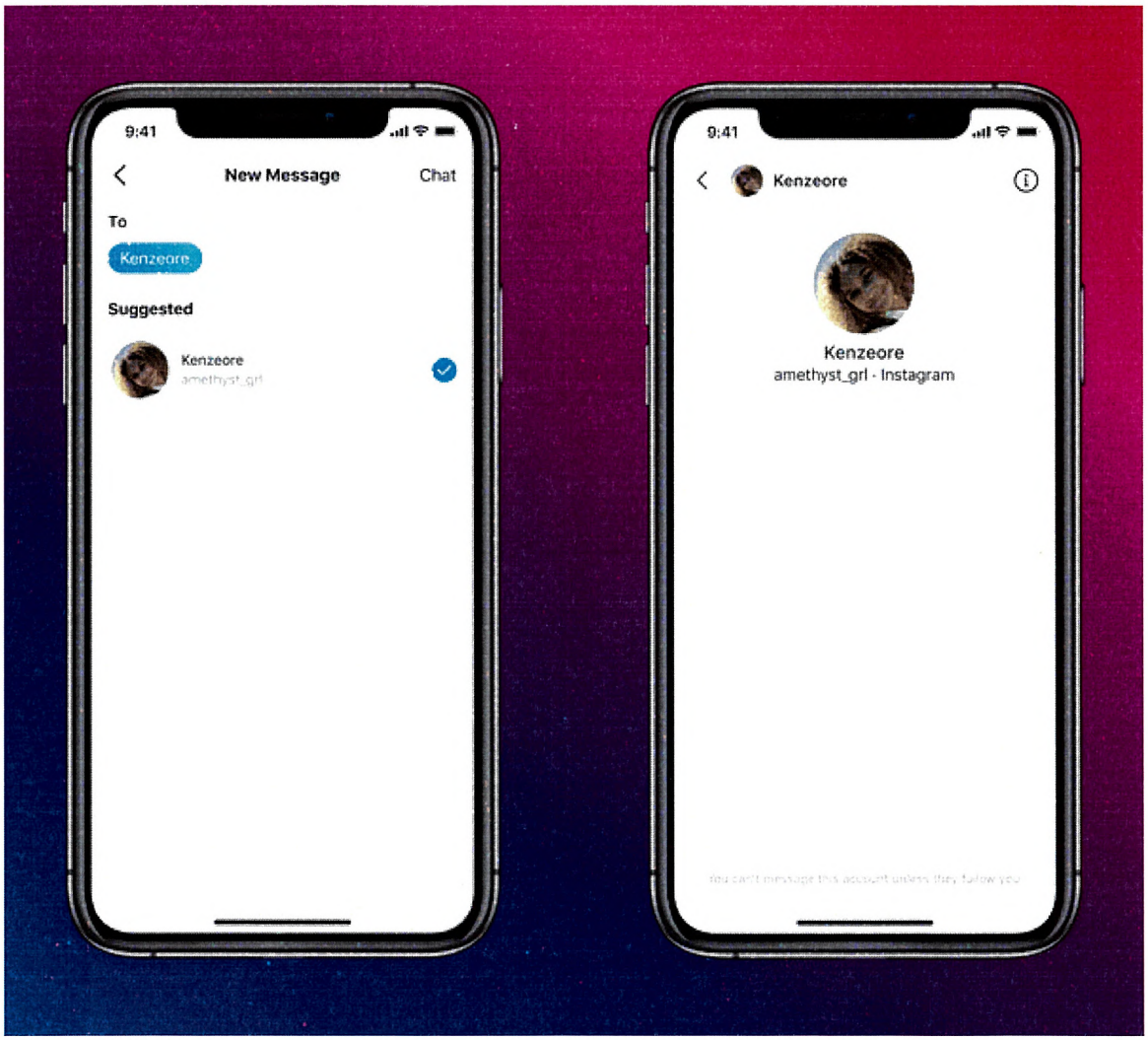
Restricting DMs between teens and adults they don't follow

To protect teens from unwanted contact from adults, we're introducing a new feature that prevents adults from sending messages to people under 18 who

don’t follow them. For example, when an adult tries to message a teen who doesn’t follow them, they receive a notification that DM’ing them isn’t an option. This feature relies on our work to predict peoples’ ages using machine learning technology, and the age people give us when they sign up. As we move to end-to-end encryption, we’re investing in features that protect privacy and keep people safe without accessing the content of DMs.

“Around the world it's widely understood that most social media platforms require a 13-year minimum age requirement, but the complexity of age verification remains a long-standing, industry-wide challenge. That's why it's positive to see Instagram investing in innovative technologies that can and will create a safer online environment for younger users. By using machine learning to flag potentially inappropriate interactions, improving teen privacy features and DM-ing younger users with realtime safety info, Instagram is equipping young people with tools to be the architects of their own online experience.”

Lucy Thomas, Co-Founder / Co-CEO, PROJECT ROCKIT

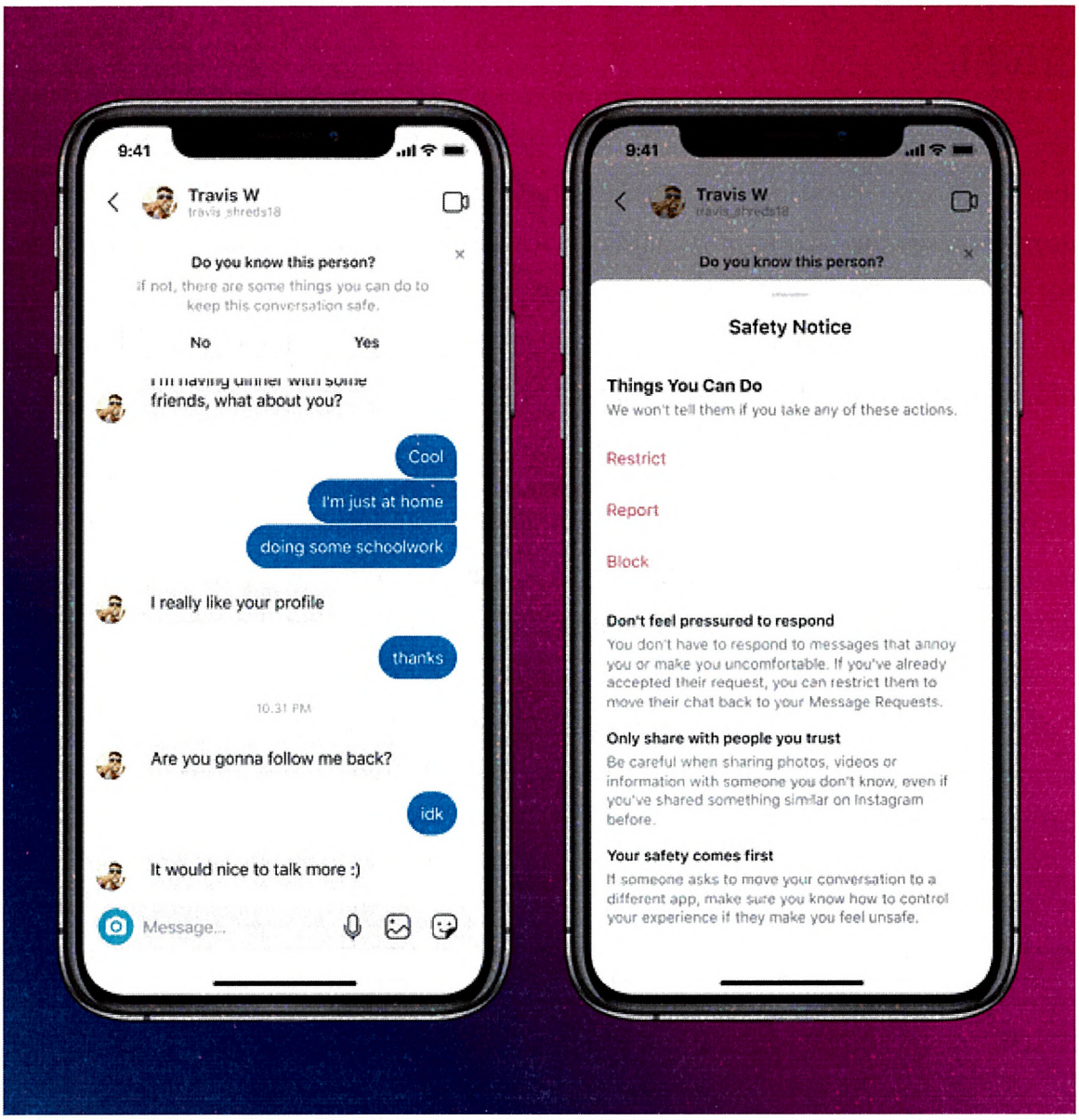


Prompting teens to be more cautious about interactions in DMs

In addition to preventing conversations between adults and teens who don't follow one another, we'll start using prompts — or safety notices — to encourage teens to be cautious in conversations with adults they're already connected to. Safety notices in DMs will notify young people when an adult who has been exhibiting potentially suspicious behavior is interacting with them in DMs. For example, if an adult is sending a large amount of friend or message requests to people under 18, we'll use this tool to alert the recipients within their DMs and give them an option to end the conversation, or block, report, or restrict the adult. People will start seeing these in some countries this month, and we hope to have them available everywhere soon.

"There are cases where it is appropriate for adults and teens to interact on Instagram but it's important that teens be protected against unwanted contact from adults. Requiring that the teen – not the adult – establish the connection empowers teens to protect themselves. It puts them in the driver's seat and gives them more control over their experiences on Instagram."

Larry Magid, CEO, ConnectSafely.org



Making it more difficult for adults to find and follow teens

In the coming weeks, we'll start exploring ways to make it more difficult for adults who have been exhibiting potentially suspicious behavior to interact with teens. This may include things like restricting these adults from seeing teen accounts in 'Suggested Users', preventing them from discovering teen content in Reels or Explore, and automatically hiding their comments on public posts by teens.

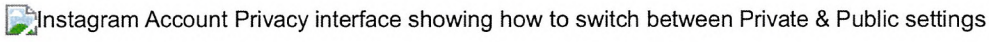
Encouraging teens to make their accounts private

Having a private account offers more protections for teens as they can better control who can see and interact with their content. We've recently added a new step when someone under 18 signs up for an Instagram account that gives them the option to choose between a public or private account. Our aim is to encourage young people to opt for a private account by equipping them with information on what the different settings mean.

We know young people, like aspiring creators or athletes, find value in public accounts. So teens can still opt for a public account if they choose to do so after learning more about the options. If the teen doesn't choose 'private' when signing up, we send them a notification later on highlighting the benefits of a private account and reminding them to check their settings. This is just a first step. We're assessing additional measures we can take to protect young people on Instagram, including additional privacy settings. We'll have more to share in the coming months.

"The introduction of Instagram's teenage privacy settings is a welcome change to the platform. We know that some young people make the conscious choice to have public profiles, and this new update allows young people to enter a more controlled environment and requires there to be a conscious decision before entering a more public environment, which in itself provides an important educational moment to help prepare for this step. This change is for new users, and we need to work to address this question of user awareness of privacy choices on existing accounts."

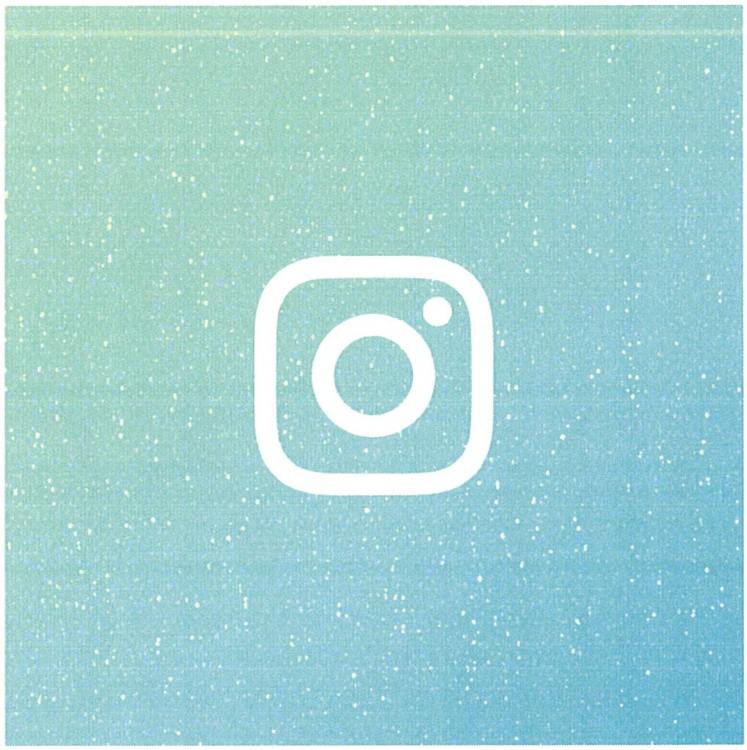
Will Gardner, CEO, Childnet International



We believe that everyone should have a safe and supportive experience on Instagram. These updates are a part of our ongoing efforts to protect young people, and our specialist teams will continue to invest in new interventions that further limit inappropriate interactions between adults and teens.

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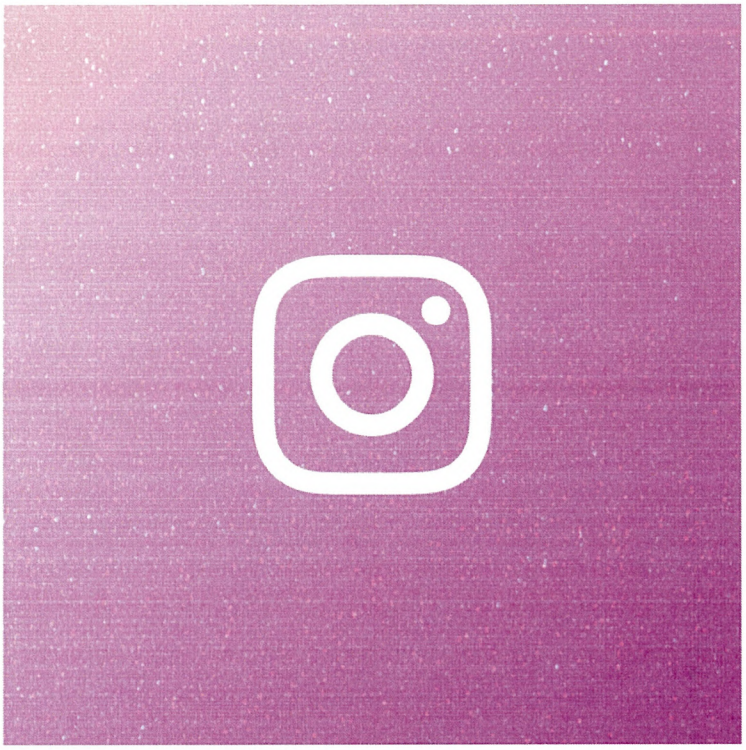


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