

Topic: Social media should be restricted for students under 16.

Paragraph 1 , Introduction

- Hook: The average teenager in the US spends 4.8 hours per day on social media , more time than they spend in school.
- Background: Lawmakers in multiple countries are now debating age restrictions on platforms including TikTok, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter).
- Thesis: Social media should be restricted for students under 16 because it negatively affects mental health, disrupts academic performance, and exposes minors to content they are not developmentally equipped to process.

Paragraph 2 , Mental Health

- Topic sentence: Heavy social media use among adolescents is associated with measurable increases in anxiety and depression.
- Evidence: A 2023 meta-analysis published in JAMA Pediatrics found a statistically significant correlation between daily social media use exceeding 3 hours and elevated depression scores in 13–17 year-olds.
- Concluding sentence: When use patterns consistently precede mental health deterioration, the precautionary argument for restriction is strong.

Paragraph 3 , Academic Performance

- Topic sentence: Social media use during study hours reduces academic performance across measurable outcomes , grades, test scores, and assignment completion rates.
- Evidence: A University of Michigan study found students who checked social media during homework sessions scored an average of one full grade lower on assessments than students who studied without access.
- Concluding sentence: The academic cost is not theoretical. It is documented and consistent across age groups.

Paragraph 4 , Content Exposure

- Topic sentence: Social media platforms algorithmically serve content that adolescent brains are not developmentally equipped to evaluate critically , including extremist content, body image material, and targeted advertising.
- Evidence: A Wall Street Journal investigation found that Instagram's algorithm actively recommended body-image content to teenage users who had shown brief interest in diet-related topics, creating reinforcement loops within hours.

- Concluding sentence: The harm here is not incidental. It is the product of deliberate algorithmic design, which means platform self-regulation alone is insufficient.

Paragraph 5 , Conclusion

- Summary: Social media harms adolescent mental health, academic performance, and content safety in ways that are documented, not speculative.
- Restate thesis: Restricting access for under-16s is not overprotection , it is a proportionate response to measurable, systemic harm.
- Closing move: Every major age-based protection law society accepts , driving age, voting age, alcohol age , rests on the same logic: some risks are too significant to leave to individual discretion before a certain developmental threshold. Social media has earned its place on that list.



College Essay