

OnlyFans – what parents need to know



OnlyFans is one of the fastest growing social media platforms right now.

The subscription-based service saw a surge in sign-ups during lockdown, gaining as many as 200,000 new users every 24 hours.

But that growth hasn't been without controversy – mainly around the large amount of adult content on the platform.

Here's what you need to know.

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What is OnlyFans?

OnlyFans is a subscription-based social media platform. Users pay a monthly subscription fee (which ranges from \$4.99 to \$49.99) to follow content creators, who take home a large cut of that fee.

Content is varied, with everyone from celebrities and influencers to musicians, makeup artists, chefs and fitness coaches using the platform to earn revenue from the content they create. However it's perhaps best-known for being popular among sex workers and adult entertainers.

The company was founded in 2016 and now has around 170 million registered users and 1.5 million content creators.

It proved particularly popular during lockdown, enjoying a **75 per cent increase** in monthly sign-ups in March 2020.

Why is it popular?

For subscribers, exclusive content for exclusive members is part of the OnlyFans package – and a lot of people are willing to pay their favourite content creators. For some fans it feels fairer and more transactional than other platforms, like rewarding creators for putting time and effort into art, entertainment or other material for fans to enjoy.

For creators, the opportunity to earn money – perhaps more than they would do through brand partnerships or other arrangements on alternative platforms – is the big draw.

While it's possible for brands and content creators to earn money on other social media platforms, usually any revenue originates from advertising and product placement. In this case, though, the money comes from the users themselves, with OnlyFans taking a 20 per cent cut of any earnings.

Many see it as a lucrative source of exposure, as well as revenue. Musicians, for instance, are able to link their Spotify accounts to their page, presenting potential talent exposure alongside revenue that music streaming services don't provide on their own.

OnlyFans also offers those with larger followings a referral programme, where they can take a 5 per cent commission of earnings from fans who sign up via their personal referral link for 12 months.

What risks should parents be aware of?

Sex work and pornography is a very popular genre of content on the platform, despite not being advertised in the site's strapline.

A [New York Times article](#) in 2019 claimed that the platform “changed sex work forever” and there have been reports of some adult entertainers making six-figure sums each year.

The platform announced in August 2021 that it would be [banning sexually-explicit photos](#) and videos – although still allowing some nude content – but quickly [reversed](#) this after backlash from users.

Although OnlyFans does provide [Acceptable Use](#) guidelines and [User Content](#) guidelines, the content posted is monetised by the creators themselves, meaning they are able to post pretty much anything as long as it’s legal.

Although anyone over the age of 18 can sell and distribute explicit content, a [BBC documentary #Nudes4Sale](#) found that minors are increasingly selling pictures of themselves on the platform.

To share their own content, users must be 18 or over, and are required to provide a selfie alongside photo ID and a registered address. However, concerns have been raised over how effective this process is, with [reports of teenagers using borrowed IDs](#) to create an account.

How to talk to your child about OnlyFans

Your child may feel persuaded by the advertised freedom that comes with an OnlyFans account, but the minimum age bracket is there for a reason. As you would normally, teach your child to [think critically](#), and pay attention to the boundaries that the website has put in place.

Regardless of what creators use their accounts for – and what subscribers pay for – a minor bypassing OnlyFans’ age verification process puts them at risk of exposure to the sale and distribution of explicit content.

If your child was to come across something upsetting online, reassure them that they aren't to blame. Let them know they can come and talk to you, and educate yourselves on where to report and get support, should something go wrong.

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