



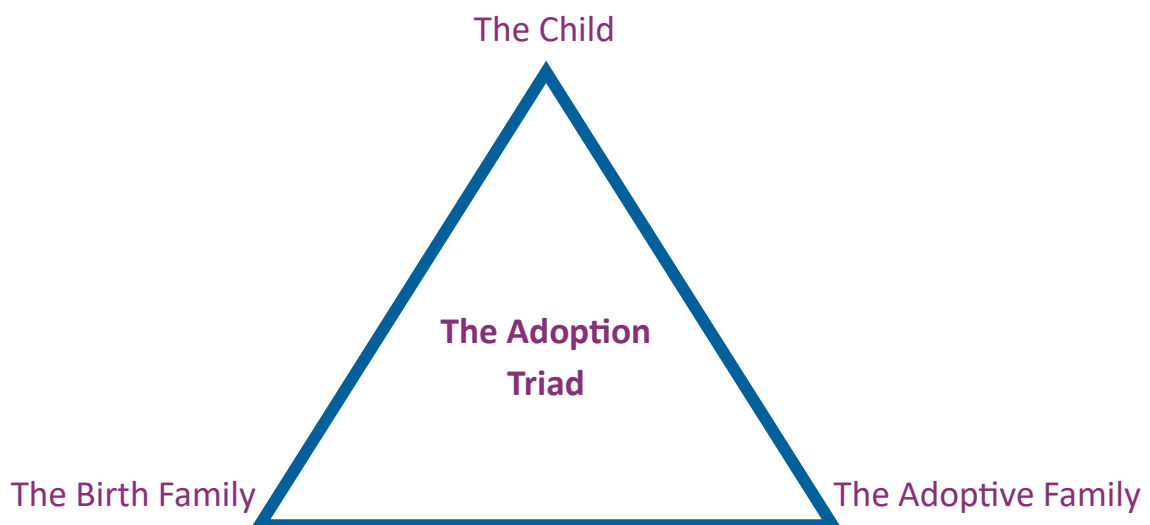
Social Media Advice for prospective adopters





A child born to another woman calls me mom.
The depth of the tragedy and the magnitude of
the privilege are not lost on me.

Jody Lander



Our lives are all interwoven, and while one element may be celebrating joy, another may be at the lowest point in their lives. When sharing content online, we always need to be aware of who may view it, and the potential impact of this (now and in the future).

Adoption and Social Media Etiquette

It almost seems impossible today to carry on with our everyday lives without the presence of social media. From posts about outfits we wear and food we eat to more important issues like family or politics, we can record and share issues that are dear to us. The prominence of social media has significantly altered adoption communication. More broadly, it has significantly altered communication as a whole. People share more than they ever have about their lives and know more than they ever have about others. Connection is immediate and everywhere — but what does this mean in an adoption?

Navigating social media in adoption can be tricky. Like any other form of communication, this is complex, nuanced and personal. As a new adoptive parent, you may be wondering what's ok to share?

The spread of social media use has far outpaced the study of it, which means best practices and professional guidelines are still being developed, as adoption specialists learn more about what works and what doesn't. But, hopefully this guide will offer some insight into what good practice looks like and what to avoid.

As a general rule, if you are wondering if it's ok to post something, then it's probably safer not to post. You can always share with close family and friends via other means.



Hopefully, this guide will bring some sense of clarity as we all try to navigate these confusing realities.

You've just met the child you hope to adopt, for the first time, it seems natural to pick up your phone and snap a picture to post on social media. You want to celebrate this moment with your loved ones.

But, this is not yet your child, and even when that longed for Adoption Order arrives, it's not that simple.

What are the rules?

Those who adopt may have to avoid posting anything online that may make their child, or in some cases themselves, identifiable.



Maggie Davies, an adoption manager at Coram Ambitious for Adoption, explains: 'An adoption order passes the legal rights of the birth family to the adoptive family. They have a new identity which needs protecting - so they can build trusting relationships with their new family and find out about their story gradually from their adopters.

'Putting photos and info about adopted children on social media there is a chance of birth family members seeing these and trying to trace the child. This could be disruptive to the adoptive placement and the child,' and potentially extremely upsetting for all concerned, including the birth family.

Can adoptive parents share pictures of their children online?

There are no specific rules other than the parents having to ensure they keep their child safe.

Each case is different, so while one adoptive parent may choose to share their child's name, another might feel that it is not appropriate in their case.

As an adoptive parent, you will know your child's background and the risks of sharing certain information and will be best placed to make the ultimate decision, although staff at Adoption West are available to offer advice and support.

What about all those Instagram accounts I've seen?

There are many parents who run blogs, Instagram accounts or YouTube channels talking about their lives as adoptive parents. These are a valuable resource for those looking to find out more about the process and what it's really like.

To keep their children safe, many choose to refer to their children by a nickname, and cover their children's faces. Jane*, who adopted a little boy last year, explains: 'When I adopted my son, we kept his first name but were able to give him a middle name and we chose Jack. On social media we refer to him as J because of that.'

'It does mean we need to be careful sometimes with things like personalised toys or things in his bedroom though. Sometimes it's easy to remember to cover or blur his face but we might miss something like that. I've become hyper aware of where anything with his name is every time I take a picture.'

'We also know not to take pictures in certain areas of our house where we have family photographs on show. It's easy for one of those to appear in the background too.'

As part of your Adoption Assessment your Social Worker should talk to you more about social media, this is a good opportunity for you to raise any concerns or worries you may have.

In a world of social media where it appears everyone shares everything, it's more than okay to have boundaries.



Finding connections on social media has its benefits, but there are times when a post can muddle the line between informative and inappropriate.

When posting on social media, as an adoptive parent, we recommend sticking to these points:

Things to consider

Does the image you are about to share, give an indication of your location? Is your profile name very similar to your actual name? Is your place of work included in your profile?

It can only take a first name, a location and a photo for a birth family member to be able to trace you.

No Delete Button

Remember that a post on social media is irrevocable. Once we put something out there for the world to see, the delete button only acts as a Band-Aid to cover the wound. The post has either already been seen and remembered or can be found again much later. The thoughts, pictures, or even friends we share have a finality that prompt us to be mindful of all that is out there. We must consider all those that may see the post now and in the future. Will your child be happy that you documented their life so publicly? What if a member of the extended birth family sees your post?



Make Privacy Important

Set your social media accounts to private so that the information you share is only for certain people on your friends list. Be vigilant and only accept friend requests from people you personally know, and even then, make sure the details of your life are not spelled out for all to see.

When going through an adoption, you not only want to protect your information but also the information of your adopted child and his/her family. When choosing to share pictures and details of your adoption, only do what you believe to be respectful to all families involved.

Be sure to review your privacy settings regularly; social media is constantly evolving and platforms like to 'shake things up' regularly.

Show Respect

If everything we posted online was done out of respect not only for ourselves but also for those who would be reading it, we would be a lot more careful with our words and probably post a lot less. Read and re-read your words before publishing. Could your words be misconstrued by someone? Is it going to demean or leave an unfavourable portrayal of someone involved in your adoption? Would your child appreciate what you posted five or ten years from now? Are you showing the same respect that you want shown towards you?

And finally

Social media is not without its benefits

- **Maintaining social ties;** keeping in touch with friends
- **Support;** through online community groups, young people can share experiences with peers
- **Self-expression;** videos, blogs and other digital mediums allow individuals to express and share their feelings and ideas, but it is important this is done in a way that protects everyone involved.

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If in future you need to have a further conversation about social media, please get in touch and a member of our team, who will be happy to help.

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