

Meta Deal Puts New Limits on Teens' App Time

A major settlement over Instagram and Facebook raises questions about phones, sleep, school, and who should set the rules.



A phone lies face down next to school supplies and a clock, suggesting limits on late-night app use.

Meta, the company behind Instagram and Facebook, has agreed to pay up to \$17 billion and add new limits for users under 18. According to PBS NewsHour, the deal is a **settlement**, which means Meta and state officials agreed to end a court fight without waiting for a final jury decision. Dozens of states had accused Meta of designing its apps in ways that endangered children.

The rules Meta agreed to are aimed at time, sleep, and school. The company says it will enforce a two-hour daily time limit for people under 18. It also says it will block app use from **midnight** to 6 a.m., mute notifications, and **restrict** use during school hours. A notification is the buzz, sound, or pop-up that tries to pull someone back into an app.

This matters to middle schoolers because the settlement is about the same problem many families and schools already debate: how much control young people, parents, companies, and governments should have over phone use. A **guardrail** is a safety limit meant to reduce harm without banning something completely. These rules do not end Instagram or Facebook for

teens. They try to change when and how teens can use them.

Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser, whose job is to act as the state's top lawyer, told PBS that the states settled because they wanted protections sooner instead of waiting years for more court action. He said the case was about protecting kids, not just winning money. Meta said the **framework** would help parents manage access, but that it would work best only if other large platforms joined too.

That is one of the biggest questions raised by the deal. Teens often move from one app to another. If Instagram has a time limit, someone might spend more time on YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, games, or group chats. Meta called for an **industry-wide** solution, which means similar rules across many companies, not just one. Weiser said states are ready to go to court against other companies if they do not agree to similar steps.

The settlement also includes enforcement. An independent **auditor**, which is an outside checker who is not supposed to work for Meta, will watch whether the company follows the rules. If Meta breaks the requirements, Weiser said the rules

can be enforced by a court. That matters because a promise from a company is different from a rule that can bring legal consequences.

The deal does not change everything. PBS asked Weiser about personalized recommendations and targeted advertising. Personalized recommendations are posts or videos an app chooses for a user based on what that person has clicked, watched, or liked. Targeted advertising means ads picked for a person based on information about them. These tools are central to how many social media companies keep people scrolling and make money. The settlement allows Meta to keep using them.

Another part of the deal focuses on younger children. Weiser said Meta had allowed kids under

13 to get on its platforms and stay there. The settlement requires age **assurance**, which means tools meant to check whether users are old enough. The source does not say exactly how those checks will work, and that detail will matter. A weak check could be easy to get around. A strong check could raise **privacy** concerns if it asks for too much personal information.

For civics class, this story is about who gets to set rules in daily life. For science and health class, it connects to sleep, attention, and mental health. For technology class, it asks how design choices shape behavior. The settlement is not the end of the argument. It is a new test of whether legal pressure can change how powerful apps are built for young users.

Written from reporting by PBS NewsHour.

THINK IT THROUGH

1. Should app time limits for teens be set mostly by families, by companies, or by government rules? Defend your choice and explain a downside.

2. If only one social media company follows strict teen rules, how much good can those rules do?

3. What information would you want before deciding whether this settlement actually helps young people?

Meta Deal Puts New Limits on Teens' App Time

L E A L D I V O L E I E V U R R L R
T Y N S T R H F D T R I A A S E T L
N T I Y T T I R H H D E A O R A D Y
N M O K S N H N E X A S H M E I N D
R S O D D O N T I N I F H L D N D R
M T L R A N A R T A G O P G S D I D
V O W S R S M C L C N F W M I U U T
D I S I V T S I I N T R P R Y S A A
Y R E M M M T U D A T S R I P T E C
R H G T S S T F R N R A I M T R T U
A E G G U A R D R A I L A A A Y M N
D U L R H R A H R A N G I T E A P R
G R D N I L K E A E M C H F Y D R L
D T D I I O I T L C E E E T C Q I Y
I S S E T T L E M E N T W F M P V E
V D T E Y O C E P L A T F O R M A R
A T E D S E R I R Y R E S T R I C T
D F N R I N I T I E O V S T H K Y F

ASSURANCE

AUDITOR

FRAMEWORK

GUARDRAIL

INDUSTRY

MIDNIGHT

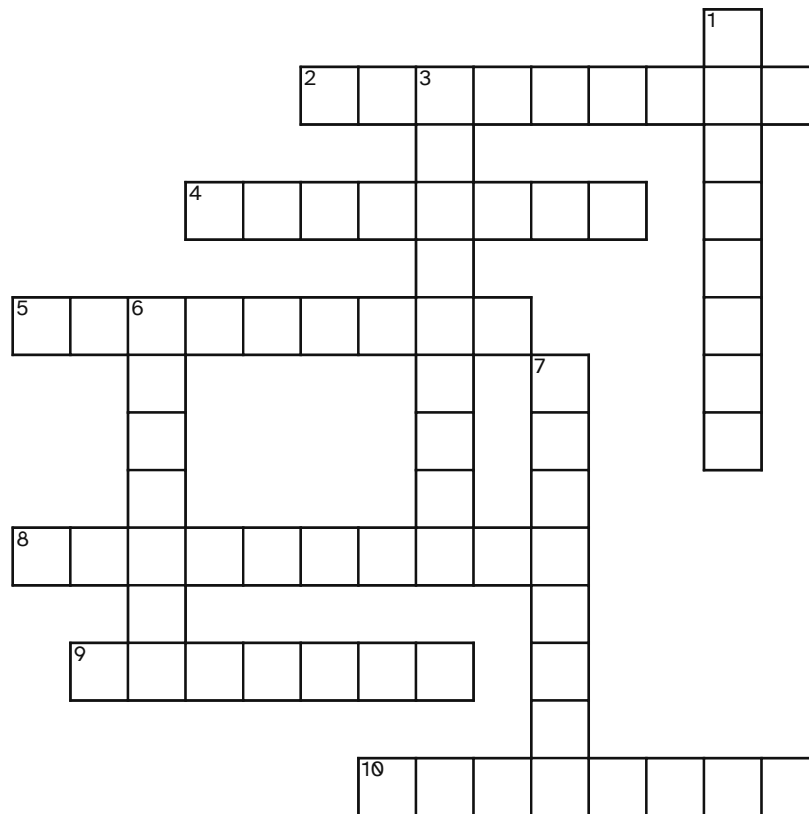
PLATFORM

PRIVACY

RESTRICT

SETTLEMENT

Meta Deal Puts New Limits on Teens' App Time



ACROSS

- 2 Safety boundary that lowers risk without an outright ban
- 4 Group of businesses offering similar products or services
- 5 Basic structure for organizing rules or ideas
- 8 Agreement ending a lawsuit before a court's final decision
- 9 Control over who can see personal information
- 10 Online app or service for sharing and viewing content

DOWN

- 1 Twelve o'clock at night, when one date becomes the next
- 3 Check that confirms a user's age or other fact is correct
- 6 Independent outside reviewer who checks whether rules are followed
- 7 Limit when, where, or how something may be used

Where this came from

This article was written for 3andB from the reporting below. It is not a reprint — the wording is ours and the facts are theirs.

PBS NewsHour

“\$17B Meta settlement puts focus on youth mental health crisis, Colorado AG says”

Published Wednesday, August 26, 2026

Read by us on Thursday, August 27, 2026

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/17b-meta-settlement-puts-focus-on-youth-mental-health-crisis-colorado-ag-says>

WHAT IS IN THIS PACKET

The article and its discussion questions, a word search, and a crossword.

COPYING AND REUSE

Free to print, copy and hand out for classroom use. Please keep this page with the packet, so the next teacher can see where the story came from.

More where this came from

If this short lesson worked for your class, our full workbooks go further with the same care:

- Complete units with student and teacher editions
- Worked solutions for every exercise
- Standards-aligned, classroom-tested, print-ready

See the full lessons at 3andB.com