



Social media ban

Instagram's age-verification identified a moustachioed adult as over 16 - but how did it go with a 13-year-old?

Meta platform allows users under 16 in Australia to change their date of birth - but only after clearing a 'video selfie' or providing government ID

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Instagram's process for determining whether a user is over 16 is relatively quick and painless if you're clearly an adult - but how does it work if a 13-year-old tries to change their account's date of birth to make them appear grown up?

Meta in November **began notifying Instagram and Facebook users** whose date of birth is set as under 16 - or who the platform understands to be under 16 - that their accounts will be deactivated as part of **Australia's social media ban** for children. The **ban takes effect on 10 December**, but Meta has said it will start removing access to users under 16 from 4 December.

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As part of Guardian Australia's **reporting on what the platforms show to various age demographics**, a phone was set up with dummy social media accounts.



Due to laws in Australia, soon you won't be able to use social media until you've turned 16. 2d

 An Instagram notification sent to a test account with the age set to 15. Photograph: Instagram/Meta

One was set up on Instagram, with an age set to 15, to see what would happen when the under-16s social media ban came into effect. Instagram subsequently sent a notification: “Due to laws in Australia, soon you won't be able to use social media until you've turned 16.

“You will not be able to use your Instagram account until you've turned 16. This means you can't use Instagram and your profile won't be visible to you or others until then.

“We'll let you know when you can use Instagram again.”



Due to laws in Australia, soon people under 16 will no longer be able to use social media



What's happening

Due to laws in Australia, people under 16 will no longer be able to use social media, including Instagram.



What this means for you

You will not be able to use your Instagram account until you've turned 16. This means you can't use Instagram and your profile won't be visible to you or others until then. We'll let you know when you can use Instagram again.

[See next steps](#)

[I'm 16 or over](#)

A notification informing the test account user they will no longer be able to use it due to Australia's social media ban. Photograph: Instagram/Meta

The account was then presented with two options: download the account data and prepare for it to be deactivated until the user turns 16, or review the date of birth.



Steps you can take now

When you turn 16, your profile and all of your posts, messages and activity will be restored. [Learn more](#)

What you can do



Add your phone number

We'll text you when you can use Instagram again.



Review your email address

We'll email you at j*****g@i****.com when you can use Instagram again.



Download your information

You can save a copy of your activity, posts and messages.

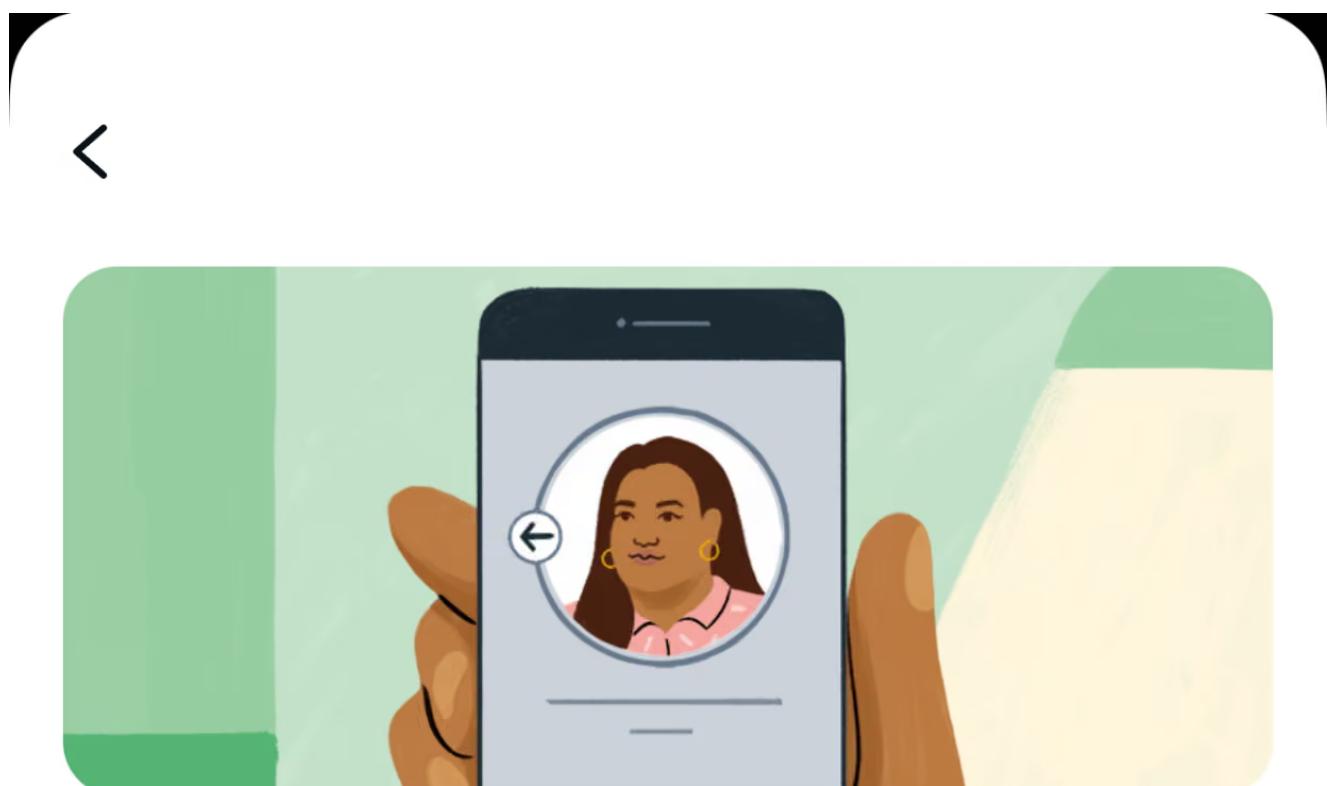
Review your date of birth

You can use Instagram again on 9 September 2026.



An Instagram notification sent to a test account with the age set to 15, including an option for a date-of-birth review. Photograph: Instagram/Meta

Choosing the latter allows the user to take a “video selfie” to prove the account holder is over 16. The app accessed the front-facing camera and required the test user, an adult who has thick facial hair, to move their head from side to side, similar to the verification method used to set up face-unlock on a smartphone.



How video selfies work

We partner with trusted service providers to securely and effectively estimate your age from your selfie.

-  We might use trusted service providers to help review your information.
-  Your selfie will only be used to confirm your age and to keep our community safe.
-  It will be deleted as soon as we've confirmed your age.

[Learn more](#) about video selfies and how trusted service providers estimate age.

[Start video selfie](#)

[Use another method](#)

An explanation of how 'video selfies' work to estimate an account user's age. Photograph: Instagram/ Meta

A notification then stated it usually took between one and two minutes to verify, but could take up to 48 hours.





We're reviewing your selfie

This usually takes 1-2 minutes, but can take up to 48 hours. We'll notify you when the review is finished.

A notification sent to the test account after a request was made for a date of birth review. Photograph: Instagram/Meta

The app quickly stated the account, set up by the test adult user, was marked as over 16.



We confirmed your age and updated your date of birth. If you have other Instagram accounts, you can add this information now. 18m

A notification confirming Instagram had updated the user's date of birth. Photograph: Instagram/Meta

In a separate test, a 13-year-old set up a new account on a phone that had never had Instagram installed using a date of birth clearly showing they were under 16. There was no immediate notification of the looming social media ban.

When the child then attempted to change their date of birth to one of an adult, the same video selfie facial age estimation process was undertaken.

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Within a minute, it stated “we couldn’t confirm your age” and then requested government ID to confirm the user’s date of birth.

Facial age testing in the age-assurance trial data showed that people over 21 would generally be much less likely to have an issue with being declared over 16. Those **closer to the age of 16, as well as minority groups**, were shown to have a higher false positive or false negative rate.

Meta may have already assessed users who have yet to receive a notification as being over 18 based on information such as date of birth, the length of time a person has had an account, and other account behaviour activity.

A Meta spokesperson said the experiment showed the process works as intended, “with the adult user being able to verify his age and move on, and the under 16 user being age checked when they tried to change their age.”

“That said, we must also acknowledge the findings of the Age Assurance Technology Trial, which recognises the particular challenges of age assurance at the 16-age boundary, and we anticipate that at times the process may not be

perfect,” the spokesperson said.

Last month, the communications minister, Anika Wells, acknowledged there would be teething issues as the ban comes into effect.

“We know this law will not be perfect, but it is too important not to have a crack,” she said.

Meta uses Yoti for its age assurance. The company states on its website that facial images are deleted after the check is completed.

The ban will affect Meta’s Facebook, Instagram and Threads platforms, along with Kick, Reddit, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitch, X and YouTube.

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