

Social Media Apps Parents Should Know About

Learn the pros, cons, and best practices for the most popular social sites and apps your tweens and teens are using. By [Caroline Knorr](#) 6/27/2016

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Remember when we worried that 140-character tweets would ruin kids' attention spans? Now that seems quaint next to some of the social media that's gobbling up our teens' time: messages that disappear (but actually don't). Video you can stream live from your bedroom. Chatting with strangers. The truth is, everything seems scary at first. Yes, some social media introduces features that seem misguided at best and downright dangerous at worst. But even Twitter spawned novels written in 140-character installments.

Social media can offer innovative ways to communicate, connect, and even create. And kids and teens are much more likely to use it responsibly when parents discuss the pros, cons, and best practices. You just need to kick the tires a little bit to understand the risks and rewards. Check out these FAQs about the most popular social media and gaming apps:

What Should Parents Know About Instagram?

The most popular social image-sharing site is creative and fun, but comments can be crushing.

Parents' Ultimate Guide to Instagram

Is Instagram safe? How does it work? And what's a "finsta"? Everything parents need to know about this popular image-sharing app. By [Christine Elgersma](#) 3/28/2019

Topics: [Cellphone Parenting](#), [Social Media](#)

6 Things Parents May Not Know About Instagram

When you see a teen taking a selfie, chances are that picture will end up on social media. Often, that means Instagram, one of the most popular social image-sharing platforms in the world. As of 2018, [72 percent of teens say they use Instagram](#) and [22 percent say they use Instagram the most](#). What's all the fuss about?

Teens love Instagram for a lot of reasons, but most importantly, that's where their friends are. They can also keep tabs on their favorite celebrities, follow accounts that align with their interests, and, of course, maintain their own profile (or *profiles*) that present an image of themselves to their friends -- and sometimes to the world.

As with all social media, the elements that make teens love Instagram can also be [breeding grounds for trouble](#). Depending on whom you follow or what you search for, you can find lots of mature content. And the comments on posts can be downright vicious, especially if an account is public. Then there's the pressure. Lots of kids feel that they have to maintain a perfect profile, so they're constantly scanning posts for likes and deleting ones that don't measure up. And they have to check their feeds all day (and sometimes at night) for updates from friends.

Instagram also has a commercial aspect. Embedded ads, celebrity endorsements, and links to buy products are all over kids' feeds.

Still, with some guidance around settings, limits on use, and ongoing conversations about content and comments, Instagram can be a place for kids to connect and be creative. [Check out our full review](#) to get even more info.

What is Instagram?

Instagram is a popular, free social networking app that lets users post photos and videos, follow celebrities and friends, and send messages. It's owned by Facebook but has a photo-forward format that's more appealing to teens.

How does Instagram work?

Once you create an account, you get your feed going by following friends and celebrities (Instagram helpfully suggests some for you). When you're ready to share your first post, tap the plus sign and select Library, Photo, or Video.

Depending on the media type you're sharing, you can choose from all sorts of filters and image-editing tools to make your post look cool. Then you add a caption and a hashtag if you wish (which categorizes all posts on the same topic together).

You get the option of adding a location to your post, but it's not recommended that kids and teens use this function. Instagram offers a lot more features, too including:

- **Direct messages (DMs).** You can send direct messages to one or more people -- including people you don't follow and who don't follow you. (The website version of Instagram doesn't support DMs.)
- **Disappearing messages.** This is a Snapchat-like feature that lets you send timed photo or video messages that recipients can only view once before they disappear.
- **Stories.** These are 15-second videos or slideshows that live in a circle separate from other posts. To create one, tap Your Story, decide what kind of post you want to create -- text, photo slideshow, video, or livestream -- and select the Story Controls to limit the audience, restrict message replies, and allow sharing.
- **Instagram TV (IGTV).**
- These are longer-form videos programmed by Instagram (i.e., they're not by your friends or followers). Kids can also create their own IGTV channels and broadcast themselves, sort of like on YouTube.

How old should kids be to use Instagram?

According to the terms of service, you have to be 13, but there's no age-verification process, so **it's very easy for kids under 13 to sign up**. Common Sense rates Instagram for age 15 and up because of mature content, access to strangers, marketing ploys, and data collection. Check out our **social media rules for high schoolers**.

What kinds of content will my kid see on Instagram?

The kinds of content kids will see mostly depends on whom they follow: If they only follow friends and don't search for anything, they may see only pictures of their friends having fun. But kids rarely limit their feeds to people they know, so it's likely they'll see mature content (including sexy stuff, swearing, and substance use), mean or sexual comments, and hashtags about suicide, anorexia, and other concerning topics. If they follow celebrities, they'll probably also see marketing.

How can I monitor my kid's activity on Instagram?

You can ask your kid to give you a tour of their Insta. **Ask them to walk you through their account**, explain memes and comments, discuss friends, and share whatever comes up. Or try one of these ideas:

- **Create your own Instagram account and follow your kid.** **You'll see what they post** (unless they block you), but you won't see their DMs (direct messages).
- **Follow their friends.** It's not unusual for parents to be friends with their kids' friends online (but you should hold back on comments). If you're close

with your kids' friends, you can follow each other and keep tabs on your kid's doings.

- **Ask for your kid's Instagram username and password.** Then, you can log in as them and review their accounts.
- **Do spot checks.** Either random or scheduled, these check-ins give you time to sit down together and go through your kid's feed.
- **Install a third-party monitoring app.** Parental controls such as [Bark](#) give you a lot of visibility into what kids are doing online. [Learn more about parental controls.](#)

What's the deal with "rinstas" and "finstas"?

Rinstas and finstas are second (or third) Instagram accounts that are completely separate from each other. Finsta stands for "fake Instagram," and these accounts reflect a kid's true self and is only meant for very close friends to see. Rinsta is a kid's "real" Instagram that's public-facing and highly curated, and they project the type of ideal online persona that's hard to achieve in reality. In other words, their "real" account is the public one everyone can find and see. Not every kid maintains more than one account, but don't be alarmed if your kid does. As long as they follow responsible social media practices such as using privacy settings, not posting things they'll regret, and limiting their audience, finstas and rinstas can be useful tools as kids go through the natural process of figuring out their identities. To see if your kid has more than one account, you'll need access to their phone. Then tap the person icon and the arrow next to your kid's username. If they have another account, you'll see it there. Another option is to stay logged in to their account(s) on your device so you can see all their activity. While you're at it, it's a good idea to make sure your kid's account names don't contain their age: Lots of kids include their ages in their handles, but that can make them a target. Also, although much rarer, check to make sure your kid didn't create an account that's meant for a business. You'll know if the account information contains a phone number and email address.

Is there any way to limit or restrict my kid's activity on Instagram, including connecting with strangers?

Instagram accounts are public by default, so the first setting to change is to make it private. To do this, go to Settings from your profile page. Select Privacy and Security, then Account Privacy, and toggle on Private Account. With a private account, only people you approve can see what you post. You get a lot of options in the Privacy and Security section -- and you should spend some time here if you're helping your kid set up their first account. You can't lock Privacy and

Security settings, though, so be aware that kids can change them back. A few more key settings in Privacy and Security:

- **Comment controls.** You can limit comments to followers, block comments from specific people, hide "offensive" comments, and create specific filters for words and phrases.
- **Resharing to stories.** You can control whether or not other people can reshare your posts.
- **Photos and videos.** You can prevent people from automatically adding pictures of you to your profile without your approval and hide photos and videos so they don't display in your feed.

How can my kid block or report other users on Instagram?

Next to each person's account, there are three dots. When you tap on them, you see options to **block**, **report**, or mute that person. You can also use the Restrict option to screen someone's comments without them knowing. Also, if a comment seems to be offensive, the bully may get an alert that asks, "Are you sure you want to post this?" which may make them think twice. If a bully is really determined, however, it's not hard for them to create a new account and start all over. Sometimes kids even make "hate pages" that are created to make fun of specific people or create accounts in someone else's name acting as an impostor. You can report those accounts, too, but since it can turn into a game of whack-a-mole -- and **Instagram is notoriously unresponsive to reporting** -- it's not always enough to rely on these features. Teach your kids **when and how to use blocking and reporting** (and make sure they know that they'll remain anonymous). If you can't get rid of a bully, you may need more support from the school or other parents.

What should I do if it seems like my kid can't stop looking at Instagram?

Within the app, there's a feature called Your Activity, which is designed to make people more aware of the time they're spending in the app and prompt them to curb their use if they feel it's getting to be too much. Your Activity shows how much time you've spent using the app in the past few days, lets you set a time limit and get a reminder to stop, and gives access to your notification controls. This can be a **useful tool** for kids if they've mastered self-regulation, but for kids who need more help on that path, you can try device-based controls like **Screen Time on iOS** or the **Family Link app on Android** to block access and set time limits on apps. Another trick is to adjust or turn off notifications completely to calm the need to check every few minutes. And if kids are constantly scrolling, they'll reach the "You're all caught up!" message that tells them there's no new content to see since the last time they checked.

What are some other risks associated with kids using Instagram?

Because Instagram is so image-based, there definitely can be a **focus on perfection**, image, and status. It's not uncommon for some users to take lots of selfies to choose the "perfect" one and delete posts that don't get a certain number of likes. And with so many filters and celebrities and posts of people having fun, it can definitely affect a **teen's body image** and sense of self. Some people **even take risks** to get the perfect shot, all for Instagram. To keep up, teens may post sexy pictures or reveal too much personal information. The effects of "influencers" are real, so knowing whom your kid follows and why might give you insight into who they admire and what products that person might be pushing (note that there's often a way to buy right from the app). As with any other social media app that includes likes and follows, some teens use those as **a measuring stick and compare themselves to others**. If your kid's activity on the app takes a turn from connection and fun to perfection and anxiety, it's time to take a break. Using it to scroll through other people's fabulous photos for long stretches every day without using it to joke with friends or send messages can make **teens feel worse** than when they opened the app.

Are there any potential benefits to my kid using Instagram?

If it's used positively, Instagram is a place kids go to connect with friends, a bit like passing virtual notes with lots of bells and whistles and paging through entertainment magazines. Teens also use it to be creative, posting art, poetry, and videos that showcase their talents. When used in balance with other activities and with purpose (not just endless, mindless scrolling), **kids can come away from the app feeling connected and positive**.

If you decide to let your teen use Instagram, there are **some steps you can take** to help them get the most positives and fewest negatives. You can sit down and go through the app and its settings with them, note your concerns, lay out the expectations and potential consequences, talk through whatever controls you might use (including spot checks), and set boundaries around when, where, how, and whom they can communicate with to get off to a solid start.

What Should Parents Know About Kik?

Because you sign up with a username and not your phone number, Kik lets you chat with a much wider range of people, including strangers.

What should parents know about Kik?

Kids and teens love using the chatting app *Kik Messenger* because it's free, it's popular with their friends, and they can quickly and efficiently add cool Web content -- memes, viral videos, images, and more -- to their texts without any message or character limits. The ability to easily interact with and share popular, trending items is a huge draw for kids (whose lives pretty much revolve around the Internet). The other thing kids like about *Kik* is that you can sign up with only a username; you don't have to tie your account to your phone number, as you would with traditional SMS messaging. That lets you chat with a much wider range of potential chat buddies -- whom you may or may not know. It's been connected to the alleged [murder of a 13-year-old Virginia girl](#) by a college student.

Parents also should be aware that inside the *Kik* app is a huge range of other apps, some of which cost money and not all of which are age-appropriate. The additional content defies categorization: There's *Nearby*, a Tinder-like dating game that matches you to other users in your area; the *New York Times*, which offers access to top stories as well as more in-depth articles for a fee; *Funny Pics*, a gallery of photos from the website Reddit; and *Jam*, where you can read about musical artists, see photos, watch videos, buy merchandise, and, of course, chat with other fans. There also are lots and lots of games. [Learn more about the pros and cons of Kik](#) and how to help your kid use it responsibly.

What Should Parents Know About Periscope?

One of the first apps to let people live-stream (use their phones to broadcast video to the internet as it's happening), Periscope has a lot of potential, but it's also kinda creepy.

Parents need to know that *Periscope* is a streaming-video app that allows people to live-broadcast anytime from anywhere via their [Twitter](#) feeds. Similar to the competing service [Meerkat](#), it's impressive technology but one that exposes the user to a wide variety of privacy implications (as well as potential inappropriate content). Because the app streams events live, there's no way for anyone to know what's going to happen next. That opens the door for sexual or violent material, endless strong language, and drinking and drug use. It's also easy to capture video of people in public places without their permission. There's a "report" feature users can access by swiping left on a broadcast to the info panel, so videos featuring content that violates the terms of service may be removed. Read the [privacy policy](#) to find out more about the types of information collected and shared.

What Should Parents Know About Snapchat?

Currently killing it with teens, Snapchat lets you share messages that self-destruct after they're read, but it turns out messages actually never disappear.

Parents' Ultimate Guide to Snapchat

Is Snapchat safe for kids? How does it work? And what's with Snapstreaks?

Everything curious parents need to know about this ultra-popular app. By [Christine Elgersma](#) 6/4/2018

Topics: [Cellphone Parenting](#), [Social Media](#)



If you have tweens or teens, you know [about Snapchat](#). And if you can't figure out how it works, you're like many parents. One of the most popular social media apps out there, Snapchat gives kids and teens what they really want: a simple way to share everyday moments while simultaneously making them look awesome. And unlike [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), which record and broadcast everything you do, Snapchat uses messages that are meant to disappear (learn more about how [they actually don't](#)). Like so many social media apps, Snapchat is a mixed bag, so it's a good idea to understand how it works, how your kids use it, and how much time they spend on it so you can make sure their experiences are positive.

In addition to letting you connect with and follow friends, Snapchat offers a lot more cool stuff: games, news and entertainment, quizzes, and truly innovative photo- and video-editing tools (so innovative, in fact, it's nearly impossible for grown-ups to figure them out -- another reason kids love it).

Something about snapping, sharing, and then forgetting about life's little moments has massive appeal for kids. And for the most part, that's what they use Snapchat for. The app has a lighthearted design, and its photo filters and effects tend toward rainbows and flower crowns. But other features pose some risks: [Snap Map](#) lets friends see each other's location on a map, which isn't always safe; [Snapstreaks](#) requires kids to exchange messages for as long as possible, which is a major time-

suck; and **Discover** offers some age-inappropriate content. With your **guidance** on privacy, safety, social media pressure, and marketing, though, Snapchat can be a fun way for teens to connect. Check out our **full review** to get the whole scoop.

What is Snapchat?

Snapchat is a popular messaging app that lets users exchange pictures and videos (called snaps) that are meant to disappear after they're viewed. It's advertised as a "new type of camera" because the essential function is to take a picture or video, add filters, lenses, or other effects and share them with friends.

How does Snapchat work?

All you need to sign up is your name, an email address, and your birth date. On Snapchat, users go by a handle, and Snapchatters gravitate toward silly names. To add friends, you can upload your contacts or search for people you know. You can also automatically add someone by taking a picture of their "**Snapcode**," a special QR code unique to each user. After that, things get a little confusing. On Snapchat, photos -- not text -- usually start the communication. To begin a conversation, you tap the big camera circle and take a snap. There are all sorts of photo-editing tools (you have to experiment to figure out what they do) as well as filters to adorn your images. Once you customize your snap, you can send it to anyone in your friends list or add it to **your story**, which is a record of the day that your friends can view for 24 hours. In addition to individual texting, Snapchat also offers group texting and group stories that everyone in a group can contribute to. You can delete the text messages you send, though in a group chat the other people will see that you've deleted something. In terms of Snaps, you can delete unopened ones that use a saved picture (not taken on the spot). Snaps that include pictures you just took (and didn't save) aren't possible to delete.

How old do you have to be to use Snapchat?

According to the **terms of service**, users must be 13. You have to enter your birth date to set up an account, but there's no age verification, so it's easy for kids under 13 to sign up. Common Sense Media rates Snapchat OK for teens 16 and up, mainly because of the exposure to age-inappropriate content and the marketing ploys, such as quizzes, that collect data.

Do messages really disappear on Snapchat?

It depends. If you set a time limit on a snap, it will disappear after it's viewed. However, recipients can take a screenshot of an image using their phones or a third-party screen-capture app. A phone screen-capture will notify the sender that the image was captured. But third-party apps don't trigger a notification. For these reasons, it's best that teens understand that nothing done online is really temporary. Before sending a sexy or embarrassing snap of themselves or someone else, it's important to remember that the picture could circulate the school by tomorrow morning.

What are Snapstreaks?

With a Snapstreaks, two users have snapped back and forth within a 24-hour period for three days in a row. Once you've established a streak, special emojis and statistics display next to the streakers' names to show you how long you've maintained a streak. Why do they matter? For one thing, they add to your overall Snapchat score (basically a number that reflects how much you use the app). For another, they can occasionally become the most **important thing in a kid's life**. Because of the intense bonds kids can form over social media, they can feel that a Snapstreak is a measure of their friendship, and if they don't keep it up they'll let the other person down. Teens have even been known to give friends access to their Snapchat accounts to keep a streak going if they can't do it themselves (for example, if their phone gets taken away for being online too much). This can lead to feelings of **pressure, anxiety, and compulsion**, so it's good to know if your kid has streaks going to get a window into why that selfie **might feel really important**.

What's Snap Map?

Snap Map displays your location on a map in real time. Only your Snapchat friends can see where you are. If your friends have opted into Snap Map, you can see their locations, too. (You can turn this off or use it in Ghost Mode, which allows you to see the map but not be seen by others.) Snap Map also features news and events from around the world -- for example, a political rally in Nicaragua, which displays as an icon on a map of the world. The biggest risk with Snap Map is a teen having their **location seen by all their friends** -- since some of their Snapchat contacts may not be real friends. Unless there's a specific event and it makes it easier for friends to know each other's location, it's best to leave Snap Maps off or use it in Ghost Mode.

What's a Snapchat story?

A story is a collection of moments in the form of pictures and videos that, taken together, create a narrative. (After Snapchat popularized the format, other social media services, including [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), offered story-creation tools, too.) On Snapchat, stories appear as circles, and when you tap them, they autoplay the pictures or videos the user collected. You can create personal stories that your friends can view for a 24-hour period. Or, if you think your Snap is particularly interesting or newsworthy, you can send it to Our Story. Our Stories are kind of like mini-documentaries of events, holidays, game championships, or other things happening in the world on a particular day. Snaps are curated and compiled by the company. While it's cool to have your story added to Our Story, it's also very public, so kids should think carefully before submitting one.

What's a Snapcode?

When you sign up, Snapchat gives you your own unique QR code. When you meet a fellow Snapchat user and want to friend each other, you can just take a snap of the other person's code, and they're automatically added to your friends list. Because it's so easy to [find friends on Snapchat](#) (depending on your settings) or exchange codes, teens may end up with virtual strangers on their friends list. For a variety of reasons, that can be risky, so it's best to talk to your teen about when it's safe to add people.

What's Discover?

Discover offers content created by celebrities, news and entertainment outlets, and other users. You can subscribe to specific Discover sources to receive their feeds. While Discover offers some legitimate news from publishers including the *New York Times* and Vice Media, the offerings can be promotional and are frequently mature. But if your kid has signed up with their correct birth date, they'll miss the alcohol ads and other adult content that Snapchat filters out for underage users. Discover stories often feature promos prompting kids to "swipe up" to learn more (which usually leads to ads) or take a quiz (which is usually a marketing tool). This section runs the gamut from harmless to shocking, so it's good to look around and get a sense of what your kids are seeing.

What are Snapchat's other features?

Snapchat is waaaaay more than cute photos. The more you use the app, the more points you get and the higher your Snapchat score goes. Snapchat awards high scorers with trophies and other perks. Here are a few other Snapchat features:

- **Face lenses and world lenses:** If you've seen photos of people with cartoon cat ears and whiskers on their faces, those are face lenses. World lenses are augmented reality elements, such as rainbows, that you can add to a snap so it looks like it's part of the photo. Technically, lenses are "overlays" -- and they cost money on Snapchat.
- **Geo-filters:** These are location-specific elements that can only be unlocked by visiting a specific place. Businesses use geo-filters as a way for customers to check in and advertise them. A kid could create a special geo-filter for their sweet-16 party for attendees to add to their photos.
- **Snapcash:** Like PayPal or Venmo, Snapcash lets users transfer money to each other.
- **Memories:** If you don't want your snaps to disappear, you can store them to send later. **My Eyes Only** is a way to save Memories behind a passcode so that no one else can see them.
- **Snapstore:** This is exactly what it sounds like: a place to buy Snapchat-related items.
- **Shazam:** A feature that helps you identify a song.
- **Snap Games:** Co-play games with voice/text chat and ads, launched from the chat section to play with friends.
- **Snap Originals:** Shows created by Snapchat with a wide range of formats from docuseries to pop culture, made in partnership with platforms like BuzzFeed.

Is Snapchat safe for tweens and teens?

Most kids use Snapchat to goof around and stay in contact with their friends -- end of story. Yes, there's some mature content, but it's appropriate for most teens 16 and up. That said, there are three key risky areas:

The myth of disappearing messages. When Snapchat first started, it was labeled "**the sexting app**" because people sent intimate photos, assuming they'd self-destruct. Any app can be misused, but a lot of kids mistakenly believe that Snapchat has a built-in Get Out of Jail Free card. Teens really need to understand that the content they share can be saved and shared and may never go away. It's best to have this conversation before they download Snapchat, but it's never too late. Talk about whether any of their friends have ever pressured them to send a sexy image and discuss why someone who would do that does not have your best interests at heart. Kids should also ask permission before sharing a picture of someone else.

The time suck. Snapchat is a ton of fun to use, and there's lots to discover on it. Snapstreaks and stories add a time-pressure element that makes kids feel like they have to check in. If it ever seems like your kid is stressing and not using the app for fun, it's time to step in.

Privacy and safety. Since it's so easy to add friends in Snapchat, you can end up with lots of people you don't know well on your friends list. And depending on your settings, the app can collect a ton of data about your habits in -- and outside of -- the app. Snapchat also works with a lot of third parties that they **share your data with**.

How do I monitor Snapchat and use the settings?

The biggest challenge for parents is that there's no way to see your kid's activity in the app in the same way as on other social media platforms. Since there's no feed to scroll, there's not much to monitor. Instead, focus on the privacy settings. If you decide to say yes to Snapchat, sit down with your kid and together go into the app's settings (the little gear icon next to your profile image). Scroll down to "Who Can..." This is where you can control important safety features such as who can see your location and who can view your story. This is a perfect time to talk to your kid about using their Snapchat account safely and responsibly. Discuss when and how often you'll check in on how they're using it and how they're feeling about it. Explain that you understand that social media is important to them, and, at the same time, your role is to protect them. Don't forget to ask your teen to show you some of their snaps and some of the cool features they like in the app. That'll make it a little less scary for you -- and send the message that you're on the same team.

What Should Parents Know About Steam?

Steam is a social gaming site offering both free and fee-based downloads (not all age-appropriate), multiplayer action, and chatting with gamer buds.

Parents' Ultimate Guide to Steam

Is your gamer obsessed with Steam? Here's everything you need to know about the popular but permissive PC gaming platform. By [Frannie Ucciferri](#) 4/2/2019

Topics: [Gaming](#), [Healthy Media Habits](#)



If your kids are into video games, it's only a matter of time before you start hearing about Steam. Launched in 2003 by Valve and now boasting over 150 million users, Steam has become one of the most important platforms in the world of PC gaming. It's a one-stop shop where you can buy, sell, and store games, plus do tons of other stuff like trade items, watch demos of up-and-coming titles, and interact with a passionate community. Steam also runs some sweet sales (often timed to line up with school breaks).

Steam is to gaming what Netflix or Amazon Prime Video are to TV. Like other content-streaming platforms, Steam has oodles of content, but the quality varies a lot, and not all of it is age-appropriate. While it has plenty of fantastic, family-friendly games like *Rocket League* and *Sid Meier's Civilization VI*, it also has games where the main draw is the graphic violence or explicit sex, like *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* or *Grand Theft Auto V*. The platform has even come under fire for boldly announcing that it would sell any title, no matter how extreme (including a controversial 2018 school-shooter game that was only removed for violating Steam's terms of service).

Fortunately for parents, Steam has parental controls that let families pick and choose precisely which titles and features their kids can have access to. So is Steam a dream platform for die-hard gamers or a nightmare for parents? Check out these frequently asked questions to learn more about this versatile gaming platform.

What is Steam?

Steam is an online platform from game developer Valve where you can buy, play, create, and discuss PC games. The platform hosts thousands of games (as well as downloadable content, or DLC, and user-generated features called "mods") from major developers and indie game designers alike.

How does Steam work?

Steam is a cloud-based gaming library. One of its most popular features is the ability for users to use any computer to play games they buy/download to their Steam accounts. This also allows users to store a large collection of games without using too much computer memory. To use Steam, you have to download and install the Steam "engine" or app on your computer. Once you do that, you can access the full library of games, software, and forums.

What age should my kid be to use Steam?

Steam requires users to be at least 13 years old to use the product. Because of the platform's communication features such as open chat and community forums, Common Sense Media also recommends users be at least 13 years old to use it, although many available games are not appropriate for young teens. But with the right settings and monitoring, parents can use the platform to find and download age-appropriate games for younger kids.

Is Steam safe for kids?

Like any other app store or video-streaming platform, Steam can be extremely safe or extremely iffy depending on the content kids are exposed to. While there are thousands of family-friendly games available on the platform, many of the games on Steam feature graphic violence, swearing, or sexy stuff. Kids can also find plenty of swearing and mature content in the groups and forums. And the trading system can expose unsuspecting gamers to scammers. However, Steam also has robust parental controls (see below) that can greatly reduce the risks kids face while using Steam -- if parents take the time to figure them out.

Is there chat on Steam?

Steam supports both text and voice chat. You can add friends and chat individually or in groups with both people you know and people you don't know. You can also join public chat rooms and talk to anyone on the platform. Keep in mind that not all of these chat groups and community forums are game-related. Groups related to just about anything, from TV to sports to memes, also attract users to Steam. Many teens share their handles with each other so they can play games and chat with

their real-life friends. Steam members are generally civil, but parents may want to stay on top of who their kids are following or engaging with online.

Are there parental controls on Steam?

Steam offers a sophisticated set of parental controls called Family View that gives parents full control over what their kids have access to on the platform. Steam offers [step-by-step instructions for setting up Family View](#), which are worth reading since the interface can be overwhelming and complicated for newcomers or non-gamers. However, once enabled, parents can choose whether kids can play any game or only games they've approved and added to the Family Game Library. Family View also lets parents control whether kids have access to the Steam store, community-generated content, chat, forums, or online profiles. All of these features are PIN protected, so kids can't easily override them. There is also the option to set your account preferences to restrict titles that feature frequent violence, gore, nudity, or sexual content and to warn about mature user-generated content, but these aren't PIN protected.

Are there privacy or security settings on Steam?

Steam profiles are public by default, but the platform does allow you to make your game details, friends list, description, comments, and group ownership private or only available to your friends list. Steam also has a security feature called Steam Guard that provides an additional level of security to an account. It uses either an approved email address or two-factor authentication via the Steam mobile app to protect accounts from hackers.

Does Steam cost money?

Steam itself is free to download and use, but many of the games available do come with a cost. Some games are free-to-play or cost as little as \$1, but new releases from the biggest and best developers can cost as much as \$60–70 each. Savvy gamers can wait for one of Steam's many sales for serious savings. Keep in mind that when you buy games from the Steam store, you can only play them on the Steam network.

What is Steam Wallet?

Steam Wallet is a way that users can buy games or other content on the Steam store. Users can either add money to a Steam Wallet using a credit card or buy a physical Steam gift card at a store or supermarket and enter the code to access the funds. Using Steam Wallet can be a useful way for parents to manage their kids' spending on Steam, especially since some games are pricey to download or offer in-game purchases that can add up fast.

What Should Parents Know About Tumblr?

One of the internet's most popular places for creative self-expression, Tumblr offer a huge range of user-generated content that's not always age-appropriate.

What should parents know about Tumblr?

Tumblr is an unending streaming scrapbook of text, photos, videos, and audio clips. It pioneered the vibrant, graphic-rich, full-screen design that kids love (which is one reason Yahoo bought it for \$1.1 billion 2013). And -- with more than a million blogs -- it remains one of the most popular places on the Web for creative types to design original pages, share cool things they discover, and follow others with similar interests. On Tumblr, the goal of many users is to be "reblogged" (as opposed to racking up likes, as with Instagram), which makes the service feel like a creative community bonded by shared interests -- and not a popularity contest. Tumblr is unique because of the wide variety of content that users can post from their phones or computers. Not only can they text and post photos, they also can offer up quotes, links, music, voice messages, and videos. It all shows up on a member's page along with a stream of posts from people they're following. This ability to post instantaneously can be a risk for impulsive teens (or any teens, really), so if your kid likes Tumblr, it's a good idea to talk about thinking before you post.

The key concerns for parents are privacy and inappropriate content. Tumblr posts are public by default. Users also don't have to use their real names (in fact, Tumblr will assign you an interesting username if you don't create one yourself), so you can stay fairly anonymous. On the Web version, you can prevent people from finding you through your email address, but the app version doesn't offer that setting. Plus, in all of Tumblr's creative self-expression, it's easy to find both mature content (which you can't filter) and "native advertising" -- ads designed to look like regular content. As with any [social-networking site](#), it's important to talk to your kids about what's OK to post and what should remain private. Also discuss what you can do if someone posts something inappropriate (for example, reporting that person for violating Tumblr's terms of service). And help your kid develop media-literacy skills by noticing how advertisers use a site's signature style to bury their messages.

What Should Parents Know About Twitch?

Twitch is where gamers go to watch more advanced gamers live-stream themselves playing games. Violent content and unscripted language are the biggest issues.

For non-gamers, the idea of watching other people play **video games like Fortnite or Call of Duty** doesn't make much sense. But, each month, more than 100 million people log on to **Twitch** to do just that. This game-enthusiast site specializes in live-streaming video broadcasts of gamers fighting, solving puzzles, and strategizing -- all while making colorful commentary. Twitch, owned by Amazon, also features gaming news, product announcements, events, and a vocal community of fans who *really* love games.

Here's how it works: Hundreds of games are listed in the main directory. Click on one you like to discover dozens of live videos of people playing the game. You can follow your favorite broadcasters for free or subscribe to their channel for an additional fee. You can also become a broadcaster yourself. The broadcasters -- who are from all over the world -- earn money from subscriptions.

While Twitch is a gamer's paradise, and the overall tone is kept in line by the site's usage rules, there's plenty of age-inappropriate content. Here's more you need to know about Twitch:

- **Most of the games are pretty violent.** While Twitch has milder games such as *Minecraft*, many are mature, including *Fallout* and *Call of Duty*.
- **Many of the commentators use mature language.** Twitch has rules against getting too graphic, but kids will definitely hear and see swear words.
- **The site runs a lot of advertising.** You'll see mature movie and game ads as well as fast-food commercials. (A Turbo account eliminates ads.)
- **Twitch can be a real time-waster.** If you're concerned about the amount of time your kid already spends playing video games, you'll want to rein in the Twitch time, as there's an endless supply of gamers, information, and other game-buff stuff.
- **Live-streaming is risky.** There's no time delay with live-streaming -- what gamers say and do goes out immediately, so the content is unpredictable.
- **Twitch costs can add up.** You can watch for free or sign up for a free account with features such as chatting. A Turbo account eliminates ads and costs \$8.99 per month. Each subscription to an individual broadcaster costs money.

What Should Parents Know About Twitter?

With the ability to follow celebs such as Taylor Swift as well as the girl next door, Twitter is a staple of teens' lives, offering news, current events, and, yes, some drama.

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

Parents need to know that Twitter is a free "microblogging" and social-networking site (and app) that brings up issues of safety, privacy, and a lasting digital footprint. The service allows users to post 280-character messages and follow their other accounts -- from friends to celebrities to politicians to news outlets to organizations. New posts appear immediately, and, though you can delete tweets, they don't always immediately disappear. Teens can also receive direct messages from anyone, unless disabled in settings. Live-streaming may contain all manner of content, so keep that in mind as your teens use Twitter. Read the developer's [privacy policy](#) for details on how your (or your kids') information is collected, used, and shared and any choices you may have in the matter, and note that privacy policies frequently change.

Hottest Social App Trends for Teens

Teens stay connected with these popular apps

By Elise Moreau

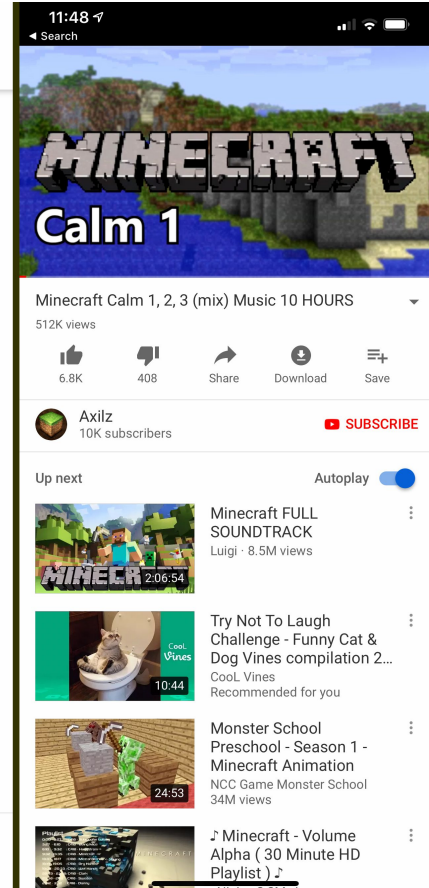
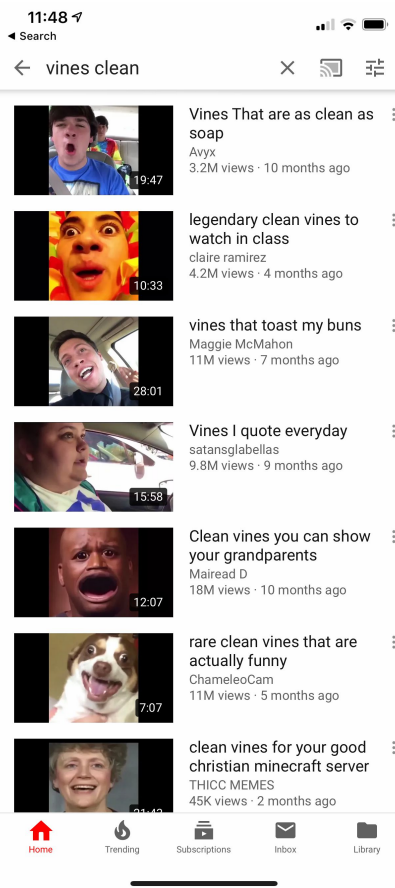
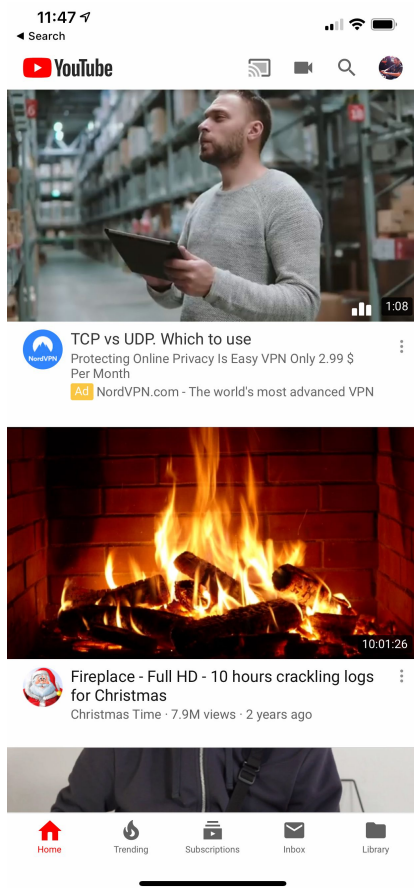
Updated December 17, 2019

Social networking is constantly evolving. Gone are the days when [MySpace](#) ruled the web. Now, practically everyone's gone mobile, with more than 95 percent of teenagers having a cell phone. Real-time photos and [video sharing](#) is the [trend](#) that young people are most excited about.

Facebook has confessed it struggles to keep its younger users engaged and excited, despite once being the ultimate go-to social network of choice for young people. So, where's the younger generation to go? They're already on their phones and tablets, of course, so they make the best of it by using the most popular social networking and messenger apps on the market. In early 2018, the top three social apps in use by teenagers were YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat. Kids are flocking to these by the thousands every month.

Parents should be sure to educate themselves and their teens on the dangers of [online child predators](#).

YouTube



What We Like

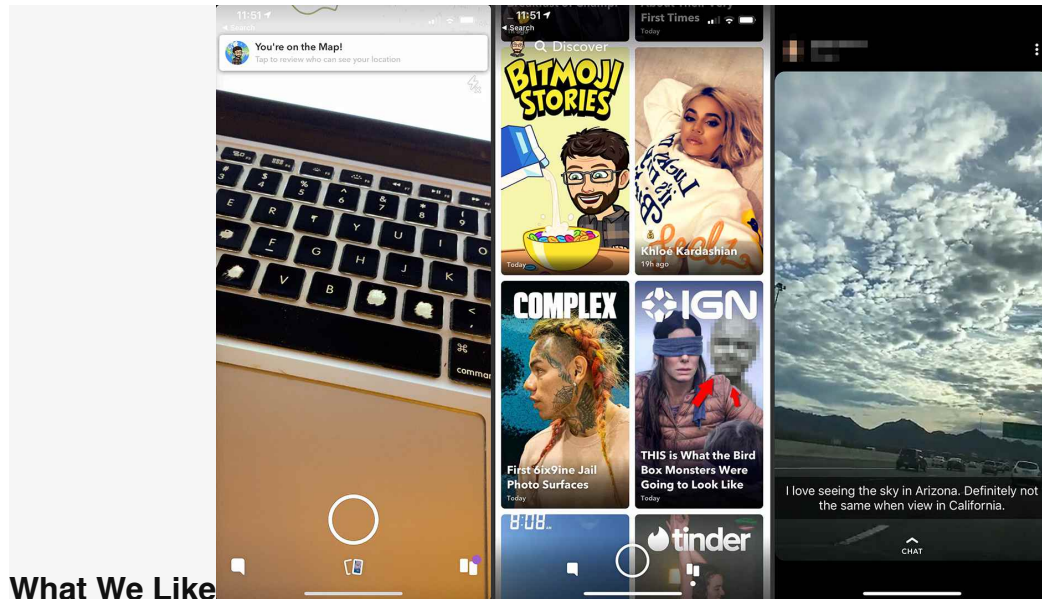
- Huge variety of topics.
- Innumerable amount of videos.
- Can add commentary and reviews to videos.
- Can save videos to a watchlist for later viewing.

What We Don't Like

- Many videos have ads.
- YouTube has problems with commentary and child predators.
- No way to really filter undesirable video topics.

You might think YouTube would be the granddaddy in this bunch, but you'd be wrong. YouTube is wildly popular with teens and tweens, who visit it at a level that's almost doubled in the past three years. YouTube added a strong influencer and vlogger base to what was once primarily a passive content consumption website, and the teens love it. In 2018, YouTube became the most popular social app among American 13- to 18-year-old teens.

Snapchat



What We Like

- Simple interface.
- Can take pictures or video.
- Share your pics with friends or the public.
- Fun avatars created through Bitmoji.
- More real-time communication.
- Lots of filters and lenses make chatting fun.

What We Don't Like

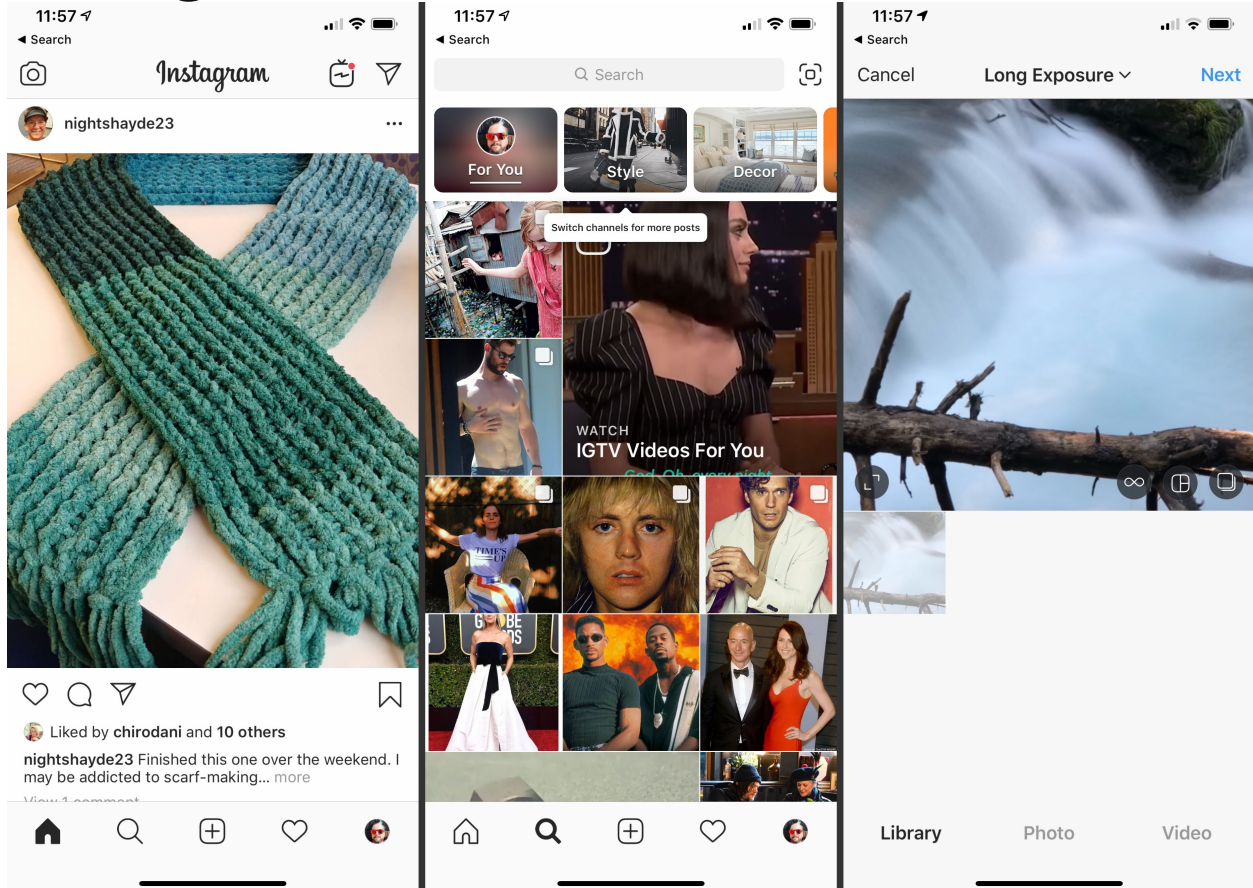
- If using location, can be intrusive.
- Ads show up in the Discover part of the app.
- Available on mobile only.

Snapchat is a popular private messaging app known for photos and short videos that are automatically deleted after they're viewed. For teens, this "self-destructing" feature is a big part of what makes Snapchat so appealing, encouraging them to interact more frequently, safe in the knowledge that all their previous snaps disappear.

Snapchat isn't just a media-sharing app. You can even use it to [send money to your friends](#).

Privacy, [sexting](#), and [screenshot saving](#) have posed some issues for Snapchat, but it remains one of the hottest apps with teens.

Instagram



What We Like

- Great place to share photos and videos.
- Easy to post photos and videos.
- You can edit images and add filters for visual effects.
- Less ads than its counterparts.

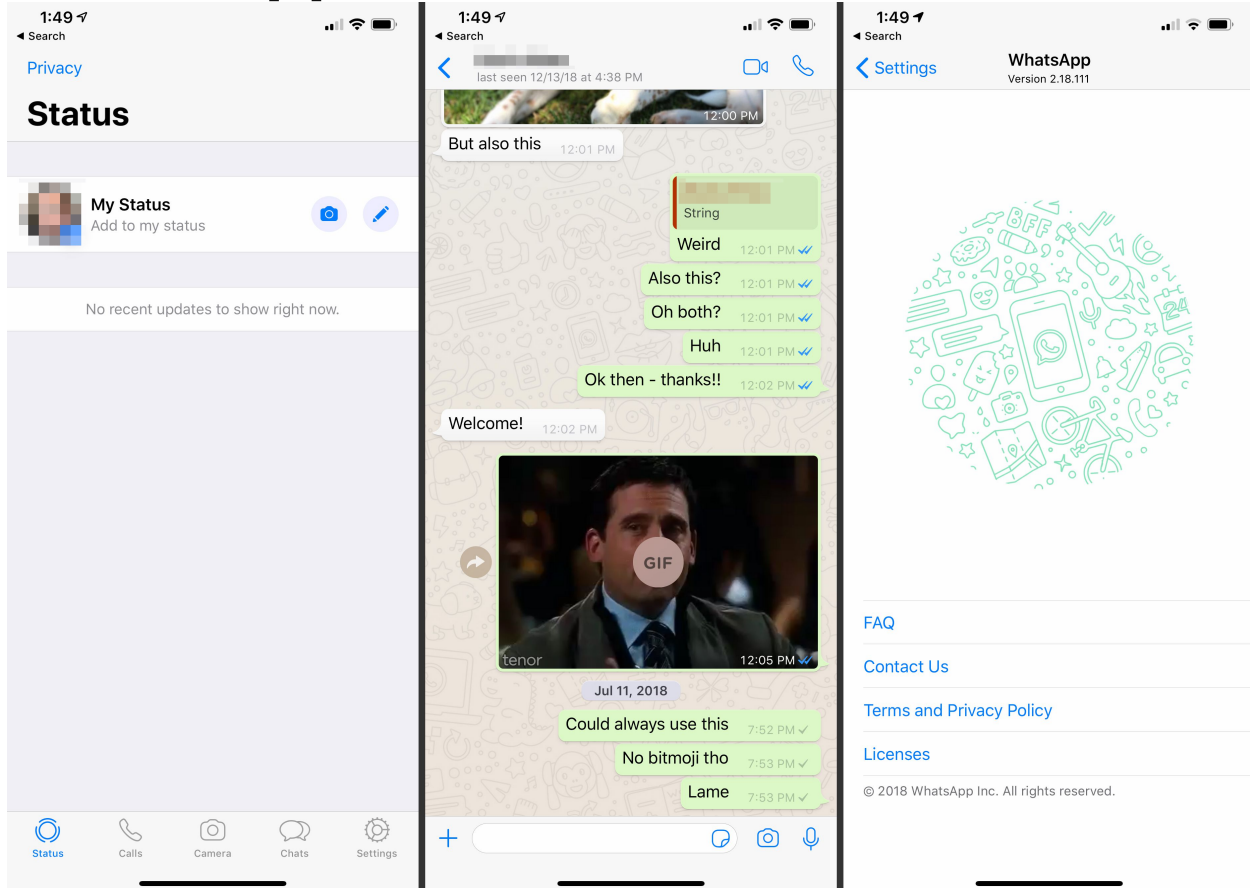
What We Don't Like

- Quite a few spam\illicit accounts.
- Can't post clickable URLs.

Facebook may have ruled social photo-sharing on the web, but Instagram arguably rules over it on mobile devices. Although it doesn't openly share how many of its users are teens, it's not all that hard to see this mobile social platform is filled with them. All you have to do is check out the photos on the [opening screen](#) or search through some [popular hashtags](#) to get a glimpse of how young the dominant demographic truly is on Instagram.

You can connect to your Instagram account through your computer, Android, or iOS device.

WhatsApp



What We Like

- End to end encryption.
- Can edit pics with clipart, filters, and more.
- App allows two different accounts on Android.

What We Don't Like

- App needs all parties involved to use WhatsApp.
- Earlier versions were prone to crashes.

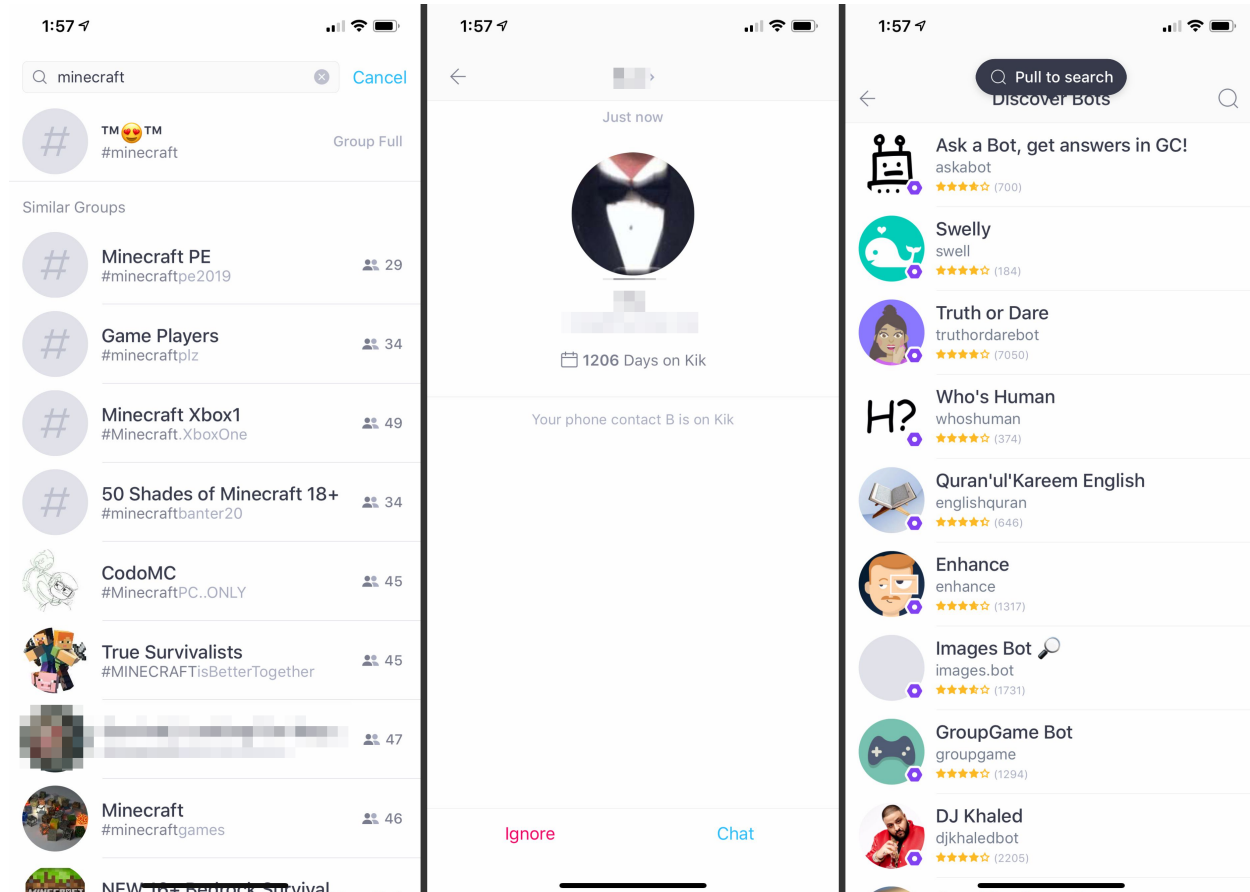
Lots of kids still use [Facebook Messenger](#) to get in touch with their friends, but Facebook also owns another messaging app called WhatsApp.

WhatsApp had more than one million monthly active users as of late 2017, and they're not just using the texting feature. WhatsApp also lets you post status updates, send video, share your location, and make voice and video calls over the internet.

The platform is completely isolated from Facebook, so teens don't need to worry about the two overlapping.

WhatsApp is compatible with Android phones, iPhones, Macs, and Windows computers.

Kik



What We Like

- Can join public chat groups on a variety of topics.
- Searchable GIFs, stickers, and more.
- Free additional emojis available for download.
- You can even create and send your own memes.

What We Don't Like

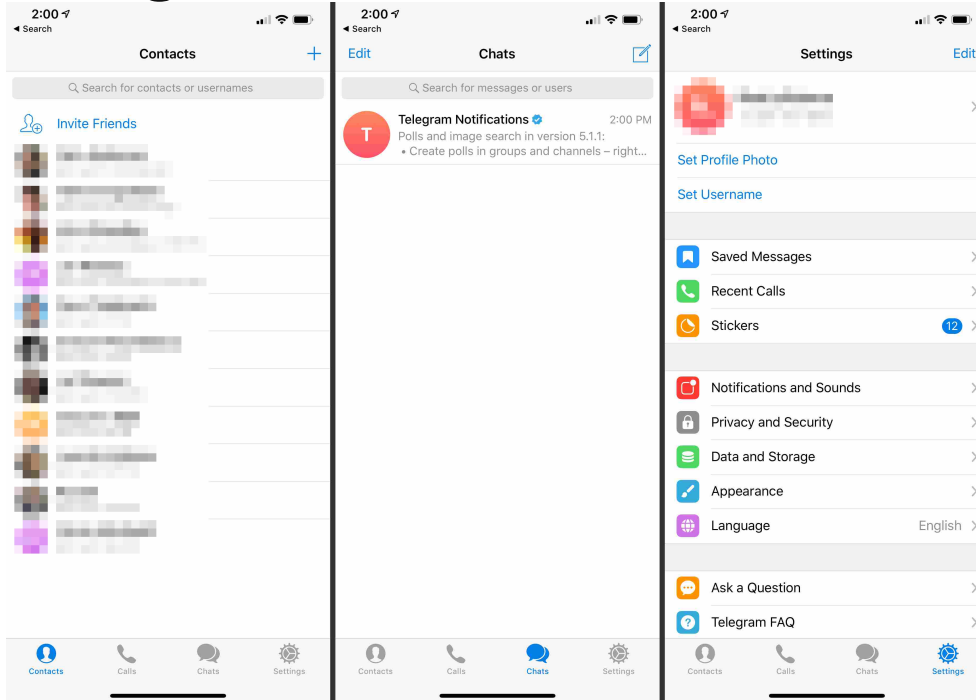
- No moderation in public chatgroups.
- Messages can be slow to send.

Like WhatsApp, Kik has become an insanely popular messaging app for teens. It's just one of the other fast and intuitive messaging apps used as an alternative to SMS texting, requiring only a username rather than a phone number.

If you take a look on Instagram, you'll notice that a lot of profiles list Kik usernames in the bios so that other Instagrammers have some way to contact them privately.

Kik works with Android, iOS, Amazon, and Microsoft mobile devices.

Telegram



What We Like

- Available on a variety of platforms.
- Encrypts your messages.
- No ads.

What We Don't Like

- You have to wait two minutes to receive an SMS code when getting started.
- There can be problems when verifying a new phone.
- Numerous reports of long delays getting access to app.

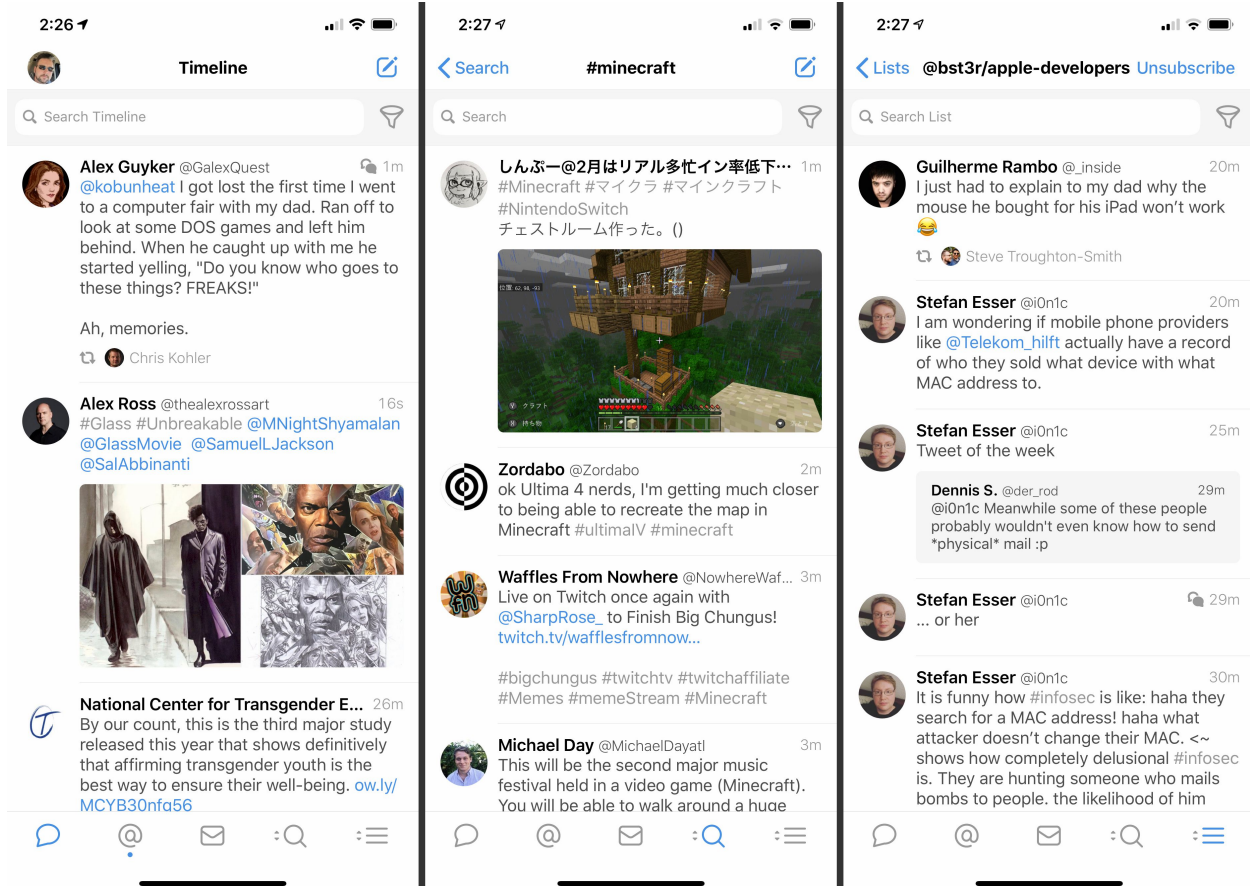
Telegram is interesting because it does a lot more than a typical texting app, and it's completely free with zero advertisements.

All the texts and phone calls are encrypted through Telegram, and you can send absolutely any file type you want—even large ones up to 1.5 GB. This is unique to most messaging apps that support image and video files.

The messages are synced across all supported devices because the messages and files are stored in the cloud. You can delete texts whenever you want and make secret chats that dissolve messages on a timer. You can also address up to 5,000 of your closest friends in one single group message.

Telegram is available on iOS, Android, Windows Phone, Windows PC, Mac, and Linux. The web version lets you access Telegram from any computer without installing the software.

Twitter



What We Like

- Instant gratification of newsworthy or entertainment info.
- You can choose between top trending tweets or tweets as they happen.
- Many famous people use the app, making for interesting reading.
- Great way to interact with your favorite TV shows via Tweet Chat.

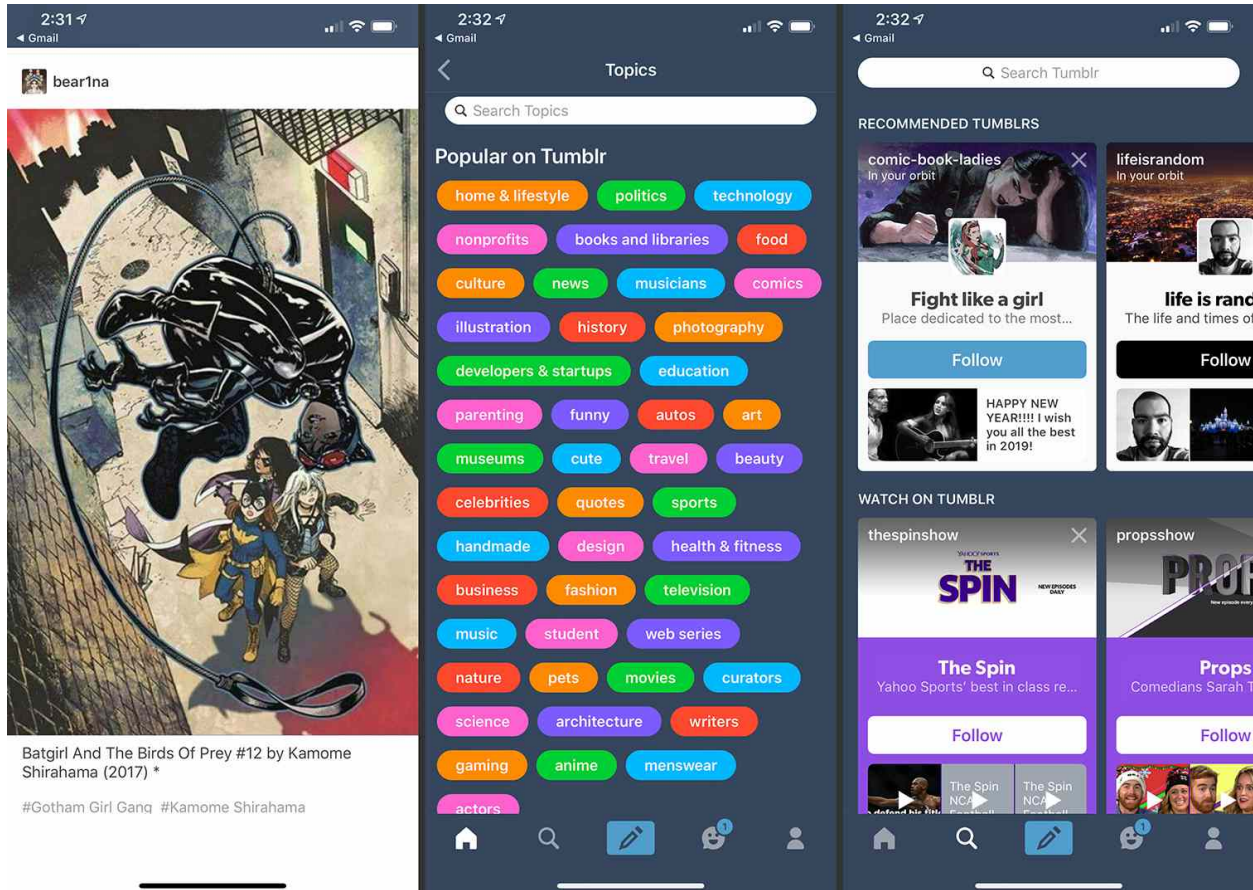
What We Don't Like

- Your tweets can easily get lost in the shuffle.
- Tweets still have a character limitation.
- Hard to keep up with feed if you follow a lot of people.

Teens have taken a liking to the Twitter microblogging social network, which is a hub for **real-time news** and connecting with high-profile individuals and celebrities. Because Twitter is so simple to use from a mobile device, it's convenient to access, but it's the visual component of embedded multimedia, such as photos, articles, and videos, in tweets that attracts most teens.

Users can get on Twitter from their computer, phone, or tablet. See all the different ways you can use Twitter on [its apps page](#).

Tumblr



What We Like

- Can post a blog, video, pics, and even animated GIFs.
- Freely express yourself with blog-like posts.
- Suggested posts help you find content related to what you just liked.
- Little to no ads.

What We Don't Like

- Has had problems with adult content in the past.
- Tumblr has had some censorship complaints.
- Hard to build a following.

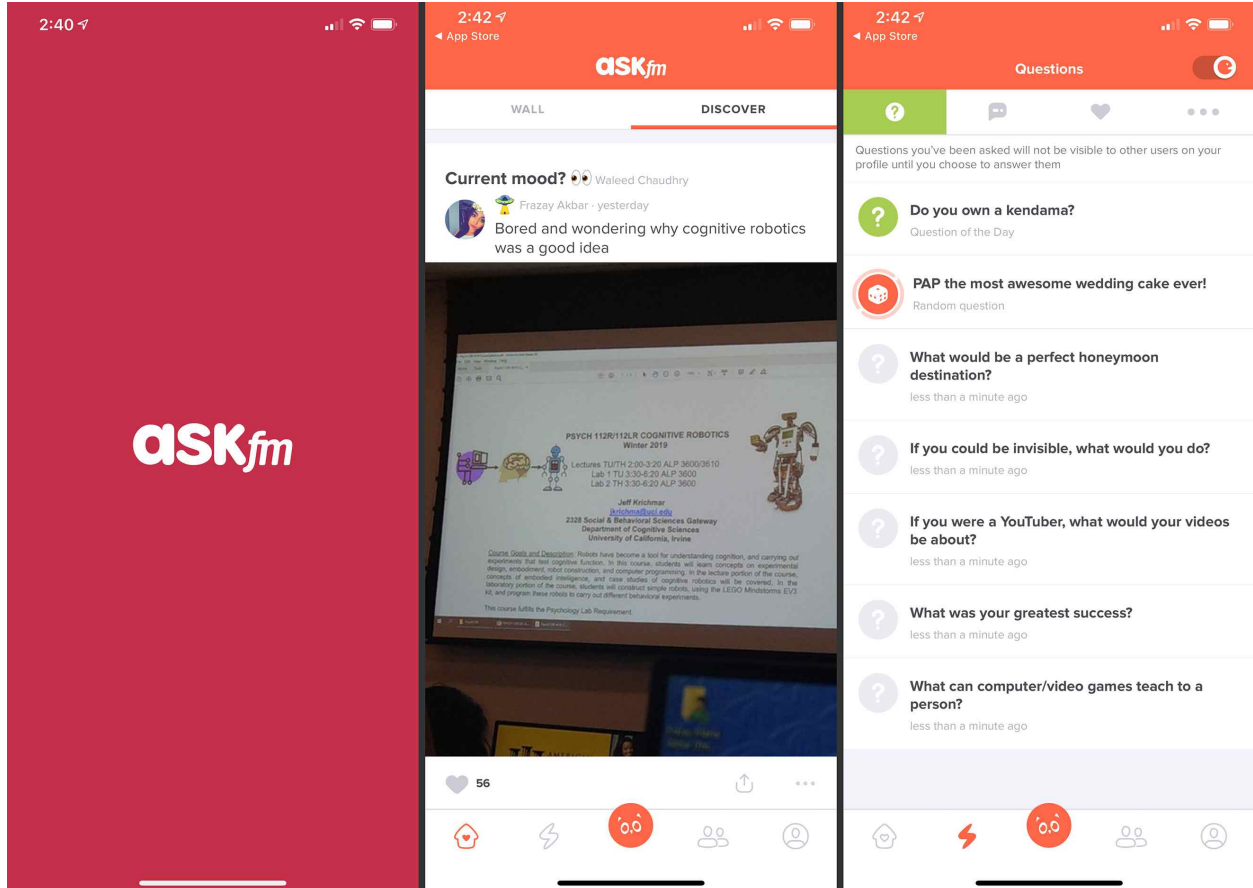
Tumblr is one of the web's most popular blogging platforms, and a lot of teens have admitted to trading in their Facebook accounts for a Tumblr blog instead.

Like Snapchat and Instagram, Tumblr is largely dominated by visual content and has become a favored platform for [animated GIF sharing](#). Although it allows its users to create blog posts in all sorts of formats, including text, audio, quote, and dialogue, it's the visual content that makes time spent on Tumblr worth it.

Tumblr can be downloaded on Android and iOS. It also works through a web browser.

09
of 09

ASKfm



What We Like

- Interesting way to get to know someone.
- Can ask anything.
- Photo polls are a fun way to start a conversation.

What We Don't Like

- Difficult to find subjects you want to read.
- Can't easily search for specific posts.
- You have to follow at least three friends to earn "coins" for profile features.

ASKfm is a Q&A-based website and app that lets its users take questions from their followers, then answer them one at a time, any time they want. It gives youngsters another reason to talk about themselves other than in the comment section of their own [selfies](#). Although ASKfm may not be as huge as Instagram or Snapchat, it's a good one to watch, for sure. With such a big interest from teens, it has the potential to become the go-to place for Q&A content.

You can use this service on the web and through the [ASKfm mobile apps](#).

How to Find Hidden Apps On Your Child's Phone

New year, new beginning: So why not start 2020 right when it comes to your knowing what apps your kids are actually using — including hidden apps as well. Here is a simple, step-by-step guide to finding out exactly what apps are on your child's devices at any given time and to get real-time alerts any time they install a new one.

Step One: Know the Secret Apps

There are applications popping up every day that provide smartphone users the opportunity to hide things on their phone. Two of the most common types are password-protected and disguising apps.

[Make your kids' Instagram account bully-proof. Download our Ultimate Guide to Social Media Privacy Settings.](#)

- Password-Protected Apps — Vault, KeepSafe, and Best Secret Folder are some of the most popular password-protected apps available for iOS. While some of these apps serve a good purpose, like providing a password lock on sensitive information, a lot of them are used to hide things from parents. In addition to needing a password to get into a user's phone, you then need an additional password to get into the contents of these apps. Users can put videos, photos, and even messages in these kinds of apps.
- Disguised Apps — Have you ever seen an app on your child's phone and wondered "What does that do?" Maybe an app that advertises volume or brightness control, when these controls are right on your child's phone? Chances are, these are apps disguised as other things. Hide It Pro and Secret Calculator are some of the most common because they look like inconspicuous apps but really house much more. In the case of Secret Calculator, the app actually stores photos and videos you don't want mom and dad to see.
- Innocuous Sounding Folders — Title a folder "Health" or "Homework" and voila, suddenly its contents can seem far more innocent than they actually are. It may sound too obvious to be true, but some teens create misleading folder names to help hide apps they know mom and dad won't like.
- Removing Apps from Screens — In addition to secret apps, there is a way to hide apps from showing on the screen. On the iPhone, teens can hide applications by going to Settings, then General, then Restrictions and checking off the apps they don't want to show up on the screen.

Pro Tip: Forcefield monitors all app download activity on your child's smartphone with its App Report feature. App Report captures information regarding which apps your children are installing and uninstalling and sends you a real-time notification any time a new app is installed. Since the App Report links to the App Store, parents using Forcefield can easily discover more information about each app their child downloads. If you discover that your children have downloaded any of the apps mentioned above, it may be time to have a talk with them and ask them why they feel the need to hide things on their phones.

Step Two: Know the Warning Signs

Teens value (and need!) their privacy, so it can be hard to tell when a child is just being private, or if they are trying to hide something. But there are some red flags to look out for if you think your child is hiding secret material on their phone. Some of these include:

- Turning off the screen quickly and not allowing you to see what's on it
- Refusing to provide passwords, both to their phone and the apps on their phone
- A spike in data usage or messaging rates. There will be influxes of usage throughout the payment cycle, but if one app that you don't recognize is using the majority of your child's data, this might be a secret app
- Lethargy during the day from lack of sleep, which could be the result of late-night app usage. App sleepers, like the one [offered from Forcefield](#), can help with this.

Pro Tip: Check your child's phone or App Report regularly. If you notice that they have no browser history or there are flagrant chunks missing from messaging conversations, you can probably assume they have taken steps to hide things from you.

Step Three: Talk to Your Child

Ultimately, the goal of discovering the material on your child's phone isn't to punish them or take away their privacy, but instead teach them good behavior and how to stay safe online. Often times, parents worry so much about their child's behavior that they digitally ground them, don't allow them to have any current technology, or ignore the problem altogether.

If you suspect that your child is participating in dangerous or inappropriate behavior, sit down with them and assess the situation. Having a healthy "tech talk" is just as important as having a healthy drug or sex talk; it reinforces what your child should and shouldn't be doing and why. Finding these secret apps on your child's phone may be scary, but it's a great way to introduce the topic of appropriate smartphone use.

Pro Tip: At [Forcefield](#), we believe that helping your children find the best apps and websites is as important as helping them avoid the worst and that teaching them good behavior goes much further than strict punishments and bans. We also offer affordable products to help parents monitor their child's smartphone and Internet behavior, promoting digital mentorship rather than censorship.

5 Things Parents Need to Know about Tik-Tok



5 THINGS PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TIKTOK

If I asked you to name which apps are on your child's phone right now, could you answer correctly? Do you even know? In 2017 the total number of mobile app downloads reached **197 billion**... with a 'B'. As a parent it can seem overwhelming and even impossible to stay on top of the constant information, media, trends, and noise that is specifically **targeted at our children**. Luckily, parental controls and age restrictions help keep a lot of unsavory apps from reaching our children. But sometimes seemingly harmless apps can slip through the cracks and cause problems for you child.

TikTok is such an app. **TikTok surpassed Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat & YouTube in downloads last month**. TikTok is a music video based social media app that allows users to record themselves lip syncing to popular songs, add effects, and share them with other users (think snapchat with music).

TikTok now boast 500 million+ active users worldwide with a **stated mission** "to capture and present the world's creativity, knowledge, and precious life moments, directly from the mobile phone.

TikTok is actually the second version of the app. The original app went by the name Musical.ly which was acquired by the Chinese company Bytedance in late 2017 and underwent a total rebranding. Musical.ly faced its own series of problems over its 3 year history. While the app is currently rated 16+, Musical.ly used to be rated 12+.

As this app has become increasingly popular we've been hearing from concerned parents wanting to know about this app.

So here are **5 Things Parents Need to Know about TikTok**

1. Strangers Can Send Private Messages

If your child's account is public, they may be receiving messages from complete strangers. Talking with your child about interacting with strangers, especially online, is becoming more and more important. Sometimes predators create social media accounts posing as children so that they appear more disarming or approachable. Remind your child that if they do not know them in real life, they should not be talking to them.

2. Suggestive Content Abounds

As with any social media platform, there is always suggestive content mixed into the bag. With TikTok being mostly based on music and video, profanity and suggestive clothing/dancing are the most obvious sources of adult content. But the app also encourages some themes that are much more mature than their 16+ rating would suggest. For example, a popular "challenge" on the app is the '#takeitoff challenge' which encourages users to dance to a specific song while discarding layers of clothes. This is especially concerning to see as young children are encouraged to participate in what amounts to a strip-tease.

3. TikTok is extremely popular

You may be thinking, "I've never heard of this app before, it must be pretty unknown." Actually, the app is incredibly popular and has been flying under-the-radar for quite a while. In the first quarter of 2018 it was downloaded 45.8 million times, to become the number one **most downloaded app**. While the main user demographic is located in China, it has been gaining traction in the United States over the last six months.

4. Positive- there is a 'digital wellbeing' setting

One of the more admirable functions in the app is the ability to turn on the 'digital wellbeing' setting. Once turned on, this setting will set time **limits on app use**, which can help your child moderate the time they spend on their phone. You can also find strategies for keeping your child's screen time in check in this **Kid Matters blog post**. This setting also allows a parent to put restrictions on their child's account. This will block videos that have been flagged as inappropriate. An important point to remember however is that not all inappropriate material is flagged properly; things slip through the cracks.

5. TikTok collects user data

While this is nothing new and all social-media apps participate in this practice, it is worth reminding parents of. This is a quote directly from TikTok's page on privacy-

"We share your data with our third party service providers we rely on to help provide you with the Platform. These providers include cloud storage providers and other IT service providers. We also share your information with our business partners, advertisers, analytics and search engine providers..."

BONUS: TikTok facial recognition feature is coming

TikTok will soon be rolling out [in the US a new face and object search](#) feature and is already part of the Chinese version of the popular app. This new feature will allow users to search for a person's face and see other videos they've created. You can also scan objects and clothing to get access to where you can purchase the same or similar items.

If you feel unsure of how to start a conversation on internet safety with your kids and where to start, check out another post I wrote on [5 Books Every Grade School Parent Should Know Regarding Internet Safety](#). Or, If you need additional resources to help you with internet safety or with how to help your kids navigate tricky things in the digital age give one of our therapists a call. We are here to help!

Remember to have ongoing open conversations with your kids about the content they're consuming when on TikTok and encourage them to come to you when/if they're seeing content that is harmful or inappropriate.

Stay safe in this digital world. Be creative. Don't parent alone.

***As of the date of this blog post, [TikTok and their parent company ByteDance are under US Federal investigation for their data security process](#). Authorities are questioning whether or not the app stores US user data in China and whether that data (user information, pictures, content, etc) would be turned over to the Chinese government if asked, giving them access to all of your child's information.*

10 Best Apps to Hide Apps



We live in a century where information can be easily accessed and checked with a few clicks. A lot of it is available on social networks, but what about your smartphone?

It sure shows a lot about your habits, browsing options and interests in general. What if you wanted to continue using those, but without other people finding out? Sure, you can put a password lock screen so no one can access it without a password, but that will only give your significant other, for example, a reason to doubt you. A lot of [spy apps for iPhone](#) available in the Apple app store. What about Android? That's why you can use any of these best apps to hide apps, but this is in no way an excuse to lie, cheat and do illegal things, that's common sense.

1. [AppLock](#)

We can't start our journey without mentioning what is certainly the king of hiding and locking apps. Not only does it have over 300 million users, but as of now, over 4 and a half million users are actively using it. It supports over 32 languages, so you'll probably find your own to make everything easier. You can lock all the important things – Facebook, Gmail, settings, other messaging and social network apps. It's all for the best – even if you don't have anything to hide, who doesn't like the feeling of security and privacy? It allows you to hide other things you wish, embarrassing selfies or videos you'd still like to cherish in a year or two.

2. Privacy Master

Next on our list is an app that justifies the name, that's for sure. Although not a lot of people have realized its full potential, we hope it'll open their eyes by reading this. It's a very lightweight app, a little under 2MB, for starters. That's a small price to pay for safety and privacy, right? You can hide and lock your apps from the view of those you don't want to take a sneak peek. Social network apps and messengers are included, of course, but like we said, that doesn't give you a reason to cheat or hide very important things. If something's wrong, try to fix it.

3. DU Privacy

Going further – DU Privacy, which is a private vault for all things smartphone. It starts with locking apps to protect your privacy, but it's multifunctional as well. It goes up to hiding images and videos from prying eyes, or even further. That's encrypting them to make them almost impossible to reach without a decryption key. There are more features to it like lock cover to change your lock screen to something else entirely. Or maybe you'd like to prevent uninstall feature to stop your kids from deleting important stuff, for example. All in all, if you'd like to hide apps, this is one of the best.

4. Hide Photos, Video-Hide it Pro

An app with a slightly misleading name, as it allows you to hide your apps, and have them vanish without a trace. Until you decide to take them out to play, that is. It serves a function of making your apps, photos, videos or even phone calls be hidden or at least locked away behind a PIN code or a password. Don't worry, no one will ever doubt it, as when installed it'll be called 'Audio Manager'. And we all have trouble with sound every once in a while, or just like or bass heavier, right?

5. Smart Hide Calculator

Very smart application, and one you will never in a million years guess hides a secret. First of all, when opened you're presented with a common Android calculator. But after the first start when you choose a password, every next time once a set of numbers has been entered and '=' pressed, unlocks the true potential. The interface then lets you hide photos and videos, all documents and files. And where are the apps, you might ask? Well, the ability to hide apps is present, although you need root permission, unfortunately. But that isn't a problem, there are many ways or apps to root your phone available.

6. Hide Application

A very obvious name for an application, and we decided to present it to you at this time. That's because we just mentioned rooting, and this app requires a rooted device too, in order to work. But after that's done, you're good for a long time. Once you hide a certain app, it will vanish from everywhere, and can't even run in the background. When you need to use it again, restore it with one simple touch of a finger. As easy as that! There's a premium version available too, if you like it a lot, although the free one does the job correctly.

7. Hide App

Another one obviously named, although it doesn't possess a full set of features others do. However, this one doesn't require any permissions or a rooted device. So if you're suspicious of apps that require those, you'll be relieved. But keep in mind, this app doesn't make apps vanish from launcher or Application many. It only prevents the app from ever showing in the list of recently opened apps. That's still a huge help, as you can quickly turn it off in a sticky situation, and no one will know you opened it.

8. AppLock

An app with very similar function and even an icon as the first one we mentioned. They just might be rivals for all we know, but the first one is pulling ahead by a mile. But do not be discouraged, this one has over 10 million downloads and about 125 thousand of users actively hiding their apps. It's a very smart and secure app locker and cleaner. It will allow you to lock all the messaging apps like Facebook and WhatsApp, but also SMS messages and more. It's hidden in a form of a calculator, similarly to the one we covered.

9. U Launcher Lite

This beauty, if we may call it that, will change everything about your phone, plus make apps disappear if that's what you like. It's a lite version, which means – very lightweight for what it offers. You get a full set of themes and 3D effects to customize your icons and lock screen as well as the interface. Among the themes and wallpapers, you get what we're talking about today. Just pinch an app and set a password and you're good to go!

10. AppMgr III

We've saved one of the best for the end. So many features are offered that it's even hard to count. It has a simple design to it, but that's all you need. The best part – it comes equipped with an ability to hide, freeze and move apps to external storage. You'll be pleased to see it at work, as you can prevent apps from wasting CPU and memory. Of course, you can hide an app from the app drawer, but also batch uninstall or save space by transferring to an SD card. Some features require root to function better, and you can purchase a Pro version to get rid of ads.

Apart from such dedicated app hiding applications, there are some **guest mode apps**, which allows creating an entirely new interface on your device just from the guest users. So, you can also consider using that.