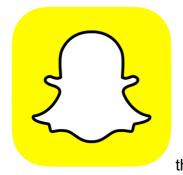# A Parent's Guide to Apps and Social Media

<u>Snapchat:</u>

Snapchat is a messaging platform that allows users to send videos, pictures and messages to one another, which disappear after they've been opened. The application also has a 'stories' feature where users can post an image or video that can be viewed by their friends for 24 hours. Users can either have an open account where anyone can send them messages and view their 'stories', or a private account where only those they accept can send them messages and view their stories. The application also has a "discover" feature which provides stories from various news and media outlets.

Age restriction: 13+

Concerns: Snapchat can be used for sexting and sending nudes as the pictures disappear after being viewed and the user is notified if a screenshot is taken of their picture. However, it is possible to bypass this and take a screenshot without the user being notified. Another concern is the misconception that content is deleted and has disappeared once it's been sent, yet Snapchat retains the information and complete ownership of it (according to their T&Cs).

Recommended privacy settings: Make the account private so that only friends you've added can communicate with you, receive your snaps, and see your Story.
If you have used 'Find Friends' to search for your friends or if you go to Settings and 'Let others find me using my mobile number' friends with your phone number will be able to find you on Snapchat. We suggest that you opt out of the 'Find Friends' feature. To do this: tap on the settings logo on the upper right corner of the Profile screen; tap 'Mobile Number'; and tap the icon next to 'Let others find me using my mobile number' to exclude your mobile number from the 'Find Friends' feature

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WhatsApp Messenger:

WhatsApp is a messaging platform that allows users to send each other messages and media, as well as make voice and video calls. Users are only able to contact someone if they have their cell phone number. Groups can be created with up to 250 users where they all can message each other collectively, rather than on a series of one-on-one chats. The platform also has a 'stories' feature like Snapchat's.

A person's privacy settings can be altered so that their profile picture, status and 'story' can be viewed either by everyone, only the contacts they have saved in their phone, or only themselves.

Age restriction: 13+

Similar apps: Telegram, Facebook Messenger, BBM, WeChat, Viber

Concerns: The biggest problem with WhatsApp is that people often don't consider it to be traditional social media, and think that somehow, they are immune from the rules and laws that are applicable on other social media platforms or in everyday life. This is untrue: WhatsApp is as much a social media application as any other platform. Groups also pose a large risk, if anything offensive or illegal is happening on a group, just by being a member of the group (even if you weren't the one that shared it and didn't engage with it) you could be held as liable as the person responsible for the content. If this happens, either actively voice your disapproval or leave the group.

Suggested privacy settings: In the 'account' section under settings, go to privacy and only let your contacts see your profile photo and status.

Kik:

Kik is a messaging platform that that allows users to send each other messages and media, as well as make voice and video calls. Users find each other through usernames, and anonymity is an important factor on this platform. Users can join public groups pertaining to a specific subject, such as anime or horses.

Age restriction: 17+

Concerns: This app has platforms which allow users to connect with and chat to strangers, sometimes for the express purpose of sexting or sending nudes. Users can easily be catfished (misled into talking to someone who they think is someone else), and even sometimes subsequently extorted, depending on the information they share) as the app doesn't have any way to verify someone's identity.

Recommended privacy settings: Go to 'Privacy' and turn off the feature that lets random people from groups message you.

Skype:

Skype is a platform that is mainly used to video call, however people can also voice call and chat through instant messaging.

Age restriction: 13+

Concerns: There are catfishing schemes that are operated through skype as skype doesn't verify a person's identity.

Recommended privacy settings: Under 'Settings', scroll down to 'calling' and turn 'allow calls from anyone' off.

Instagram:

Instagram is a social media platform that allows people to post pictures and videos for their followers to see. It also has a 'stories' feature. A user can either let anyone follow them or have a private account so that they have to pre-approve followers first. The platform also has a direct messaging system which allows users to chat to their followers as well as sending them pictures and videos that disappear after being viewed. It also includes a 'live' video feature, which lets you connect with your Instagram audience in real time. =

Age restriction: 13+

Concerns: Instagram has unfortunately become a breeding ground for a lot of cyber-bullying, often as a result of how easy it is for one to create an account under a pseudonym.

In addition, many parents may not follow their children and thus can't see what they're doing. Children are also susceptible to predators and catfishers who will use Instagram as a platform to initiate contact. The 'live' feature presents issues as losing control of the content as it's more difficult to moderate things when they're happening in the same way you'd moderate a photo you post. Going live also can reveal a lot of information about a person and their home that they may not realise.

Recommended privacy settings: In the 'Options' menu, go to 'Account Privacy' and make your account private.

Similar apps: Pinterest

Qooh.me:

Qooh.me is a platform that allows users to anonymously ask other users questions. When a user answers a question, it is then displayed on their profile for other users to view.

Age restriction: 13+

Concerns: We do not recommend that anybody uses this app at all. It is mostly used for anonymous bullying and very little good can come from it. The content is often very harmful as the askers can hide behind the veil of anonymity, thus it can get as bad as death threats, incredibly harmful and profane language, and telling someone to kill themselves.

Recommended privacy settings: The only recommendation we offer is that you don't use this app.

Similar apps: Ask.fm, Sarahah

Musical.ly:

Musical.ly is a social media platform that lets uses share and view short video clips of themselves lip-syncing and dancing to songs.

Age restriction: 13+

Concerns: In the past, there have been issues with pornographic content being shared to Musical.ly under innocuous names and tags, meaning your child will come across this content even if they are not looking for it. There are also instances of cyber-bullying as well as predatory activity, which is made easy due to most of the users being very young.

Recommended privacy settings: Go to 'Settings' and scroll down until you see 'Private account': turn that on.

Live.ly:

Lively is a platform that allows people to broadcast and view live video streams to friends, fans and followers. Users sign up by linking their musical.ly account.

Age restriction: 13+

Concerns: There is a lot of predatory behaviour where children are groomed and requested to remove clothing when streaming live.

Recommended privacy settings: If your musical.ly is private then your live.ly will be private. Under 'Settings', go to 'Llive comments' and set it to either 'People I follow' or 'None', to minimise or remove what comments are posted whilst going live.

Similar apps: Periscope, YouNow

Facebook:

Facebook is a social media platform that allows users to share text posts, pictures, videos, links and 'stories' with their friends. Their profile contains information regarding their age, education and career as well as anything else they may want to share, who sees this is determined by the privacy settings of the individual user. Users will typically follow 'pages' that share information pertaining to their interests (e.g. a restaurant or charity) and can be members of groups where users share a collective wall and share information the others may find interesting (e.g. a group for people living in Melville or for people interested in animal welfare in Cape Town). Users can also contact each other using Facebook Messenger.

Age restriction: 13+

Concerns: Facebook is a platform where predators and <mark>catfishers</mark> can operate very easily. One can quickly amass a group of mutual friends (most of whom one doesn't actually know in real life), making the victim more likely to accept a friend request.

Recommended privacy settings: In the 'About' section on your profile, you need to go to each individual piece of information and select who is allowed to see it, we suggest as a minimum, only friends are allowed to see your information.

We also recommend that you pre-approve any tags of you which may be included in others' posts. To do this, go to' Settings'; in the left column, click 'Timeline and Tagging'; look for the setting 'Review tags people add to your own posts before the tags appear on Facebook?' and click 'Edit' to the far right. Select 'Enabled' from the dropdown menu.

Tumblr: Tumblr is a micro-blogging platform that allows users to share text posts, images, videos and links with their followers. Users can either have a private or public profile. They can also enable an 'ask' feature which allows their followers to send them questions anonymously. Users can also directly message their followers.

Age restriction: 13+

Concerns: While not prevalent, Tumblr can be used for catfishing. The biggest worry is the anonymous 'ask' feature which can be turned off in the blog's options.

Recommended privacy settings: Tumblr is already very private as users aren't required to share personal information further than their email address, however we suggest that you turn 'Safe Mode' on under 'Account Settings' to filter out intimate content.

Twitter:

Twitter is a micro-blogging platform that allows users to share images, videos and text posts with their followers. Users can also directly message each other.

Age restriction: 13+

Concerns: We don't hold many concerns over Twitter as teens do not use it very frequently. The same general rules and guidance apply on Twitter that apply to the rest of the internet.

Recommended privacy settings: In 'Settings and Privacy'; under 'Privacy and safety' we suggest turning off 'Tweet with a location' and selecting 'Only allow people you follow to tag you in photos' as well as looking through the extensive list of privacy settings and deciding how much else is really necessary. Depending on the nature of the content you post, you may want to select the top-most setting: 'Protect your tweets' in order to make your account private.

Tinder:

Tinder is a dating app that matches users when they both 'swipe right' each other to indicate that they find the person attractive. The application only shows users other users that are in the same area as them. Once matched users are able to chat to each other.

Age restriction: 17+

Concerns: People are particularly susceptible to catfishing on dating sites and if your child is under 18 they should stick to meeting people organically.

Recommended privacy settings: If you're worried about people seeing you on the app, you can turn on a setting so that people can only see you if you 'swipe right' on them.

Similar Apps: Hot or Not

Grindr:

Grindr is a dating app aimed at gay and bisexual men. The app shows the profiles of other users and orders them based on their distance to the user. Anybody can message anybody however users can block other users from messaging them.

Age restriction: 18+

Concerns: The same as Tinder, if your child is under 18 they should definitely not be on this app as it has become centred around hook-up culture, however just because your child is on the app does not mean they are looking for that, they may feel afraid to speak up around their sexuality and will then be looking for someone to talk to. This however is not an excuse for them to be using the app as predators will take advantage of their vulnerable position and attempt to groom them. You should be particularly wary of accounts with no profile picture or one where the face is not shown.

Age restriction: 18+

Similar apps: Scruff, Hornet