



E-safety Newsletter

The 6 apps and services that every parent should know about



What is Snapchat?

Snapchat was launched in 2011 and swiftly became one of the most popular social media apps on the planet. And with an estimated 230 million daily users, it remains exactly that today.

The photo-messaging app allows users to take and share photos and videos to which they've added text and fun graphics. These 'Snaps' can then be shared with people listed in their smartphone's contact list who also have the app.

It also contains a 'Discover' section which features news from a wide range of media brands converted into the easy-to-digest Stories format.

What do parents need to know about Snapchat?

When Snapchat launched, its success came from the ethereal nature of the 'Snaps' – they lasted only a few seconds before disappearing and couldn't be saved by the person receiving them. This meant children could have fun, pulling silly faces and not worrying that the image would be around forever.

As Snapchat has evolved, this has changed. The person posting can now choose how long the images stay up by creating Stories, which are available for up to 24 hours. Images can also be screen shot outside the app and shared by the person receiving them.

According to Snapchat's own rules, **users must be 13**. However there's no robust age verification process – you just enter your birth date – so it is possible for children under 13 to sign up.

Snapchat is unmoderated and therefore you cannot filter the posts your child receives or Stories they view, which means they can be exposed to adult content. There are, however, a range of privacy settings including the ability to restrict who can contact you, view your Story, or see your location on the Snap Map.

Further reading

[Learn more about safety controls for Snapchat here](#)
[Snapchat parents' guide: everything you need to know](#)



What is Instagram?

There's a good chance you already know what Instagram is – after all, it now has more than 1 billion active users, with plenty of parents among them.

It made its name as an image-sharing platform, but videos are now almost as important – you can share them with followers, live stream yourself and watch others, including celebrities, on the IGTV platform.

It also has a Stories feature, which bears a striking resemblance to Snapchat's version and which also disappear after 24 hours.

What do parents need to know about Instagram?

As with Snapchat, **users are to be 13 or over**. But once again, a child could lie about their birth date and use the app before that age. Underage accounts can be reported, and Instagram says it will delete them if the user is unable to verify that they are over 13.

Other users can comment on posts, which can lead to both positive and negative judgements. Posts can be seen by anyone as default, but you can change your child's privacy settings so that only people they know can see them. However, their bio, profile and profile image will remain public. Other controls include the ability to set reminders about how much time you spend on the app.

Instagram has been accused of contributing to the rise in body image issues among young people. Celebrities post images that have been heavily edited,

professionally styled and often retouched, giving an idea of beauty that is both unreal and unattainable for most people, while young people themselves can obsess over taking the perfect selfie.

Further reading

[Learn more about safety controls for Instagram here](#)
[Instagram parents' guide: everything you need to know](#)



What is Tiktok?

TikTok is the fastest-growing social media app in the world right now, with young people in particular seemingly bewitched by its music-led short-form videos.

Creativity is the keyword here, with its 800 million daily users finding ingenious ways to turn its 15-second time limit into a tool for expression rather than a restriction.

Content is vast and varied, covering everything from make-up tutorials to gaming and from sports to music. But really, anything goes – particularly if it's upbeat and funny.

What do parents need to know about TikTok?

Once again, TikTok has a **13-plus age limit** – but once again, a child could get around that by pretending they were older.

In other regards, TikTok is increasingly well set up in terms of safety measures for young people.

For starters, there's a 'Restricted Mode' which filters content and you can also make an account private, meaning that other users must be approved before they can see and interact with your child's content.

The platform also recently put in place new rules that [prevent under-16s from sending or receiving private messages](#), and made accounts for that age group [private by default](#).

There's also a Family Pairing mode, which links your account with your child's so you can control how much time they spend on the app, who they can send messages to and what type of content they see.

TikTok also has a set of community guidelines and doesn't permit violent, racist, extremist or sexually explicit content.

Although much of the content on offer is harmless fun, some videos are undoubtedly more suitable for a mature audience. It has also become famous for spawning viral challenges, including potentially dangerous ones, so make sure that your child knows not to try risky activities they see on it.

Further reading

[Learn more about safety controls for TikTok here](#)
[TikTok parents' guide: everything you need to know](#)



What is YouTube?

We don't really need to explain this one: unless you've been living on Mars for the past 15 years, you'll already know about YouTube. But do you use it as much as your child?

Probably not – because children and young people just love it. Some just like watching the clips – anything from Taylor Swift performances to cute cat videos to YouTubers such as football gaming star KSI – while others make their own and post them for others to watch and comment on.

What do parents need to know about YouTube?

YouTube has simple parental controls to restrict access to adult content, strict community rules about posts and an easy process to report illegal, harmful or upsetting content. But there is still a chance your child will come across

content you wouldn't want them to, including religious and extremist propaganda.

That's why it's important to encourage them to think critically about anything they see on the platform. The content may not be true or have come from a verifiable source.

To post, you need to be 13 years old and open an account but you can watch content at any age. For children under 13, there is an app, **YouTube Kids**, with content specially curated for a younger age group.

Further reading

[YouTube Kids parents' guide: everything you need to know](#)



What is Skype?

For a long time, the veteran Skype was synonymous with video chatting, and many people still use the term 'to Skype' when they want to strike up a video conversation.

The pioneer no longer has the monopoly it once had, but it's still used by millions to stay in touch with friends and family.

The Microsoft-owned service is available on several platforms – including desktop, mobile and even Xbox – and enables you to talk one-on-one or in groups of up to 50 people for free.

What do parents need to know about Skype?

Once you've logged in with your Microsoft account, you can easily populate your contact list by adding people through their username, then start chatting.

It's very easy for even the youngest user to wrap their head around Skype, but it does require its users to be at **least 13 years old** – although once again there's no robust age-verification in place.

One of the problems for parents is that your child might not think their online friend is a stranger at all, so could be persuaded to do things they wouldn't normally, such as sharing sexual images, or become interested in extremist political or religious views.

There are, however, controls for parents to make the user-experience safer for their child, such as hiding their username from search and only allowing friends to contact them.

As with all sites and apps they use, teach your child how to block and report, and make sure they have a trusted adult to confide in should something go wrong.

Further reading

[Learn more about safety controls on Skype here](#)
[Video chatting: a guide for parents and carers of primary-age children](#)



What is WhatsApp?

The most popular messaging app in the world is now the main way many people stay in touch on their mobiles. Forget texting or phoning, WhatsApp-ing is close to becoming a verb in its own right.

The app, which like Instagram is now owned by Facebook, allows groups of users to have a running conversation. It's good fun and can save a lot of time when organising activities – or even what the family is having for tea.

You can also use it for voice calls and video – indeed, during the Covid lockdown the maximum number of users on a video call was raised from four to eight.

What do parents need to know about WhatsApp?

Children and young people use it to share images, organise homework and generally chat with their friends and they can communicate with anyone in their contacts list who has the app.

It was originally aimed at 13+ but in May 2018, its minimum age was raised to 16 in Europe, including the UK, following the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). It remains 13+ elsewhere.

Anyone who has your child's phone number could send them a message, and there have been reports of bullying and inappropriate contact with children by adults on the app. It's unmoderated, so young users will need to know how to block upsetting or illegal contact and report users within the app themselves.

For more information please visit [Parent Info | From NCA-CEOP and The Parent Zone](#) or follow the blue links in this safety newsletter.

Gaming

All games will have an age rating on the packet. Please check that is appropriate for your child.

ESRB (USA)	PEGI (EU)	RARS (Russia)	ACB (Australia)	USK (Germany)

What to think about:



Ways games can benefit children

If your child is a keen gamer, **steer them towards games that will help them to develop life skills** like problem-solving or supplement their learning.



Be aware of game content and themes

It's important to **stay on top of what themes are featured in the games** they play so that you can be aware of how these might influence their view of the real world.

What to talk about

Discuss what they enjoy playing

Have regular conversations about the games they play so you can create an environment where they feel they can come to you if something goes wrong.

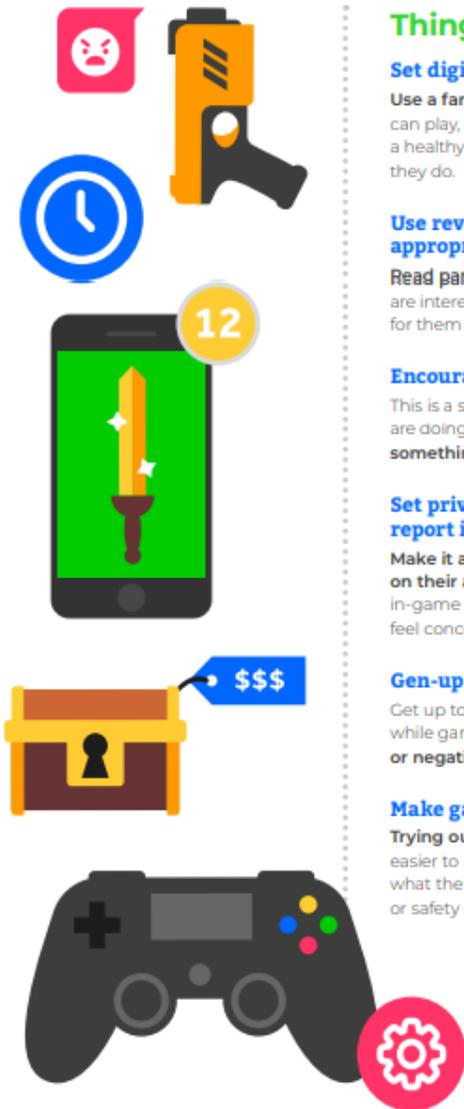
Talk about potential risks

Help them understand the **importance of keeping personal details private** and tell them that not everyone online is who they say they are.

How to cope when things go wrong

If they see something that upsets them or are targeted by another player in a game, it's important to talk about how to handle this situation. **Advise them to come and talk to you or a trusted adult for support.**





Things to do

Set digital boundaries

Use a **family agreement to set rules** on what they can play, when and how long for to help them strike a healthy balance between gaming other activities they do.

Use reviews and sites to pick appropriate games

Read **parents and expert reviews of games** they are interested in to help you choose the right games for them to play.

Encourage them to play in shared spaces

This is a simple way to stay engaged in what they are doing while gaming and **step in if you feel something's not quite right**.

Set privacy settings and learn how to report in-game abuse

Make it a habit to review their **privacy settings on their account** and teach them where to report in-game abuse so they can take action if they feel concerned.

Gen-up on the lingo

Get up to speed on how players communicate while gaming to **spot the signs of cyberbullying or negative behaviour**.

Make gaming a family affair

Trying out new games with children makes it easier to relate and can give you a better sense of what the game is about and prompt conversation or safety measures to help them stay safe.

Visit the link below for lots more advise on gaming and keeping your child safe online.

[Online Safety Leaflets & resources - Internet Matters](#)