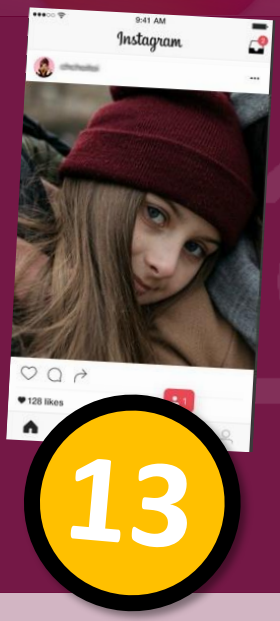
Instagram
Parent / Carer Advice



What is Instagram?

Instagram is a social media platform which focuses on the creation and sharing of images, providing users with a range of filters and special effects popular among younger users.

Despite requiring users to be 13 or older, a study in January 2017 indicated that 43% of 8-11 year olds in Britain are using Instagram.

Safety Tips

As with all Internet activity, talk to your child about how they use Instagram, the importance of not 'oversharing, and any issues they have faced.

It is safest to change the default privacy settings in your child's account from public to private. If your child is older and you agree for them to have a public account, you should discuss strategies for coping with negative feedback and for blocking users. You should also monitor messages they receive.

Given Instagram's reported impact on young people's mental health, keep an eye out for early warning signs of such issues with your child. Seek professional support or consult online services such as Shout at the earliest point of concern.

shout
for support in a crisis

Regularly spring-clean your child's Instagram account with them by removing any posts and images you agree are inappropriate and blocking any concerning contacts. If you have any concerns that somebody might be trying to groom your child you should immediately contact CEOP.

CLICK CEOP
Internet Safety

Reasons for concern

Privacy settings
A key concern regarding children's use of Instagram is the fact that the default privacy setting for accounts is 'public'. As such, unless a child actively alters their privacy settings, all of the pictures they post to Instagram will be available to anybody. This could result in their images being seen by inappropriate individuals and might lead to receiving unwanted communication.

Follower lists
In a world where celebrity success is measured by numbers of social media followers, it is understandable that children might want to grow their own list of followers. A child's non-private account can quickly grow with followers, some of whom might not have entirely innocent motives.

Terms and conditions
Instagram's 5,000-word terms and conditions states that users agree that Instagram can use and sell their sell images for others to use (without paying or further consent). Instagram also retains the right to store, use and share the personal information and direct messages of their users.

Grooming
In 2019 the NSPCC reported that Instagram was involved in more online grooming cases than any other online platform. Where the police recorded the method of communication, Instagram was used in 32% of cases, in contrast to Facebook at 23% and Snapchat at 14%.

Mental health issues
A report by the Royal Society for Public Health found that Instagram rated as the worst social media platform when it comes to its impact on young people's mental health. Being image-centred the RSPH claimed that Instagram (along with Snapchat) appears to be driving feelings of inadequacy and anxiety in young people.

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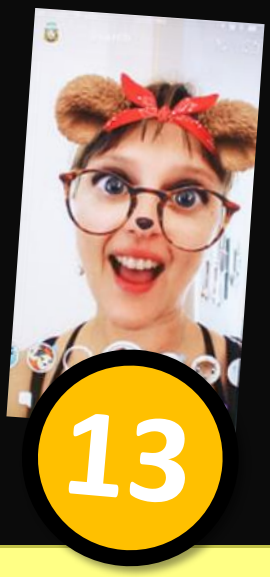
Snapchat
Parent / Carer Advice



What is Snapchat?

Snapchat is one of the image-based social media platforms which is incredibly popular with children. One of the key features of Snapchat is that, by default, messages sent through Snapchat disappear seconds after they are viewed by the recipient. The minimum age to use Snapchat is 13 but it is a popular and widely used platform among children younger than this.

Safety Tips

- **As with all Internet activity, talk to your child about how they use Snapchat, the importance of not 'oversharing, and any issues they have faced.**
- **The default privacy setting of 'My Friends' prevents children from sharing 'snaps' with users unknown to them. However, children may change this setting and make their posts public. Ensure your child is aware of the importance of maintaining strong privacy settings and check the settings your child has selected.**
- **In the settings options, ensure your child has Snapmap set to 'ghost mode'. This will ensure that nobody can see their current location.**
- **Ask your child if they know how to report or block a user who sends them anything that upsets them. This can be done by going to the friends list, selecting the person creating the issue and then selecting the gear icon.**
- **Remind your child that although Snapchat automatically deletes images once seen, somebody can copy the image and share it with others.**

Reasons for concern

Abuse and bullying

As messages disappear shortly after being read, Snapchat has become a popular tool for abuse such as online bullying as abusers feel they will not be held to account for messages posted once they are deleted. This is supported by the fact that if somebody takes a screenshot of a message posted on Snapchat then the person who posted it is informed that this has happened, making it more uncomfortable for people to take evidence of abuse they have suffered or witnessed.

The Snap Map

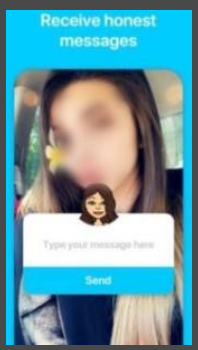
The Snap Map allows users to see the live location of their friends on a map. Cartoon-style avatars are used to represent people in a move that was clearly designed to be popular with younger users. This feature can result in children sharing their location (including effectively their home address) with individuals.

Addiction-inducing features

Children are naturally more prone to addictive behaviour than adults. As such, the inclusion of features such as 'Snap Streaks', where two users share pictures with each other on consecutive days. Snapchat rewards longer streaks with special emojis. This can result in children increasing their daily usage of the app.

Risk of secondary apps

Snapchat allows users to link to secondary apps that can be used inside Snapchat. A recent concerning example is YOLO which allows users to offer people the opportunity to anonymously ask them questions. Such apps have led to online bullying and hate crime.



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WhatsApp
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What is WhatsApp?

WhatsApp is a free messaging app. It allows you to send text and multimedia messages (video, images and voice recordings) to people in the contact list on your phone. It also allows users to set up group chats where the administrators can invite up to 256 people to share messages and images publicly within the group. Although the age limit for WhatsApp was recently raised to 16 it is popular with primary age children and above. So what are the risks?

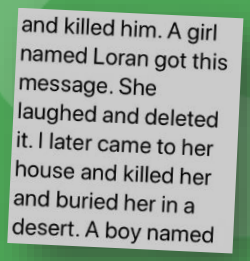
Safety Tips

- **As with all Internet activity, talk to your child about how they use WhatsApp and any issues they have encountered.**
- **With your child, look through the groups they are members of and discuss any areas of concern you have. You may agree that it would be best to leave the group.**
- **Go to the settings (by pressing the three dots in the top right of the screen) and ensure your child's profile is set to 'contacts only'.**
- **To leave a group: Open the group in WhatsApp. Press the three dots in the top right of the screen and select 'Group Info'. Scroll down to 'Exit group'.**
- **If an admin adds your child back into a group they have left, your child can ask them not to do this. If they keep adding them then you can prevent it by blocking the admin. To do this, WhatsApp provide the following guidance:**

1. Go to the group in WhatsApp, then tap or click the subject of the group.
2. Tap or click the phone number of the admin you wish to block.
3. If prompted, tap or click **Message {phone number}** or **Send Message**.
4. A blank chat with the admin will open up. Tap or click the phone number at the top.
5. Tap or click **Block** > **Block**.

Reasons for concern

- Group administrators can invite people your child does not know into group chats. Some of these people may not have innocent intentions or may be older and post age-inappropriate messages.
- Some WhatsApp groups can contain images and messages which can cause distress to children. These might include violent images or videos, abusive messages and sexual content.
- Chain messages are often shared through WhatsApp. These pressure children to post them on to their contacts, e.g. by claiming that failure to do so can result in the child or a family member dying. Many children find such messages distressing but also feel they must share them with others due to fear of the threat.


and killed him. A girl named Loran got this message. She laughed and deleted it. I later came to her house and killed her and buried her in a desert. A boy named

- WhatsApp does not allow users to decide whether to join a group. Your child will be automatically added to any groups that their contacts add them to. If your child leaves the group the administrator can add them straight back in.
- Your child may be in WhatsApp groups in which huge numbers of posts are made. The alerts this generates can be an unnecessary distraction and can disrupt sleep.
- WhatsApp's default privacy settings are that anybody can see your child's profile photo and when they were last online.
- WhatsApp 'dare games' have become popular with children. These involve the child making a quiz about themselves to share with others and this can lead to oversharing of personal information which can be publicly available.
- Children can add and then remove other children from groups as a form of exclusion and bullying.

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TikTok

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What is TikTok?

TikTok is a social media app where users share short video clips of 15 seconds duration. It started out as an app named 'Musically' and was used to share videos of dancing and lip-syncing to music. Much of the content on TikTok still reflects these origins, but popular videos now also include pets, makeup, magic tricks, fashion, art, people reacting to situations, etc. According to OSA research, TikTok is now as widely used by 11-14 year olds as SnapChat and Instagram.

Safety Tips

As with all Internet activity, talk to your child about how they use TikTok and any issues they have encountered.

Discuss whether it would be best to change your child's account to private to avoid interactions with non-friends. If you agree to keep the account public you should discuss strategies for coping with negative feedback and for blocking users.

Help your child to spring clean their account from time to time by removing videos you agree to be inappropriate.

Ensure your child knows not to post videos in their school uniform. Also discuss how recording videos at school might break school rules and what the consequences could be.

The TikTok settings allow you to set a time limit for how long each day you want your child to be able to use the app. This can be password protected to ensure they stick to the limit.

Reasons for concern

TikTok has a minimum age rating of 13 and anybody under 18 should have parental permission to use the app. However, new users simply enter a date of birth to indicate their age and there are no verification steps. As such, children of any age can create an account by using a false date of birth.

New users will be shown a range of video clips the app feels may be of interest. Many of these will quickly expose users to offensive language which will be inappropriate for children.

The clothing worn and the type of dancing in some videos could be deemed sexualised and therefore something that might be inappropriate for younger users to be exposed to.

The default privacy settings in the app are concerning. Although only friends can send users direct messages, the videos posted by users can be seen by anybody and anybody can like / comment on the videos. New users are also available for anybody to perform a musical duet with. Such default settings can leave children vulnerable to unwanted communication from others.

Many children in the UK are posting videos to TikTok where they are wearing their school uniform, making it possible for strangers to identify their location.

The nature of videos children are posting to TikTok (singing, dancing, etc) can leave them vulnerable to receiving negative comments which can have an impact on mental health.

The company that owns TikTok is facing legal issues and stands accused of illegally collecting data on children (when it was Musically) and the app has been deemed a 'potential security risk by the FBI'.

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