

apps guide for parents



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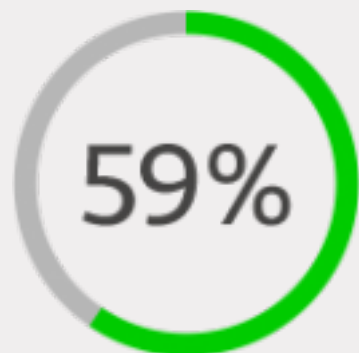
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Although child-friendly apps can make using the internet a more accessible and enjoyable experience, the thousands of apps available for different types of people mean it's important to make sure children use appropriate ones.

This guide maps some of the most common apps available and highlights those that might create risky situations for children, such as unintentionally revealing personal information, stranger danger and generating large bills through in-app purchasing.



Privacy

59% of apps send information about the device and user habits to a third party¹



Purchases

In 2013, 80 of the top 100 apps were 'free' but made all money through in-app purchasing²



Permission

29% of mums and dads let kids download apps without their permission³

Some apps that allow children to create and maintain online relationships raise some important safety issues that it's worth knowing about as a parent:

- **Chatting with strangers**

Meeting and chatting with strangers online poses risks to young people who might be vulnerable to grooming and online (and offline) forms of sexual abuse.

- **Sending inappropriate content**

With the physical barrier of a screen, some people feel more empowered to pressurise others into sending messages, often of a sexual or derogatory nature.

- **Sharing a location**

Many apps share the user's location. This can put children at risk from others who actively seek out children with the intention of meeting in the real world. Sharing a location can also raise concerns with identity theft and privacy.

Read more about [Online Grooming](#), [Privacy & Identity Theft](#), and [Sexting](#) here.

Chatting apps popular with children

Where available, you'll also find links to the relevant privacy pages or FAQs for these apps.



BBM

The BlackBerry Messenger (BBM) app allows you to share messages and images. It also allows you to make free calls anywhere around the world.



Facebook Messenger

The Facebook Messenger app is a messenger app that connects with the Inbox in Facebook.



Chat and Play

The app offers a virtual world that might be appealing to children due to its cartoon-like customisation. You can create your own avatar as well as customising your own chatroom.



Skype

Skype allows you to make voice calls over an internet connection. It also has a chat function and allows the transmission of files from one person to another.



Telegram

Telegram is an app available on both mobile and desktops, allowing free and safe messages for the sender. The app encrypts messages and gives you the ability to destroy them if unwanted.



Viber

You can make free calls, share images and texts free-of-charge anywhere. It's based on knowing the other person's phone number, so you can only message another person if you already know their telephone number.



WeChat

WeChat is a voice and text messaging app with location and Bluetooth functionalities. WeChat allows you to contact other people randomly if they're in a similar location or using certain functions of the app at the same time.



Whatsapp

Free-of-charge, real-time messaging. You can share images and videos, take part in 'group chats' and share locations. You can only message someone if you already know their telephone number.

Apps for meeting new people that might create risks

Many of these apps forge a link between children, teens, and adults in the virtual world. Whilst some of the apps don't have age restrictions, those that do could be ignored by young people. Worryingly these apps might also bridge the gap between virtual and real world. In a [recent Childline survey](#), as many as 33% of children had been asked to meet offline by someone they've met on a dating site.

In this section you'll also find links to independent third-party articles and opinions about these apps and the risks they may pose.



Chatroulette

The app version of Chatroulette has the same functionality as the desktop version, allowing video interactions between randomised strangers. The user has to log in and there is some (human and computerised) moderation/filtering for inappropriate content, but children may not know who they are talking to.



Dattch

Dattch aims to make it easier for lesbians to avoid feeling isolated and meet each other away from bars and clubs. The app asks users to verify security by linking it to their Facebook page. Dattch state their network is not for under-18s, although it is possible to claim a false age and bypass age verification questions.



Down

Previously called 'Bang with Friends', Down is an app that allows users to find which of their Facebook friends are local and available to meet up. Down openly acknowledges and promotes that their community use their app for sexual encounter, yet their policies don't restrict use to over-18s.



Grindr

Aimed at bisexual and gay men, this app uses location and photos to encourage 'like-minded' meetings between strangers. Grindr introduces users to 'matches' within the closest geo-radius. Grindr is intended for over-18s, and asks the user to verify their age

when signing up, however teens could use it regardless.



MeowChat

MeowChat's distinctive look includes cartoon cats and allows users to send texts, images or audio clips. It encourages chatting with 'like-minded' strangers based on the user's location at any time. MeowChat's minimum sign up age is 13, yet chatrooms can contain bad language and invitations to private chats with strangers.



MyLOL

MyLOL is a 'teen dating app' aimed at 13-20 year olds. The network is moderated and key word detection is in operation. Following recent criticism, an upper age limit came into effect, however it has been reported that those older members with accounts registered before the change still have active accounts.



Tinder

Users are 'selected' by other users as someone they'd like to meet by swiping on their

photo. As it's location based, Tinder introduces users to 'matches' within the closest radius. Tinder's minimum age is 13 as it uses Facebook's signup age policy.



VoiceCandy

The app allows users to record a short voice clip and other users decide whether they want to chat before they're able to see a photo. If users don't find the person attractive once they see their picture, they have 5 seconds to change their mind. The minimum age for signup is 13.



Whisper

Whisper is an anonymous messaging app where users are encouraged to share stories they wouldn't want to put their name to. Whisper includes a category whereby users can search for 'Meet Up' - in this category there can sexual images and messages. Whisper is rated 17+ in the app store, but many teens could use it regardless.




Yik Yak

Yik Yak is an anonymous messaging app that allows its users to send text and photos to others without using their name. Users can choose to engage with the feeds of others within a certain radius of themselves. Yik Yak is aimed at 18 year olds, but teens could click past the age verification and use it anyway.

Apps to help young people overcome chatting problems



Send This Instead

The Send This Instead app has been developed to help children combat  sexting from peers. The app gives a range of optional images with humorous messages so that children can send these as a response to sexting, putting them back in control.



Zipit

Made by ChildLine, Zipit aims to help teenagers deal with difficult sexting and flirting situations. The app offers humorous comebacks, advice, and aims to help teenagers stay in control of flirting when chatting.

2. Nielsen Book, *Understanding the Children's Book Consumer in the Digital Age*, September 2013.

3. Internet Matters OnePoll survey of parents of 5-11 year olds.

Have you set your parental controls?



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