

SNAPCHAT:

ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS



Snapchat is an instant messaging app that allows users to send images, videos and texts to people in their friends list. Snapchat is unique in that it is designed to make images and messages disappear after 24 hours, though there are techniques to get around this by taking pictures of the user's screen

What are the risks?

Connecting with Strangers

Anyone can send a friend request on Snapchat. Even if your child only accepts requests from names they recognise, it is very difficult to verify that user's identity. If your child accepts a request from someone they don't know or someone falsifying their identity, that user can get access to your child's personal information

Excessive Use

Social media platforms, including Snapchat, work hard to maximise user engagement.

Snapchat uses features like streaks (messaging the same person multiple days in a row) and spotlight challenges (contests to produce content on Snapchat in return for monetary prizes) keep users glued to their screens as long as possible

Inappropriate Content

Many videos on Snapchat are inappropriate for children, and even filtering using hashtags can return inappropriate results because those hashtags are chosen by users. Additionally, the disappearing messages feature makes it easier for young people to post explicit images and messages on impulse

Online Pressures

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Visible Location

Snap Map highlights the exact position of a device using snapchat on a virtual map, visible to members of the user's friends list. Snapchat also has real-time location sharing, which is designed to ensure friends have gotten home safely. Both of these systems could be used for more sinister reasons if your child hasn't been careful about who they add

Artificial Intelligence

My AI is snapchat's new AI-powered chatbot, able to respond to questions in a human-like manner. As with most AI technology, it is still in its infancy and has been known to give biased, misleading or outright incorrect answers. There have been reports of young people using AI to ask medical questions, which can be dangerous if the accuracy of the answers cannot be guaranteed.

So how do I keep my child safe?

Turn off Quick Add

The Quick Add feature helps users discover other users based on mutual friends. As this feature makes your child's profile visible to other users, it is recommended that it be turned off in the settings menu.

Choose good connections

In 2021, Snapchat rolled out a new safety feature that sends notifications to users reminding them of the importance of maintaining connections with people they actually know well, instead of strangers, and encourages them to delete connections with users with whom they rarely communicate.

Keep accounts private

Ensure your child's account has proper privacy settings enabled, including "Ghost Mode" to prevent their location being broadcast on Snap Map, and that they only add friends they know in the real world.

Chat about content

Thought it may feel awkward, it's important to talk to your child about concepts such as sexting, openly and without judgement. Remind them that once something is posted online, the creator loses control over where it ends up (and who sees it).

Chat about AI

Encourage your child to think critically about any response they receive from an AI and remind them that chatting with an AI should never replace interaction with real people.

Be ready to Block and Report

If a stranger does connect with your child through Snapchat and begins to make them feel uncomfortable through bullying or pressure to send and/or view inappropriate content, encourage your child to block that user and report them.