



As a Trust, we are committed to promoting the safe and responsible use of the Internet and social media, working alongside parents to assist and support their children and help to keep them safe. As such, we like to remind and reiterate some of the main points of Online Safety in our newsletters.

Fortnite Battle Royale is rated PEGI 12 because it features moderate violence which means it is not suitable for persons under 12 years of age.



TikTok has become one of the most popular social media apps on the planet, with 1 billion monthly active users. Young people in particular love its short-form video focus.

Watch this video below for a quick introduction to parenting a young person on TikTok:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NecNSMxaN5M&t=11s>

What is TikTok?

TikTok is primarily a social media app where users can both create and watch short video snippets, often accompanied by music. Users don't need an account to watch videos on TikTok but if they want to like, comment, customise their feed or create their own video content, they'll be prompted to sign up for a free account.

Why is it so popular?

You can find videos relating to almost all interests on TikTok, from DIY tricks and make-up tutorials to gaming and sports. Although most of the content you will find is upbeat, funny and joyful, people also use the platform to respond to political events and movements, such as the #BlackLivesMatter campaign and the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast to most of its competitors, TikTok doesn't require the user to add any information to their profile: they're issued with a user number, but whether they add a name, profile picture or any other personal information is their choice. Users are given complete creative control of their content. Putting together a video is very easy and there's a range of tools available to spruce up the content, such as filters, effects, text and stickers.

What do parents need to be aware of?

Age restrictions

TikTok requires its users to be at least 13 years old. When logging in for the first time, the user will be asked to log in using either their email, their Google account, or by linking TikTok to one of their other social media accounts, for instance Facebook or Twitter. In January 2021, TikTok updated its privacy settings so that accounts for under-16s are set to private by default. This means that other users must be approved before they can see and interact with your child's content or contact them.

Note also that standard TikTok accounts (rather than [TikTok for Younger Users](#) profiles) will be **taken down** if moderators suspect that the individual operating the account is under the age of 13. This can be a useful piece of information if you're trying to resist the 'pester power' of younger children there's less of a point getting around age restrictions if the account will be taken down anyway. You can read more about their age-appropriate policy [here](#).

Parental controls and safety

TikTok offers its users a range of settings to make it safer for young people, which they refer to as 'Family Pairing'. These settings allow parents to control elements of their child's TikTok account if their child is under 16.

The features include the option to decide what your child can search on the app, set screen time limits, opt to disable comments on your child's videos and decide if other users can view their 'liked' videos. As a parent, you won't have access to your child's actual videos. It's also worth noting that children under the age of 16 are not able to engage in direct messaging.

Although it's important to bear in mind that parental controls don't eliminate risk, they can be a good first step. In conjunction with their 'Family Pairing' settings. You can view TikTok's [Guardian's Guide](#) for more information on parental controls – including setting up passwords and linking yours and your child's phone numbers.

Blocking and reporting functions

TikTok is moderated and content that does not uphold its [community guidelines](#) is continuously weeded out.

If you want to further minimise the risk of children stumbling across mature content, it's a good idea to enable 'Restricted Mode'. Make sure that your child knows how to report videos or users if they stumble across inappropriate content and how to block users who are bothering them.

In-app messages and privacy

Although connecting with new people on social media is not harmful in and of itself, it is important to be aware of the possible risks. Children aged 16-17 now have their direct messages set to 'no one' by default. This means that they will have to manually switch settings if they wish to send and receive private messages.

Overall, there's plenty of choice when it comes to privacy settings – you're able to control who can see, share, or download your child's content, even on a video-by-video basis. Visit TikTok's [Youth Portal](#) for more information on how best to do this. and be sure to let children know that they can come to you if they've had a bad experience which has involved being contacted by a stranger.

Youth resources and mental health

TikTok's [Youth Portal](#) gives young users expanded safety advice on privacy, community guidelines, reporting functions and resources for dealing with dangerous or upsetting situations. All this information is presented in a youth friendly, accessible way. The Youth Portal also has an expanded list of resources, including tips for wellbeing and links to mental health support sites.

Alongside this, TikTok have enhanced their search intervention policy. If your child searches for something that sounds worrying – for example, #suicide – they will be directed to Samaritans or another mental health support site. If they search for something that might be less explicitly distressing – for example #scary makeup – the search will come up with an 'opt in' viewing feature.



You must be at least 16 years old to register for and use WhatsApp.

WhatsApp is a free messaging app that allows you to send messages, voice notes, photos and videos.

What are the features of WhatsApp?

Group chats: One of the key features is the group chat function. Everybody in the group, even if they are not one of your child's phone contacts, will be able to see all messages within that group. *If your child is added to a group with someone that they have previously blocked, that person can still see their messages and send them messages within the group chat.*

In settings, you can change who can add your child to groups, for example, you can change it to 'my contacts', which means that only those in your child's contacts can add them to a group. You can leave a group chat at any point so talk to your child and encourage them to leave any chat that makes them feel uncomfortable. You can leave groups silently (only the admin will be notified).

Location sharing: you can share your location on WhatsApp. Talk to your child about when this would be appropriate to use but also the potential danger of sharing their location, for example with strangers.

Blocking/Reporting: Show your child how to block and report.

Online Bullying: WhatsApp has been used in instances of online bullying, e.g. to send nasty messages or share images of other children without their permission. It is important to have regular chats with your child about their online life and that they understand that they must talk to you or another trusted adult if they are being bullied. This is a helpful article from Family Lives, which talks about what to do if you are being bullied:
<https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/bullying/cyberbullying/what-to-do-if-you-re-being-bullied-on-a-social-network>

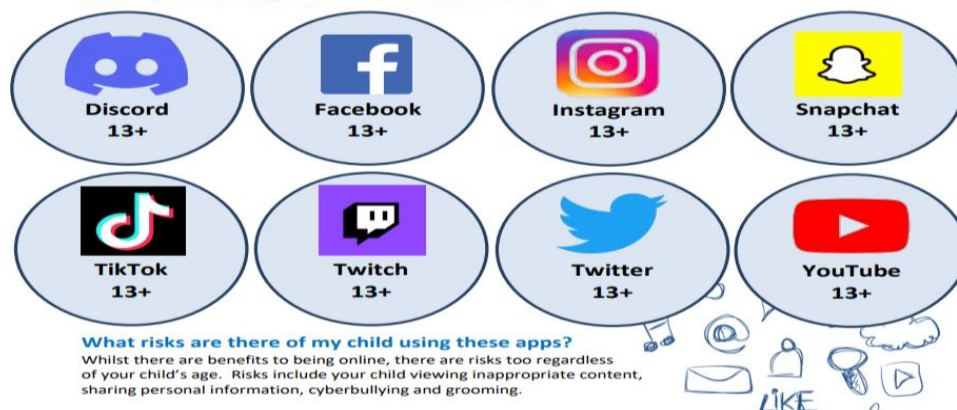
Disappearing messages: With disappearing messages, you can control how long a message can be seen for before it is deleted – 24 hours, 7 days or 90 days.

Choose who can see your profile pic and when you're online: In settings (privacy), you can choose who can and can't see when you're online and your profile pic. You can choose either Everyone, My Contacts, My Contacts except and nobody.

Further information - <https://parentzone.org.uk/article/whatsapp>

Social Media Apps

What age should my child be to use these apps?



Managing Screen time from Internet Matters

Are you worried your child has too much screentime or would like more advice on how to support your child in managing their screen time? Internet Matters have a wealth of information on their website to help support you.

This first link discusses how to get the most out of screen time and how to talk to your child about screen time based on their age:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/screen-time/protect-your-child>

This second link provides advice on how to tackle too much screen time and what the signs of too much screen time might be:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/screen-time/deal-with-it/>

This final link provides a guide on how to balance screen time:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/creating-a-balanced-digital-diet-with-screen-time-tips/>



Online safety concern?

If you or your child has an online safety concern, please contact your school and let us know. We can then help to support you through how to report or deal with this concern