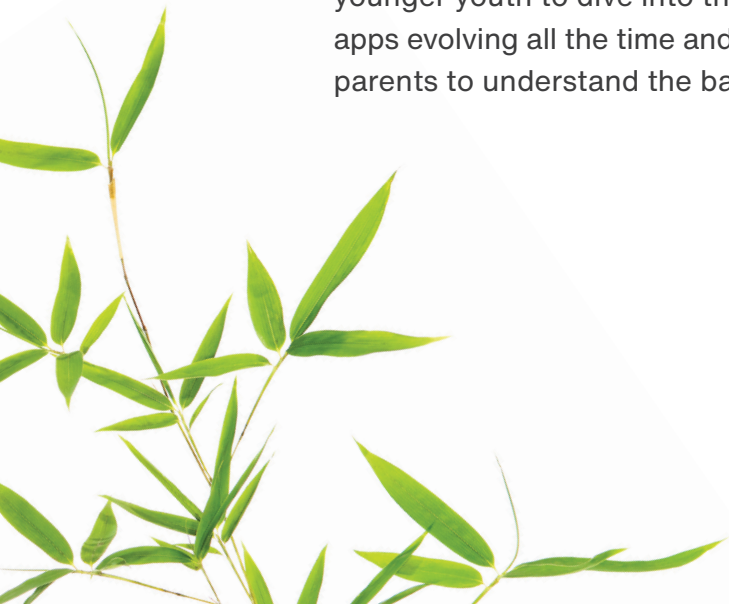


Guide to popular social media and messaging apps

Unfollow. DMs. TBT. Reels. Snaps. Streaks. FYP. SMO. Confused? You're not alone. Social media and messaging apps have not only ushered in new ways to communicate and share information, but they've also created new cultures and languages among youth that have some parents a little baffled.

While most social media platforms do request that users be at least 13 years old, it's common for younger youth to dive into the world of social and messaging apps long before they become teens. With apps evolving all the time and many youth spending countless hours posting and scrolling, it's important for parents to understand the basics to help keep their kids as well as their privacy and well-being in check.





This guide offers parents a high-level overview of the most popular social media and messaging apps, how they work and important safety tips, so you can help the kids in your life stay safe online.

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Instagram



Instagram reigns supreme as one of the most popular social media apps. The free photo and video sharing app lets users, celebrities, brands and influencers post and share through photo carousels, reels (15-second videos) and stories (posts that remain visible for 24 hours).

How it works

- Share, like and comment on images and videos
- Get recommendations on content that may interest you
- Follow celebrities and athletes for an inside look into their lives
- Get creative with your own posts

Tips for parents

- Be aware of what content your kids are posting and whether or not they have two or more accounts (many kids maintain two accounts – one for everyone, including parents, and one for just friends)
- Make sure your kids' accounts are set to private, so only the people they've allowed to follow them can see their posts
- Tell kids never to accept random direct messages from non-followers
- Ensure they avoid posting any personally identifiable information, like their school or date of birth
- View all social media with a critical eye – remind youth that there are many fake accounts, sometimes created by fraudsters with the purpose of gaining access to personal information
- Keep in mind that many celebrities and influencers have glam teams and professional content creatives to make their posts appear flawless. Talk with kids about the comparison game and how it can impact self esteem



[Visit Instagram's Help Centre to learn more >](#)



TikTok

TikTok is a short-form video sharing app that allows users to create and share videos up to 10 minutes in length (although most are under a minute) on anything and everything. Users can make videos using sounds, voiceovers and song snippets and add special effects, captions and filters. Users can also “go live” or watch live streams of other creators.

How it works

- Create, share and view video content
- Have fun, get creative and build community around your interests
- Get involved in viral phenomena (also known as “challenges”) that are fun to follow and recreate, like choreographed dances, culinary trends and beauty hacks

Tips for parents

- Monitor usage and set time limits (with bottomless new content, TikTok can be addictive)
- Remind kids to keep safety and common sense in mind when participating in viral challenges
- Connect your account to your child’s account with Family Pairing and remotely manage their settings. For example, you can turn on restricted mode to limit exposure to inappropriate content or manage screen time limits
- Ensure your kids’ accounts are private to limit who can see their videos and remind them to avoid sharing personal information
- Help them adjust privacy settings to ensure that only “friends” can comment on their videos or message them (or disable comments and direct messages altogether)
- Educate your kids on what content they share and remind them of digital permanency – once something is shared on TikTok it can be downloaded and shared by others (unless you disable downloads)
- Have open conversations with kids about what they’re seeing on TikTok and how it makes them feel (there is a lot of risqué content on the app)

[Visit TikTok’s Safety Centre to learn more >](#)



YouTube



YouTube is the most popular video streaming platform in the world with more than two billion monthly viewers. There is no log-in or registration required to use the app, but if you want to upload videos, you need to create an account and a personal YouTube channel. Becoming a “YouTuber” is an increasingly popular career choice for today’s youth.

How it works

- Watch music videos, how-to videos, beauty and gaming hacks, and more
- Discover opportunities to learn, be entertained and get creative
- Subscribe to channels for targeted content
- Create and post your own long or short-form video content

Tips for parents

- Create a shared family account to track suggested and watched content
- Turn on restricted mode for your children’s accounts to filter inappropriate content
- Subscribe to channels you’ve vetted, so kids can only view approved video feeds, and watch videos with your kids to learn about the type of content they like to consume
- Consider YouTube Kids for more kid-friendly content for youth under the age of 13, then help your kids transition to the main YouTube platform with a supervised account
- Turn off auto-play to help manage screen time
- If they’re sharing their own content, consider disabling the comments functionality to help protect from unwanted feedback



[Visit YouTube’s Privacy and Safety to learn more >](#)

Snapchat



Known as “snap”, Snapchat promotes itself as the “fastest way to share a moment.” Users can send photos or videos to other users that disappear after one to 10 seconds. Content can include filters, captions or stickers. Many kids use the app just to message their friends (with or without images).

How it works

- Stay connected with friends and build community
- Be creative and express yourself with photo and editing tools
- Explore content from major publishers and accounts you follow
- Use story reels to link snaps together and broadcast as you capture them (story reels only last 24 hours)

Tips for parents

- Keep in mind that the videos and photos on Snapchat ‘disappear’, so it’s challenging for parents to monitor exactly what kids are posting
- Snapchat is known to be a popular platform for youth to sext or send intimate images (because the content vanishes quickly); always remind youth of what is and isn’t appropriate to share online and that photos can always be screen shot by the recipient
- Talk to your kids about Streaks (the number of consecutive days two users have been exchanging Snap messages) – maintaining streaks can become consuming and stressful
- Disable the Snap Map feature as it lets users share exact location details with friends and followers



[Visit Snapchat’s Safety Centre to learn more >](#)

BeReal

Touted as the “anti Instagram,” BeReal promises to provide a, “unique way to discover who your friends really are in their daily life.” The premise is simple – every day, at a random time, users receive a notification and have two minutes to post a picture. The app takes a photo with both the front and back camera of your device, so users post a selfie and where they are in that moment. The random aspect is meant to make social sharing more authentic and less curated.

How it works

- Showcase real life without filters that are common on other platforms
- Share pictures only with people you add as friends
- Add a caption underneath your picture after it goes live and comment on friends’ posts
- Use Realmojis (a spin-off of emojis, Realmojis turn a picture of your facial expression into a custom emoji)
- Catalogue your previous posts as memories on your profile page

Tips for parents

- Be aware of the pressure to post on time every day – the app notifies your friends if you post late, and you can only see what others have posted if you adhere to the time window
- Understand that random post alerts can come at inconvenient times
- Delete and repost is only allowed once a day
- Ensure kids turn off location sharing; otherwise, they will reveal their exact location every time they post
- Know that daily posts can make it easier for others to figure out users’ daily routines and activities
- Remind kids to scan their surroundings before taking their candid photo to avoid revealing personal or location information
- Know that the app doesn’t include privacy features, parental controls or blocking

[Visit BeReal’s FAQ page to learn more >](#)



Pinterest



Pinterest is a visual discovery engine for finding inspiration on literally any topic – crafts, birthday parties, recipes, travel, sports, décor, fashion, nails. In Pinterest language, images are “pins” or “ideas to spark inspiration.” With pins, you can bookmark content you love by adding it to your personal boards, which can be categorized to keep similar ideas in one place (eg. fashion, food, fitness).

How it works

- Find inspiration on any topic
- Get inspired by others' creativity
- Collaborate on boards to share ideas
- Contribute your own creativity through images, videos or products

Tips for parents

- Urge kids to make sure any account they follow is legitimate – fake and spam accounts post pins that link out to websites that try to solicit personal information
- Remind kids to view all content with a critical eye – much of what is seen on any image sharing app is filtered and well curated
- Be aware that the app doesn't offer any real privacy settings, and pins, boards and profiles are visible to anyone unless marked as private
- Caution kids to be careful when participating in group boards – if something inappropriate is posted by another member, your profile is associated with it and your followers can see the content
- Know that there is inappropriate content circulating, including adult/pornographic content or graphic pins that normalize eating disorders and self harm, as example

[Visit Pinterest's Privacy and Safety page to learn more >](#)





Discord

Discord is another free chat app. “Servers” are private, invite-only spaces where groups (classmates, families, friends, community) can connect and interact. There are also larger, public communities centered on specific topics, like gaming apps Fortnite and Minecraft. Servers are organized into text channels (to share messages, files and images) and voice channels where you connect by voice, video or Go Live (screen share).

How it works

- Connect and interact with people who share your interests and hobbies
- Communicate with a large group without the confusion of group chats

Tips for parents

- Be aware that user generated content could be inappropriate
- For younger kids, ensure they only participate in servers with people they know in real life (settings can help you limit who can send friend requests to your kids)
- Help kids adjust settings to limit DMs, ensure they’re scanned for inappropriate content and control how the app uses their data for customization and analytics



[Visit Discord’s Safety Centre to learn more >](#)



Reddit

Reddit is a social news site where users create and share content. The wide array of communities (subreddits) allow people to “dive into their interests, hobbies and passions.” You can post images or text and comment on posts from other users. Your “front page” features posts from the communities you follow.

How it works

- Connect with people and join communities who share similar interests
- Explore and follow topics like sports, TV, travel and celebrities
- Find support and community (particularly for LGBTQ2S+ youth)

Tips for parents

- Ensure a positive experience by using the security and privacy settings to control comments, limit search, turn off information collection, block inappropriate content and enable two-factor authentication
- Be aware that the app contains content for an 18+ audience
- Talk with kids about the communities they join and familiarize yourself with the content they consume, so they avoid any subreddits like those that promote hate, homophobia and racism



[Visit Reddit's Help to learn more >](#)



Messaging apps

Messaging has become the dominant form of communication for many of us. Most messaging apps like WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and Kik offer texting, phone and video calls.

How it works

- Take advantage of an instant and convenient way to communicate
- Share photos and videos safely with one person or a group
- Create contact lists to stay in touch with family and friends near and far
- Block unwanted contacts from reaching you

Tips for parents

- Advise your kids to only interact with trusted contacts (family and friends) and reject message requests from people they don't know
- Talk to kids about cyberbullying – if they experience cyberbullying, urge them to talk to a trusted adult and show them how to report and block users. If they witness a friend being cyberbullied, encourage them to reach out and offer support
- Remind youth about digital permanency – anything they text or share in a messaging app can then be shared with others
- Advise youth not to participate in any conversation that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe
- Encourage kids to adjust notification settings to minimize disruptions in their day; this is particularly relevant for apps where friends are constantly messaging each other





With social media apps changing all the time and content constantly evolving, maintain an ongoing dialogue with your kids. If you come across content or an app you're unfamiliar with – ask! Kids love to be considered experts and have the chance to teach the adults in their lives. You can also download and use the apps yourself to become more familiar with them.

Regardless of the app, always encourage kids to keep their personal information private, use strong passwords and enable two-factor authentication to limit the chances of their accounts getting hacked. Share regular reminders about digital permanence and the importance of protecting their online reputation.

For more tips, check out the **Helping our Kids Navigate our Digital World** guide or visit telus.com/wise.

