

We've compiled a list of the most popular social networking and messaging apps that children are using and the potential risks they may expose children to. You'll also find links to relevant safety pages or independent third-party articles and opinions with further information about specific apps.

YouTube app



YouTube is a social video platform that allows young people to not only watch videos from their favourite YouTubers or vloggers but also share comments with each other about what they are watching. With so many people at commenting, liking and created content for their own channels, it has become one of the biggest social networking platforms around the world with over 2 billion active users.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 13

Instagram



A photo-sharing app which allows you to edit photos and videos, upload them and share them to other social networking sites. Photos and videos can be sent directly to friends.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 13

TikTok



TikTok is a popular social networking app that allows users to create, musical clips and short clips up to 60 seconds and add special affects to them.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 13

Facebook



The Facebook app allows you to share personal information, status updates, pictures, videos and chat with a network. The GPS feature is worth understanding – ‘Nearby Friends’ allows you to see your friends’ current locations on a map.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 13

Facebook Messenger



The Facebook Messenger app is a free messenger app that connects with the Inbox in Facebook and allows users to share photos, videos, audio and can be used for group chats.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 13

Snapchat



Snapchat is a photo-sharing app where users can send photos or videos to their friends. These will display on screen for up to ten seconds before being deleted, although it is possible to screenshot messages and use other apps to capture the content. Snapchat could be used for messages of a sexual nature or also mean messages. Learn how to set privacy settings with our “how-to” guide.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 13

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.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 16

Twitter



The Twitter app works in a similar way to the desktop version of Twitter, except that when you tweet you can also post the location of where you’re tweeting from. The Safety Centre for parents can help with any questions or concerns.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 13

Discord



Discord is a free voice and text chat app that is often used by young people to communicate with others while gaming online and streaming live video. Known as ‘skype of gamers’ it helps players to communicate with each other through private servers that enable voice, video and text.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 13

Telegram Messenger

Apps for meeting new people that might create risks

These apps have gained a reputation for being potentially risky for children because of the types of technology they use and the types of communities that have formed around them.

Tumblr



The app version of Tumblr allows users to post, share, and read other users text and image blogs. Although Tumblr have blocked blogs related to eating disorders, self-harm and suicide, between 2-4% of Tumblr's content is pornographic.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 13

Risk: Exposure to inappropriate content

Omegle



The **omegle app** is a Free online chat site that is used to talk to strangers through a webcam.

Like Chafroulete, the app randomly pairs users with each other for anonymous one-to-one chats.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 13

Risks: Exposure to sexual content and other types of inappropriate content

MeowChat

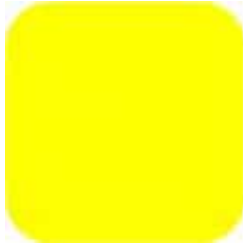


MeowChat's distinctive look includes cartoon cats and allows users to send texts, images or audio clips. It encourages chatting with 'like-minded' strangers based on the user's location at any time. Chatrooms can contain bad language and invitations to private chats with strangers.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 18

Risks: Exposure to sexual content and other types of inappropriate content

Yubo



Yubo is a messaging app that allows its users to send text and photos to others and live stream with friends and ‘Anyone’ on the app. Users can choose to engage with the feeds of others within a certain radius of themselves. It’s been called “Tinder for kids”: Users are invited to swipe right on profiles they like and swipe left on profiles they don’t. The app is deemed dangerous for teenagers to connect with strangers.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 13

Risks: Connecting with strangers, inappropriate content

Chatroulette



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.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 18

Risks: Connecting with strangers, inappropriate content

Monkey App

What are anonymous apps?

Anonymous apps allow users to share and interact with each other without revealing who they are. Unlike social media sites, many of these apps encourage users to stay anonymous and chat to each other or post questions and answers on a range of topics.

In recent years, there has been a growth in honesty or feedback apps that allow users to post images or ‘tell-all’ posts to get ‘honest’ feedback from strangers which at times can lead to bullying.

Examples of popular anonymous apps

ASKfm



The Ask.fm app is an extension of the desktop site, where users can ask and answer questions, either with their name or anonymously. Ask.fm's reputation as platform for cyberbullying was highlighted in the past and the organisation has since worked with anti-bullying charities to help create safety tools and policies to deal with this and other harmful content on its platform.

Key safety features:

- Report/ block / Unfollow
- Restrictions on searches of harmful content
- Disable anonymous questions in privacy settings

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 13

Risk: Exposure to inappropriate content and

Omegle



The **omegle app** is a Free online chat site that is used to talk to strangers through a webcam.

Like Chaftroulete, the app randomly pairs users with each other for anonymous one-to-one chats.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 18

Risks: Exposure to sexual content and other types of inappropriate content

Sarahah



Sarahah is an established free social media app that allows you to receive comments from friends and strangers anonymously. The name means ‘honesty’ in Arabic and was initially designed for employees to share feedback with each other anonymously. Now that it is linked to Snapchat, many teens have taken to it and it now has millions of users.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 17

Risks: Cyberbullying, violence

SayAt.Me App



SayAt.Me is an Android only app that allows you to ask questions to others and get ‘honest feedback’. Like similar apps, it can expose children to cyberbullying as young people may use anonymity to harass others. Also, getting honest feedback can impact young people self-esteem if comments made are hurtful and cruel.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 16 (with parental consent)

Risks: Cyberbullying

Whisper

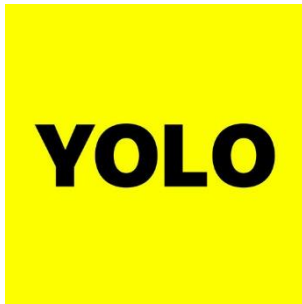


Whisper is an anonymous messaging app where users are encouraged to share stories they wouldn’t want to put their name to. **Whisper** includes a category whereby users can search for ‘Meet Up’ – in this category there can sexual images and messages. Whisper is rated 17+ in the app store, but many teens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

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 17

Risks: Connecting with strangers, location sharing, cyberbullying, inappropriate content

Yolo App



Similar to apps like Kik and Sarahah, the **Yolo app** allows teens to ask 'honest feedback' in the form of anonymous replies to a question. The app is used within Snapchat where users can post anonymous questions and comments on a Snapchat story and also attached an image. Once you have linked the app to a Snapchat account, it prompts you to 'get anonymous messages' and create a question to prompt others to 'Send me honest messages'.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 17

Risks: Connecting with strangers, cyberbullying, inappropriate content

Monkey App



Like many anonymous apps, Tellonym allows you to ask and answer questions about users on the platform anonymously. The app can be linked to other social media accounts (Instagram, Twitter or Snapchat) to allow user to get incoming messages from friends and people they don't know. Connecting Tellonym to other platform increases the risk that strangers could target children across platforms.

Safety on the Tellonym

- Language filters to remove offensive language, spam or sexual harassment
- Custom word filters to exclude specific topics
- Adjust privacy settings
- Report and block users

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 17

Risks: inappropriate content, cyberbullying



Psst! Anonymous

Like many anonymous apps, Psst! Anonymous allows you to share secrets, daily experiences without sharing your identity. You can vote, comment and private message others on the

platform. This can expose young people to incidents of cyberbullying as some use the anonymity to target others and say things they wouldn't say in real life.

Also, like Snapchat, once a message has been opened it is deleted within 30 seconds however, you cannot screenshot conversation for later viewing which means if you are receiving inappropriate content, you are not able to collect evidence.

Cost: Free | **Minimum age:** 17

Risks: inappropriate content, cyberbullying

What are decoy apps?

Some apps have been created with the specific purpose of allowing the user to hide content within them. These decoy apps can protect personal information from strangers but also allow people to hide content they don't want anyone else to see.

In order to throw off the unknowing eye, decoy app icons often look like a regular camera icon, music app, photo app or a calculator. These apps are great for securing sensitive information from strangers, but they also make it difficult for parents to monitor what information children are accessing and holding on their devices.

Examples of decoy apps

Secret Calculator app



Appearing as a calculator icon, the only giveaway that this may actually be a decoy app is if you see more than one calculator icon on your child's device. Private information, videos and photographs can be hidden in this app.

Cost: Freemium with in-app purchases | **Minimum age:** No minimum age

Risk: Sharing or receiving inappropriate content

- [Secret Calculator App parents' guide](#)
Photo Album Vault



The Photo Album Vault appears as a typical lock screen and allows you to store photos in the cloud with unlimited storage. You can also take and store videos and photos in the app.

Cost: Free with in-app purchases | **Minimum age:** no minimum age

Risks: Sharing or receiving inappropriate content

Stashword – Private Fingerprint Messenger



The Stashword app cannot be seen as it is an extension to messages only. It requires a PIN or fingerprint scan in order to open private messages. You can erase conversation easily and it can also be used to save and manage passwords.

Cost: 99p **Minimum age:** No minimum age

Risks: Sending or receiving inappropriate content

KeepSafe Photo Vault



The KeepSafe app allows you to store photos and videos behind a PIN, fingerprint touch ID and military-grade encryption. There is a free and paid version of the app based on extended features like advanced security features, such as fake login PINs, break-in alerts and the ability to disguise the app as something else.

Cost: Free with in-app purchases | **Minimum age:** no minimum age

Risks: Sharing or receiving inappropriate images