






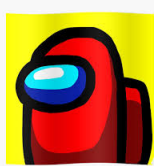























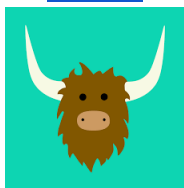


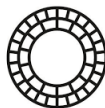






Important Apps to Know

Ideas to monitor screen time and for Internet safety:

- [Parents' Ultimate Guide to Parental Controls](#) - CommonSense Media
- [Keeping Children Safe Online](#) - US Department of Justice
- [GetNetWise](#) - referenced from NH Department of Education ([NHEON-Internet Safety](#))

Instagram 	TikTok 	YouTube 	Snapchat 	HouseParty 	Omegle 
Discord 	AmongUs 	Reddit 	Tumblr 	Doublicat 	Kik 
YOLO 	Whisper 	Holla 	Ask.fm 	Hot or Not 	LiveMe 
Fortnite: Battle Royale 	MineCraft 	Roblox 	Twitter 	Slack 	MeetUp 
Telegram 	Sarahah 	TBH (to be honest) 	GroupMe 	WhatsApp 	Pinterest 

Facebook 	Yik Yak 	MeetMe 	Voxer 	VSCO 	Tellonym 
Bigo Live 	IMVU 	WeChat 			

All reviews taken from [Common Sense Media](#), unless otherwise noted:

Instagram

Parents need to know that Instagram is a popular [platform](#) for instantly enhancing photos and videos with cool effects and sharing them across a number of social media platforms. The terms specify that users should be at least 13 years old and should not post partially nude or sexually suggestive photos but do not prohibit the portrayal of violence, swear words, or drugs. Users can flag photos for review, but mature content still appears in some photos and in the comment sections. Photos shared in Instagram are public and may have location information unless privacy settings are adjusted. Also, it's possible to save other users' photos. In the app's Direct section, users can send private messages directly to other users, and a green status dot shows your friends you're active in the app (which could show people that you're active but not answering their messages) unless you turn it off in settings. "Vanish Mode" lets friends send messages that disappear after users leave the chat. In a section called IGTV, users can subscribe to other people's video collections called channels (like [YouTube](#)). [Tinder](#) users can access other Tinder users' Instagram feeds directly from within the Tinder app, even on private Instagram feeds, if Tinder integration is enabled. As of 2016, users can livestream video, and video streams and selected private photos will disappear, [Snapchat](#)-style. If they want to send an audio message, users can hold down the microphone button and record a minute-long message to send. And, as of 2020, users can use the Reels feature to create [TikTok](#)-style short videos with visual effects and clips from popular music that they can share in their Instagram Stories or in their main feed.

Users can remove followers, turn off comments, mute followers, and like others' comments. If users want to poll their friends, they can attach a sticker to an image to get votes. Teens will see lots of product placement and marketing, and they can make purchases directly from buy links in the app and from the Shop section. The Your Activity feature shows how much time you've spent using the app, lets you set a time limit for yourself and get a reminder, and gives access to your notification settings. Parents can learn more about Instagram and see conversation starters around its use in their [parents' guide](#). Read the app's [privacy policy](#) to find out about the types of information collected and shared. Under the CCPA law you have the right to protect your personal information. [Make a Do Not Sell](#) request to Instagram.

TikTok

Parents need to know that TikTok is a social network for sharing user-generated music videos. It used to be called musical.ly. Users can create and upload videos, remix others' work, or browse content created by other users and by famous recording artists. However, as of 2019, in response to an FTC settlement, there's a separate section of the app for users under 13. That

experience only lets users view curated videos: They can't comment, search, or post their own videos, and their data isn't collected. Because access to that area only requires the user to enter a birth date, the app is still recommended for older teens. Because the app employs popular music, expect swearing and sexual content in the songs. Though videos viewed during the review process contained only some tight and revealing clothing, some families have encountered sexually suggestive or even explicit material.

The Digital Well-Being settings allow parents to set two-hour screen-time limits with the app (locked with a password), and a new Restricted Mode (also password-protected) can help filter out inappropriate content. As of 2020, there's a Family Safety Mode feature that lets parents link their own account to their kid's to control time limits and Restricted Mode, and it lets parents disable direct messages as well. Parents can also control who can leave comments, turn off search, and disallow users from seeing which videos their kid has liked. If a kid unpairs the account, the parent gets an alert. Note that kids can get around these controls by setting up a new account. Settings allow users to share their videos with friends or the general public, but setting accounts to Private does nothing to eliminate previously obtained followers. For kids 13-15, the privacy default setting is private, only friends can comment on videos, and other users can't use the Duet or Stitch features with their videos. Also, only users 16 and older can livestream and use direct messaging. Users 18 and older can buy, send, and receive virtual gifts. Parents should note that the app has its own celebrities, and kids may use it in hopes of becoming famous. Finally, users cannot delete accounts themselves and must request a delete code from the developers after submitting their phone number. Read the developer's [privacy policy](#) for details on how your (or your kid's) information is collected, used, and shared and any choices you may have in the matter, and note that privacy policies and terms of service frequently change. Under the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA), you have the right to protect your personal information. [Make a Do Not Sell](#) request to TikTok.

YouTube

Parents need to know that [YouTube](#) is a video-sharing site and [app](#), and there are many videos on YouTube that may not be age-appropriate for kids. The app includes a feature that lets you see how much time you've spent watching videos, and you can set reminders to turn off autoplay and take a break. The site is entirely user-generated and relies on its community to flag videos that violate YouTube's terms of service (mostly for sexual content, language, and hate speech). For full reviews of the most popular channels, check out our [YouTube Reviews](#). Channel owners can also now distribute live content, and can launch livestreams at will, which are governed by YouTube rules. Plenty of inappropriate content can surface after typing in the most innocent of search terms, so parents will want to monitor kids' use. Violent and emotionally distressing pranks and stunts have been banned from the site, and conspiracy theory videos and disinformation videos are no longer getting promoted through search. Videos here run the gamut, from commercial to educational to music videos to homemade clips. Many kids love YouTube and rely on it as a way of keeping up with popular culture. Videos go "viral" when viewers share the clips they like. One of the web's most popular destinations for people of all ages, YouTube now curates its videos, suggesting clips and new "channels" based on what you've watched previously. Kids can also discover new videos by seeing what's popular and trending throughout its immense collection. These new features can easily increase the amount of time your kids spend on the site. YouTube does offer parents the ability to filter out objectionable content and comments using Safety Mode. But Safety Mode doesn't catch everything, and it's easy to disable. YouTube also has channels by which users can access specialized content: [YouTube Kids](#) and [YouTube Music](#). Users can also subscribe to YouTube Premium to stream videos for free, save videos for background and offline viewing, and access new original content. As of 2017, the YouTube app allows in-app messaging between users. Also within the app, users can enable the option to "take a break" from within their user settings and set a time for a reminder. And the app also lets users create "Shorts," which are under-a-minute, [TikTok](#)-style videos with editing features. If you're interested in more information about the site from Common Sense, make sure you check out our latest [Young Kids and YouTube](#) research report. Read the [privacy policy](#) to find out about the types of information collected and shared. Under the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA), you have the right to protect your personal information. [Make a Do Not Sell](#) request to YouTube.

Snapchat

Parents need to know that Snapchat is a popular messaging app that allows teens to exchange user-generated photos, texts, videos, and calls -- both audio and video. The developer claims that "Snaps" can't be saved within the app and are viewable only for one to 10 seconds before disappearing from the recipient's device, noting that the app notifies the sender if the recipient takes a screenshot of an image. However, several third-party programs easily intercept and store any Snaps sent to the user, and users can buy replays of Snaps via in-app purchase, negating the "temporary" aspect of the service. Also, as of 2017, users can play Snaps as long as they'd like until they exit that Snap, which deletes it as usual. You can delete text messages sent through the app and Snaps, if they're unopened and used a saved picture (rather than one taken on the spot).

If users opt to share their location, they can see friends on a "Snap Map" and see Snapchat Stories from other users in various locations, and if they do opt in, they can use "Ghost mode" to see others but not be visible themselves. In terms of location, friends can also send their location and request a friend's location, which will update live for eight hours unless turned off. There's an option to share public stories on other social media platforms, and premium publishers can access and use publicly posted stories. The "Sounds" feature lets users set Snaps to music, TikTok style. If users swipe up and tap "Play This Song," they can tap and listen to the full song. In the Memories section, teens can save posts behind a passcode so that no one else can access them. The app has gained a reputation as a sexting app because outgoing (and incoming) pictures, videos, and texts are not stored on devices, but many teens use it simply to exchange fun, silly pictures. In addition, a video feature called Discover has curated content from outlets including CNN, *Cosmopolitan*, Warner Music, and *Vice*. The Discover content (which disappears after 24 hours, a much longer window than for other content) often features harsh language, sexual content, violence, advertisements, or videos with, for instance, a character flipping viewers "the bird," and there is no option to opt out. Third-party "mini-apps" are available in the chat field, mostly enabling easier purchases, but also offering content from platforms like Headspace for meditation.

In light of a feature called "Snapstreaks," some kids may feel pressure to keep a streak (trading Snaps within 24 hours over a period of days) going. The "charms" found in friend profiles are also incentives to keep snapping. There's also a "Do Not Disturb" feature that lets teens mute threads without outright blocking anyone. To compete with other group video chatting apps, it lets you video-chat with up to 16 friends at a time. The Spotlight feature promises that the most popular Snaps can earn real money, which could push kids to post riskier stuff publicly. Original, multiplayer games are available from within the app, too. Snapchat also has video-recording glasses called Specs available for purchase, which record short videos that you can send to your phone and, from there, post to Snapchat. Through the World Lens, users can find Snapchat Art, which will place AR art in select cities so users can find the exact location and see the AR image. If a kid does a search for topics like depression or eating disorders, the results will include resources from experts to find support. Check out their [Safety Center](#) and content for parents to get more information. Read the app's [privacy policy](#) to find out about the types of information collected and shared. Under California's CCPA law, you have the right to protect your personal information. [Make a Do Not Sell](#) request to Snapchat.

Houseparty

Parents need to know that Houseparty - Group Video Chat is a video-focused social media app. Friends (and friends of friends) can communicate with each other via live video and texts. Because there's no screening and the video is live, there's always the possibility of inappropriate content for kids, but that will largely depend on the friends who are communicating. The biggest risks are communicating with people you don't know well, pictures and screenshots getting shared around, and spending lots of time in virtual hangouts. Parents should also note that users can send links to their profiles on the app via a text message to whomever they want, and it's possible to take a screenshot -- even of private groups -- and share it. NOTE: In times of social isolation, kids can use an older family member's Houseparty account to connect with friends and family with parental supervision. Read the developer's [privacy policy](#) for details on how your (or your kids') information is collected, used, and shared and any choices you may have in the matter, and note that privacy policies and terms of service frequently change.

Omegle

Parents need to know that this chat site's catch phrase, "Talk to strangers!", says it all. Though created by an 18-year-old, Omegle is not for kids. The site puts two strangers together in a chat room. Though chats start out anonymous, users often ask for and share personal information. Language is uncensored, and sexual come-ons and requests for email addresses are common. Omegle might be fun if both users desired a real conversation, but the odds of this here seem unlikely. It might be worth the effort for older teens willing to sift through the trash talk. But most kids should definitely steer clear. Note that there's also [an app](#), though whether it's officially affiliated with site is unclear; however, it does have the same basic functionality.

Discord

Parents need to know that Discord - Chat for Gamers is a voice- and text-chat tool geared toward gamers. Its developers created it to replace other voice-over-internet protocol (VOIP) apps that gamers use to talk to each other in real time while they play games, especially [MMOs](#). Users can log in to with a username, and they can add friends, join a server, chat by logging in with a code provided from an email invitation or from a real-life friend. Users can send direct messages to other users, chat, and talk or listen in larger group chats. Using the Nearby feature when adding friends (and with location features turned on), you can find users near you. While there are good features available for opting in to conversations, this is still a social-networking app, and it's primarily geared toward adults. As you might find on any social network, there are occasional issues with abusive language. Also, though the app doesn't generate iffy content, many players are discussing mature games, so sex, violence, and substances are often a part of the conversation. If you're going to let your younger teen use it, check out [these tips](#) around how to use the settings wisely. Read the app's [privacy policy](#) to find out about the types of information collected and shared.

Among Us

Players need to know that Among Us is a downloadable action/strategy game for Windows PCs. The game has also been released on iOS and Android devices. Players take on the role either of crewmates trying to accomplish tasks or of imposters trying to sabotage these missions and murder the crew. Imposters can kill players in somewhat gory ways, and bodies are left behind, but there's no blood and the cartoonish visuals limit the impact of the deaths. While there's no dialogue, play is unmoderated, especially when using external chat programs or discussing who may have killed other players. Gamers can also select offensive phrases as their character name, so players should be warned that they could encounter racist, sexist, or homophobic language. Players can choose to purchase cosmetic items and pets that tag along, but these give no advantages within play sessions.

Reddit

Parents need to know that Reddit can inform and influence kids to both positive and negative ends. It's a site and [app](#) for free speech and kids will see things that are credible, factual, and charitable as well as silly, offensive, and weird. To a degree, a voting system helps police the area. Links with the most positive votes float to the top of the page, but there's no telling why people vote the way they do (Dan Akroyd in a strip club vs. Q & A with a NASA scientist? Team Akroyd wins). It also has a one-to-one and group chat feature. Reddit is a peek into what people find interesting in the world and how they feel about it, but the adult attitudes and opinions expressed here can impact impressionable kids. Under the CCPA law you have the right to protect your personal information. [Make a Do Not Sell](#) request to Reddit.

Tumblr

Parents need to know that this online hangout is hip and creative but too raunchy for tykes. The microblogging site and [app](#) showcases a range of user-generated content including product ads, racy images, depictions of drug use, and plenty of offensive language. Though the keyword search does block terms such as "porn," "f--k," and "sex," curious kids could stumble upon racy, and even raunchy, images and writings. (There's really everything under the sun here -- positive and negative.) The terms of service specify that Tumblr should not be used by children under 13, but the app stores rate it as mature and for 17 and older. Note that posts are public by default and there's only one privacy setting which is only available on the website -- not the app: Users can turn off the option to let others find their blog through an email address. As of 2017, there's a "Safe Mode" that users can toggle on and off that filters out racier content, but there's no lock or gate to keep teens from changing the setting. As of 2019, there's also a group chatting feature in the Tumblr app.

Doublicat (reviews excerpted from [Parentology](#))

Fears surround Doublicat / REFACE, however REFACE is registered in the United States. It's for ages 13 and older, and if a parent has concerns about their child using the app they can easily contact the company at hi@reface.app...Regarding photos, the company's Privacy Policy says, "We may collect the photos, that you upload from your mobile device while using our application. Please note, you won't be able to upload content from your camera roll unless we can access your device's camera."...The company also collects your facial feature data separately from your photos "only to provide you with the face-swapping functionality of REFACE. Please note, we collect the facial feature data that is not biometric data." This is essentially saying that they can't use the data they collect for Face ID functionality...Photos you upload are kept on REFACE for up to 24 hours after the editing session before being deleted. The facial feature data "is stored on the REFACE's server for a limited period of 30 calendar days after your last use of the REFACE application."

Kik

Parents need to know that Kik is an app-based alternative to standard texting as well as a social networking app for smartphones. With features like video, sketch, bot search, and friend or group code scanning, the app can be used by kids as young as 13 but should really only be used by older teens and adults since it's so easy to connect with strangers. There are no in-app ads or purchases, but the Kik Code function encourages users to use the app to connect themselves to commercial brands. A built-in web search also points users to third-party sites. Read the app's [privacy policy](#) to find out about the types of information gathered and shared.

Yolo

Parents need to know that YOLO: Anonymous Q&A is a free social networking app that works in conjunction with popular apps, Snapchat and Bitmoji. The app allows users to send pre-generated questions through Snapchat and receive anonymous responses. There are about forty question options to choose from, including, "Send new music to listen to," "Would you date me?" and "What's my best feature?" The app's inbox keeps a record of questions posed to Snapchat members and responses. YOLO: Anonymous Q&A also includes a chat feature where users can start private conversations or group chats. This feature requires users to link Bitmoji. Beyond a statement that YOLO is for positive and respectful feedback and simple block and report tools, the app has no safety measures built in. The amount of provocative pre-generated questions and built in anonymity make this app best for older teens. Read the developer's [privacy policy](#) for details on how your (or your kids') information is collected, used, and shared and any choices you may have in the matter, and note that privacy policies and terms of service frequently change.

Whisper

Parents need to know Whisper is a social "confessional" app that allows users to post whatever's on their mind, which is then paired with an image. All too often, those whispers are sexual -- and sometimes so are users trying to meet with other users for sex. There's copious strong language and sexual images (though no actual sex is shown). The app also encourages private

communications in which users can exchange images and personal information. The iOS app requires users to confirm they're at least 17 years old before they download the app. It is absolutely not an app for children.

Holla

Parents need to know that HOLLA: Live Random Video Chat is a freemium social networking app that lets users conduct live video chat sessions with random strangers. Registration requires either your phone number or a connection to your Facebook account, and the app insists on accessing your phone's camera and microphone. Default settings upon starting the app connect you to live random chat with users who could be doing literally anything (including engaging in sexual behaviors) when you connect. The app's "Nearby" chat mode uses your phone's location tracker to connect you with nearby strangers, and free usage provides little information about the people you interact with; only HOLLA Prime members (\$9.99/mo) get to see full user profiles and search users by gender. Read the developer's [privacy policy](#) for details on how your (or your kids') information is collected, used, and shared and any choices you may have in the matter, and note that privacy policies and terms of service frequently change.

Ask.fm

Parents need to know that you can't register for Ask.fm unless you're 13 -- or say you are during registration. But you can't go back and enter a new birth date once you've been denied. The site doesn't monitor content, which opens the door for content that's inappropriate -- and that's very, very easy to find. Bullying has been a major concern in the past; the British news website MailOnline reported that the site has been linked to the suicides of several teens. But Ask.fm has since launched a separate safety site to help teens understand how to adjust their profile settings for additional safety and have a more secure experience. Users, for example, follow each other anonymously. But kids also can be very visible, such as filming and posting video responses to user questions and sharing personal photos on the site. Users can report questions or answers that are violent or pornographic or that contain hate speech. But profiles, at present, cannot be reported. As with many social apps, some users keep things friendly and clean, while others post more offensive content. Both app and website versions of this title are available; our review references key points relevant to both.

Hot or Not

Parents need to know that *Hot or Not* (called *Hot or ...* for iOS devices) is a social app that has users rate the attractiveness of others based on a series of photos. Users must first set up an account of their own, with photos -- and must verify their identity with a working email address or a Facebook account and their mobile phones. The site says it will not accept a profile unless the user is 13 or older, and that users 13-17 can't chat or share photos with users older than 17 -- but there's no age verification process. Users can log in to see what others think of them. And if two users think each other is "hot," they can send messages to each other. Keep in mind that there's no guarantee anyone is really who they say they are here.

LiveMe

Parents need to know that LiveMe - Live Video Chat is a tool for broadcasting live-streaming videos and watching others' videos. The [terms of use](#) specify that users be at least 18 or have parental permission to use the tool, but tweens and young teens are broadcasting. The potential for predatory comments or bullying of broadcasters is a concern, as is the possibility of viewing inappropriate content, even though the message shown when logging on to each broadcast reminds users to report any violent or sexual content. During the review period, profanity and racial slurs were commonplace, some users were scantily clad, one 13-year-old was asked sexually charged questions, and one broadcast showed someone preparing marijuana. Privacy issues abound as users have no control over who views their broadcasts, and all their clicks and interactions as a viewer could be collected or shared. Via in-app purchase, viewers can purchase coins to give as gifts to broadcasters. Also, a live quiz show called Quiz Biz allows users to answer questions and potentially win real money, and there's a music-themed show called "You Need The Code" which features indie artists. As of 2018, [musical.ly/TikTok](#) users are being directed to this app if they want to livestream. Users log in with a phone number, [Facebook](#) account, or [Instagram](#) account. See the [privacy policy](#) for full details.

Fortnite: Battle Royale

Parents need to know that Fortnite is a hugely popular survival action game that's centered around short play sessions, and this is the mobile version of the popular [console/PC game](#). Players battle up to 100 other live players in solo mode, pairs, or teams; the goal is to be the last player standing. The game is loaded with violence, but it's all cartoonish, rather than bloody or gory. (Defeated enemies disappear, "absorbed" by a drone.) The game does offer in-app purchases for costumes, dance animations, and other content, but it doesn't have a heavy push for them. There's no language, sexuality, or alcohol/drug concerns. Additionally, there's no chat with other players in the mobile version. Android users should be cautious as well, because thanks to Epic choosing to bypass the Google Play store, they could be exposed to malicious software by downloading the game to their devices. Read the developer's [privacy policy](#) for details on how your (or your kids') information is collected, used, and shared and any choices you may have in the matter, and note that privacy policies and terms of service frequently change. If you want to know more about this phenomenon, be sure to check out our [Parents' Ultimate Guide to Fortnite](#).

MineCraft

Parents need to know that Minecraft - Pocket Edition is a mobile version of the popular PC game. While early versions of the game lacked monsters, danger, and resource restrictions, updated builds have inserted those popular objects. The game is still an alpha build, but is fairly feature complete and offers the sandbox-style gameplay of the PC version, letting players create things from materials. It still lacks any sort of direction for users. That's partly understandable for a game that fosters creativity, but it leaves newcomers stumped about what they're supposed to do. The app includes very mild violence.

Roblox

Parents need to know that Roblox is a game-creation website where users design and upload their own games -- and play games that other people have created -- in a multiplayer environment. Roblox's free and open communication policy means that kids' interactions can vary widely, from legitimate player engagement to iffy involvement with possibly predatory users. We've rated it for age 13+ based on continuing challenges with problematic content, but it's potentially OK for kids younger than that if account restrictions are turned on and parents pay close attention to their kids' activities on the platform. Posts and chats are filtered for inappropriate content and personal information references if a user is 12 or younger, and parents can restrict their child's chatting capabilities. We recommend that parents disable the chat functionality as a protective measure when they can't supervise their kids' play. We also recommend setting a four-digit PIN code that's required to make any changes to a child's account (preventing kids from giving themselves broader access) and change the security settings to allow kids to access only a curated list of age-appropriate games. Registered users who are 13 and older can also choose to alter their settings to restrict in-game chatting and messaging capabilities. There have been reports of users thwarting the chat and exchanging inappropriate messages with young players, and games that feature inappropriate sexual content, violence, and adult language; some kids have also been exploited by predators through the site. Despite Roblox's efforts at policing itself -- including using human moderators, implementing digital-civility rules, and more -- bad actors continue to find ways to share dubious content, both on the site and off, including uploading inappropriate game clips to YouTube. There's also a commercial element: Kids can purchase Robux, the in-game currency; obtain it by selling shirts, pants, or game access; or receive a monthly Robux allowance by signing up for a paid Premium membership, which allows you to buy, sell, and trade items to earn more Robux. As always, it's a good idea to read the developer's [privacy policy](#) for details on how your information (or your kids') is collected, used, and shared, and any choices you may have in the matter; note that privacy policies and terms of service frequently change. Parents who have additional concerns about Roblox should check out our [Ultimate Guide to Roblox](#). Under the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA), you have the right to protect your personal information. [Make a Do Not Sell](#) request to Roblox.

Twitter

Parents need to know that Twitter is a free "microblogging" and social-networking site (and app) that brings up issues of safety, privacy, and a lasting digital footprint. The service allows users to post 280-character messages and follow their other accounts -- from friends to celebrities to politicians to news outlets to organizations. New posts appear immediately, and, though you can delete tweets, they don't always immediately disappear. That said, users can create a Fleet, which is a post that does disappear after 24 hours. Teens can also receive direct messages from anyone, unless disabled in settings. Live-streaming may contain all manner of content, so keep that in mind as your teens use Twitter. Read the developer's [privacy policy](#) for details on how your (or your kids') information is collected, used, and shared and any choices you may have

in the matter, and note that privacy policies frequently change. Under the CCPA law you have the right to protect your personal information. [Make a Do Not Sell](#) request to Twitter.

Slack

Privacy Rating 59%Warning Users can interact with trusted users and/or students. Unclear whether users can interact with untrusted users, including strangers and/or adults. Profile information is shared for social interactions. Unclear whether data are shared for third-party advertising and/or marketing. Unclear whether this product displays traditional or contextual advertisements. Behavioral or targeted advertising is displayed.

MeetUp ([From Mobile App Daily Review](#))

This app can be thoroughly engaging and appealing to anyone. The app provides you with multiple categories of groups that you may join. After all, what's better than meeting like-minded people and getting together to do some of your favorite things. Though there are some concerns that we figured out while reviewing the Meetup app for Android and iOS. Firstly, it's about the safety of the user. The app offers you an option to report the user, but what if you get to know about the group members or admin after the meetup. As the app has no identity verification process, meeting up strangers may pose a potential risk. The other predicament is the inadvertent cost to join groups. Despite the free entry to join groups, some organizers may still put up a membership fee. And you never know, after joining the group, you may be asked to cater to your supplies, meals, and transportation costs, as well. However, you are always advised to take precautions to avoid unsafe situations.

Telegram Messenger

Parents need to know that Telegram Messenger lets users send text messages, stickers, images, videos, and other files to one or many people for free, all using encryption to keep one-to-one messages secure and private, though some security experts question the quality of the encryption. The software is open-source as well, so savvy users can see exactly how information is collected, stored, transmitted, and secured. As with [Snapchat](#), private-messaging sessions can be created between users with preset self-destruct timers; secret messages aren't stored on the app's servers. After six months without use, accounts also self-destruct. Setting up a username allows other users to find you, but a username isn't required. How much questionable content is available through the app is entirely up to users and their contacts, though the open-source nature of the platform means anyone can create stickers, bots, and plug-ins, many of which feature decidedly adult content. As such, it's really only appropriate for older teens to use to communicate with family and trusted friends. Read the app's [privacy policy](#) to find out more about the types of information collected and shared.

Sarahah

Parents need to know that Sarahah is a messaging website, where the messages sent between users are delivered anonymously. Comments that other users send also won't identify who made them and aren't posted publicly, making conversations a specific chat between two users. Users are supposed to be 17 or older, but all younger users need to do to register is check a box saying they are -- the site doesn't verify age. Users may also be exposed to all kinds of inappropriate content, ranging from violence to sexual commentary to swearing and substance discussions; with the site's lack of moderated discussion, there's no guarantee that you won't encounter this when talking with others.

tbh

[tbh video review](#)

GroupMe

Parents need to know that GroupMe is a messaging app that lets users send direct messages and group messages from mobile devices without message limits or fees. You can also use the app as a one-stop shop for interacting with your friends,

from scheduling events to sending each other money. Its main claim to fame may be its emojis and open search for GIFs: There are tons, including lots that are available for in-app purchase. Unfortunately, some of these emojis feature more adult themes, such as cartoon liquor bottles and sexy characters. Searches for GIFs find scantily clad people, drug use, and violent images. Some users like GroupMe for its stealth potential, since on-screen notifications pop up without content, which is appealing to some kids. Since there's no way to delete past posts, there are also concerns about a user's control over content. Read the app's privacy policy to learn more about the types of information collected and shared.

WhatsApp

Parents need to know that WhatsApp Messenger lets users start video calls and send text messages, videos, photos, and audio messages to one or many people with no message limits or fees. Messages can only be sent to other smartphone users who also have WhatsApp, which is available on different devices. The app checks your phone's address book for WhatsApp users and connects you automatically. It also encourages you to urge friends not using the app to sign up. Privacy and security can be customized in settings, including a two-step verification feature uses a PIN for added account security and the ability to turn off location sharing. Users also have the ability to send disappearing photos, videos, and GIFs through the Status feature, which is similar to features on [Instagram](#) and [Snapchat](#). Read the developer's [privacy policy](#) for details on how your (or your kids') information is collected, used, and shared and any choices you may have in the matter, and note that privacy policies and terms of service frequently change. Under the CCPA law you have the right to protect your personal information. [Make a Do Not Sell](#) request to Whatsapp.

Pinterest

Parents need to know that Pinterest is a photo-sharing site. To join this digital pin-board site and app, you need to either enter a username and password or sign up using Facebook. People use Pinterest to share, save, and categorize images and ideas for everything from crafting, tattoos, and photography to cooking, decorating, and collecting stuff. Although most pins people post are pretty clean, there's some not-for-kids stuff that teens may happen across (pins that include nudity in the tattoo category, for example), and they will definitely find iffy stuff if they intentionally search for it. In some instances, Pinterest links to other sites, and some of those may contain content that's inappropriate for teens. There's no language, violence, or drug filter to be found on the site either, so it's entirely possible that kids can be exposed to mature content. Users will also have to worry about being exposed to various product shots and ads that are constantly posted across user boards. As of 2019, if users search for something related to anxiety or stress, they'll be presented with mental health resources and activities. Both app and website versions of this title are available; our review references key points relevant to both. Under the CCPA law you have the right to protect your personal information. [Make a Do Not Sell](#) request to Facebook.

Facebook

Parents need to know that Facebook is a popular social-networking site (and app -- our review references key points relevant to both) where users connect with people of their choosing -- either privately or publicly -- and post pictures, text, or videos. Users also can watch videos, post and tag photos, share favorite product information, "like" favorite celebrities and social causes, live-stream video with Facebook Live, connect with goods and services, and live-chat via [Messenger](#), an app that's integrated with Facebook. Budding game developers may also appreciate the chance to express themselves and share their creations through Facebook's downloadable gaming platform and/or the gaming section of the site.

Though the app itself doesn't generate iffy content, users can create plenty, so the content in a teen's feed is dependent on friends, and they can search for somewhat racy stuff -- and find it. Teens can also watch livestreams of people playing video games on a part of the site called "fb.gg." Facebook has pledged restrict hate speech, which it defines as a direct attack on people based on what's called protected characteristics -- race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, caste, sex, gender, gender identity, and serious disease or disability. In some instances, though, the site says it will allow content relating to hate speech -- if, for example, someone shares it for the purpose of raising awareness or educating others, or if it's contained in humor and social commentary. Facebook also had said it's undertaking a number of steps to prevent fake news from being distributed on its network, including utilizing third-party fact-checking organizations, machine learning, and trying to make it more difficult for people who post false news to buy ads. On the [Safety](#) page, parents can access directions about setting up a secure account, read about how to prevent online bullying, and get parenting tips around helping kids use social media responsibly. There's also a [Youth Portal](#) that's meant to help teens understand how to use the

site, control their information, and protect their privacy and safety. On the Watch tab, users can watch all kinds of content (viral videos, sports, news, comedy and more); some is Facebook-created and some produced by major media companies. You can also use Watch Together on Messenger to view videos with other users. Users who have entered their age as 18 or older can access Facebook Dating which can be used to create a profile separate from your regular one, sort through potential matches based on your preferences, establish Secret Crushes (if your crush chooses you, too, you get matched), and integrate Instagram posts. Because the privacy settings are layered and change often, it's important for users to check their settings and make sure they are only sharing with their intended audience. Consult the [privacy policy](#) regularly to confirm the types of information collected and shared; it includes personal information being shared with advertisers. Under the CCPA law you have the right to protect your personal information. [Make a Do Not Sell](#) request to Facebook.

Yik Yak (App may no longer be available)

Parents need to know that Yik Yak is a free, local social-networking app and website that lets users post "anything and everything" anonymously, including a lot of explicit content that's clearly not for kids. Yik Yak users post brief, Twitter-like comments and photos, which are distributed to anyone using it in the same geographic area. It works via GPS to identify where the user is each time he or she opens the app and posts messages (called "yaks") to other nearby users. People read and "upvote" or "downvote" other people's posts to rate them. Message content ranges from simple questions ("Where are all the spring breakers?"), personal opinions, and local information to negative messages aimed at specific people, sexually explicit messages, and posts about seeking or using drugs and alcohol. In 2015, the app began allowing photo messages as well, and in 2016 the app moved to requiring users to create a username (or "handle") and profile, though both can still be anonymous and don't require users to provide their real names. Unless the user's location is toggled off for each post, it can be seen by others. According to the terms of service, users must be at least 17, although there's no age verification on the app itself (there's an initial content warning on the iTunes App Store that requires users to confirm they're 17 by tapping OK; there's no verification or warning on Android devices). Bottom line: It's not appropriate for kids.

MeetMe

Parents need to know that MeetMe - Chat and Meet New People is popular online flirting, entertainment, and social networking app and [website](#), formerly called [MyYearbook](#), and has some privacy and safety concerns. Users primarily log on to interact with new people, instead of keeping up with real-life friends. Teens, who must be 13 and in high school to sign up (if they enter a younger age, they'll be blocked from registering), use "lunch money" or credits to do things like put their profile at the top of the homepage as a spotlight for others to see; to get "priority in match" to increase the number of "secret admirers" you get; and play online games. Much of the communication has flirty overtones. Read the app's [privacy policy](#) to find out about the types of information collected and shared.

Voxer

As with other messaging platforms, your mileage may vary: Voxer isn't an app intended for schools or education, so its features aren't built to address the privacy concerns of communicating with kids or their parents. This app feels especially intrusive to set up: It's hard to set up your account without surrendering your device's contact list or your list of Facebook friends or Twitter followers, and some users may object to sharing their location and keeping their device's microphone on. In general, the setup experience feels less private and less comfortable than other tools your school might use to share important information with students and their families.

VSCO

Parents need to know that VSCO is a photo and video app that offers editing tools to create new content, allows users to explore tips and tutorials, and promotes communication through the sharing of images and direct messaging with members of the creative community. The free version of the app gives users access to standard photo editing tools and some of VSCO's presets, but membership is required in order to access tips, tutorials, video editing tools, and all other photo editing tools and presets. Similar to [Instagram](#), users can browse and like images that appear on their feed. They can also share their own images, follow other users, and communicate directly with other members who follow them back through messaging. However, there are no public likes, public comments, or public follower counts. The Community Guidelines state that material posted should be appropriate for all audiences; however, that is subjective and some images portray suggestive, sexy material and other material that may be considered too explicit for kids. Searches can also turn up images for marijuana

and alcohol. There's a feature that allows users to flag inappropriate images for removal. Location data appears on shared images and when exporting unless turned off in the privacy settings. The sharing feature allows users to share/export directly to platforms other than VSCO, such as Facebook, Snapchat, or WhatsApp. After registering, the app asks permission to send notifications and access contacts, the camera, and photos. Read the developer's [privacy policy](#) for details on how your (or your kids') information is collected, used, and shared and any choices you may have in the matter, and note that privacy policies and terms of service frequently change.

Tellonym

Parents need to know that VSCO is a photo and video app that offers editing tools to create new content, allows users to explore tips and tutorials, and promotes communication through the sharing of images and direct messaging with members of the creative community. The free version of the app gives users access to standard photo editing tools and some of VSCO's presets, but membership is required in order to access tips, tutorials, video editing tools, and all other photo editing tools and presets. Similar to [Instagram](#), users can browse and like images that appear on their feed. They can also share their own images, follow other users, and communicate directly with other members who follow them back through messaging. However, there are no public likes, public comments, or public follower counts. The Community Guidelines state that material posted should be appropriate for all audiences; however, that is subjective and some images portray suggestive, sexy material and other material that may be considered too explicit for kids. Searches can also turn up images for marijuana and alcohol. There's a feature that allows users to flag inappropriate images for removal. Location data appears on shared images and when exporting unless turned off in the privacy settings. The sharing feature allows users to share/export directly to platforms other than VSCO, such as Facebook, Snapchat, or WhatsApp. After registering, the app asks permission to send notifications and access contacts, the camera, and photos. Read the developer's [privacy policy](#) for details on how your (or your kids') information is collected, used, and shared and any choices you may have in the matter, and note that privacy policies and terms of service frequently change.

Bigo Live

Parents need to know BIGO LIVE - Live Stream is a free app that lets users make video blogs or livestream their activities with the object of monetizing their videos. Livestreamers receive live commentary from other users, and the app lets you search for nearby users. Vloggers can share their posts via Facebook, Twitter and Vkontakt, a social media platform aimed at Eastern European users. Though the base app is free, users pay up to \$89.99 to "recharge" in-app currency. Profiles include users' names, gender, age, and location. User-generated content can include bad language, violence, and nudity. Though it's rated "Teen" on the Google Play store, iTunes rates it 17+. Read the app's privacy policy to find out about the types of information collected and shared.

IMVU

Parents need to know that IMVU (Instant Messaging Virtual Universe) is a 3-D chat world site and [app](#) that has some adult content. The most explicit content (such as nudity) is restricted to users 18+ who buy an Access Pass, but kids might find sexual talk or behavior in public areas if they're looking for it. There's no restriction on language. Under the CCPA law you have the right to protect your personal information. [Make a Do Not Sell](#) request to IMVU.

WeChat

Parents need to know that WeChat is one of the world's most widely used social-networking platforms. You can create an account via your Facebook account or with a mobile device, and users can share anything from audio and text to their current location. There are also built-in stickers and games, some of which are free and many of which are available for in-app purchase. Know that there are some built-in features that make your location discoverable and your content shareable with people nearby, and there are also plenty of opportunities to connect with strangers. Read the app's privacy policy to find out more about the types of information collected and shared.