



Online Safety Newsletter

Snapchat/WhatsApp

Snapchat

Snapchat is a social media app used for messaging and sharing photos and videos.

You must be 13+ to sign up.

What should I be concerned about? Risks include your child viewing content that is not appropriate for them, location sharing, cyberbullying and contact from strangers.

Safeguarding features: Snapchat have features to help protect 13-17-year-olds. The features include seeing a warning message if they receive a chat from someone who has been blocked/reported by others. Also, if a teen blocks a user, it will also block any future friend requests sent from accounts created on the same device (to reduce the potential of bullying). **These two features are only available to users aged 13-17-year-olds, this is one of the reasons why it is always important for your child to sign up with their correct date of birth.** You can find out more here: <https://values.snap.com/news/new-features-to-help-protect-our-community?lang=en-GB>

Family Centre: Family Centre is a set of parental controls designed to help you see what your child is doing when using Snapchat. You must have your own Snapchat account to set it up. You will be able to see who your child is friends with, who they are communicating with and who your child has sent messages, photos or videos to in the last week. Find out more:

<https://parents.snapchat.com/parental-controls>

Safety tips: Please make sure the appropriate privacy settings are applied and your child knows how to block/report others: <https://help.snapchat.com/hc/en-gb/articles/7012343074580-How-do-I-change-my-privacy-settings-on-Snapchat>

More information: Parent Zone have published a short 5-minute guide here: <https://parentzone.org.uk/article/snapchat>

WhatsApp

Users should be at least 13 years old to use

WhatsApp. We frequently receive reports of children not using WhatsApp appropriately, such as sharing images to embarrass others, sending hurtful messages, spreading rumours, or excluding people from group chats to make them feel left out.

Since WhatsApp lacks parental controls, it is important to think about whether it is really the right platform for your child. For example, you should consider if your child has the critical thinking skills to recognise bullying. Furthermore, do they understand how to manage peer pressure and refrain from joining in on harmful behaviour?

If your child is using WhatsApp, it is crucial to have regular conversations with them. Talk about who they are chatting with, encourage them to think carefully about the messages they send and how they might be perceived by others. Finally, make sure to model good digital behaviour yourself, as children often learn by observing the adults around them.

What should I be aware of if my child is using WhatsApp?

- **Group chats:** Everyone within a group, even if they are not one of your child's 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. If your child is using WhatsApp, check their group privacy settings to see who can add them to groups. Ensure your child understands that they can leave a chat at any time, and they know how to report users. Find out more here: <https://faq.whatsapp.com/424124173736394>

- **Inappropriate content:** users can be exposed to content that is not suitable for their age.

- **Location sharing:** talk to your child about when this would be appropriate to use and the potential danger of sharing their location.

- **Chat lock/secret code:** users can lock chats as well as apply a secret code setting so a chat does not appear in the main chat.

- **Blocking/Reporting:** Show your child how to block and report other users. Find out how here:

<https://faq.whatsapp.com/1142481766359885/>

Further information

Internet Matters have produced a how to guide available here:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/whatsapp-safety-a-how-to-guide-for-parents/>