

# TikTok Guide

## What to know

TikTok is a free social media app that allows users to watch, create and share short videos, mostly of people lip-synching and dancing to popular songs. Users can “like” or comment on videos and direct message each other. What kids need to be safe on TikTok:



### A private account

- Users need to be at least 13 years old but pre-teens are able to create an account without parent consent or knowledge by entering a fake birthday.
- Compared to other platforms has the youngest user base.
- Appealing to users because they feel like they're watching “real” people having fun and being goofy, unlike Instagram, which is more polished and staged.
- Accounts are public by default so all users can see videos, send direct messages and use location information unless privacy settings are turned on manually.
- Some TikTok videos feature songs that include swearing, sexualized or misogynistic lyrics, expressions and behaviours that are not age-appropriate.



### Smart decision-making



### Awareness

- “Challenges” are dares that go viral. Most are harmless, but some can be very dangerous.
- Like many social media apps, TikTok is a popularity contest. It can seriously influence a young person's self-esteem.
- Users might feel pressure to post/do things they might not normally do (even if it's unsafe or a bad choice) to get exposure, to seek approval or to get new followers.
- Predators can easily like and follow children, the first step in exploitation.
- TikTok can be a hot bed for cyberbullying, objectification, criticism and racism.



### Adult supervision





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## What to say

- “I agree with you that being on TikTok can be a lot of fun and a great way for people to express their creativity and connect with others.”
- “I want social media to be a fun experience for you. I don’t mind you being on TikTok if we have an agreement on how that will look.”
- “I trust you to make smart decisions and use good judgement online. And I’m here to support you if you run into trouble.”
- “You can roll your eyes if you want, but I will always talk to you about important topics such as racism, objectification, misogyny, and safety online (and off) because I love you and it’s my job to keep you healthy and safe.”
- “As long as we have open conversations about those important topics, then I’m comfortable with you using TikTok and other social media apps.”
- “Watching hyper-sexualized videos can damage confidence, increase body shame and lead to depression. Not to mention, it reinforces damaging gender stereotypes that objectify women.”
- “If you see a behaviour or video that is harmful or disrespectful to others, I expect you to call them on it if they are your friend, come and talk to me about it or unfollow that person (or all of the above).”
- “Don’t ever participate in behaviour that’s mean. The rules for behaviour online are the same as in real life: to practice respect, kindness and consent.”
- “It’s hard not to compare ourselves to others on social media...at any age. This can be unhealthy and harmful if what other people post makes us feel less interesting, less fun or less cool.”
- “I worry that you might come across videos on TikTok that are too adult for you to see. If that happens, just move on and then talk to me about it if you want to. You won’t get in trouble.”
- “I have a big problem with song lyrics that glamorize violence or objectify women. Not only do they contradict our values, but I worry that you’ll become desensitized to their harmful message.”
- “When we sing or dance to a song that has violent, discriminatory or demeaning lyrics, we’re showing our support for these ideas and beliefs. This is obviously not ok.”
- “I know that you can create TikTok accounts I don’t have access to. I trust that we will be honest with one another. I’m assuming that our conversations around social media (and others) are based on mutual trust.”
- “I want you to know that you can talk to me about anything you see online. You won’t be in trouble and I won’t get mad. I just want to help you make sense of what you come across.”
- “Social media is awesome. What’s also awesome, even for adults, is to do a check in with ourselves one in a while to make sure it hasn’t become the boss of us. Sometimes it’s a good idea to take a step back and do some thinking about the role we want social media (and devices) to play in our lives.”
- I hope I can be as cool as you are on social media one day :)





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## What to do

13

- Create a TikTok account of your own and share it with your kids if they're under the age of 13. But keep in mind they can create other accounts without your knowledge.
- Get to know who your child enjoys watching, make it known that you poke around on TikTok now and then.
- Stay up to date with the most popular TikTok songs and challenges.
- The more eyes the better! Ask friends and family to follow your child on TikTok.
- Collaborate with the parents of your child's friends, support each other and commit to having open communication. If another parent lets you know about something your child posted, try not to get defensive. Remember, the collective goal is to keep all of your kids happy and safe.
- Toggle "Private account" and limit who can comment or send direct messages by using the "Friends" setting.
- Use the Family Pairing, Screen Time Management and Restricted Mode features, and lock the setting with a passcode. But remember, they aren't foolproof.
- Watch the TikTok Privacy and Security tutorials with your kids.
- Talk with your kids about safety, respect and kindness online, objectification, internal vs. external self-esteem, trolls, haters, sexism, and racism.
- If you haven't done so already, check out our Body Science Online™ and Growing Up Game Plan learning platform for other resources and videos you can watch with your family.

