



# Snapchat

*What to know*

- Snapchat is a light-hearted photo, video and audio messaging app.
- It's one of the most used apps among preteens and teens.
- It allows users to easily and quickly share everyday moments with friends in a funny, casual and engaging way.
- "Snaps" are photo, video and audio messages that can be sent to one person or a group of people.
- User-friendly filters change the appearance of images sent in Snaps and increase the fun factor.
- Snapchat also offers games, news, quizzes and entertainment to users.
- Users can video chat with up to 16 friends at a time.
- Searching topics such as "anxiety" or "cutting" will result in users seeing resources from qualified sources.
- Snapchat provides a false sense of privacy to users because Snaps "disappear" 1-10 seconds after being viewed. This may encourage users to send more provocative or sexual messages than they would on other apps. But as of 2017, users can view a Snap until they exit it. And images can easily be saved with a screen-capture app or screen shot. Users can also access sent Snaps through the in-app purchasing feature. Snapchat notifies users if a recipient takes a screen shot of their Snap. But Snap purchases and screen-capture apps do not.
- Generally speaking, experts see Snapchat as a relatively safe app people aged 16 and up can use. Its use at younger ages presents some concerns, though.
- Like many other apps targeting young people, Snapchat is difficult to move away from and there are rewards for engaging in "Snapstreaks", when users Snap often and consistently over a long period of time. Bonus points are given for "middle of the night" Snaps.
- Predators may use Snapchat to groom victims and lure them into high-risk situations, as they do with other apps targeting young people.
- Popular Snaps can be promoted to the Spotlight feature and earn the user money. This may motivate users to create more outrageous or attention-getting Snaps.
- The Discover feature can expose young people to sexualized or violent content, and the Quick Add feature allows users to connect with strangers.
- Snap Map allows users to see their friends' location live on a map for up to eight hours unless turned off, which also raises safety concerns since their "friends" may, in reality, be strangers. Ghost Mode allows a user to see others' locations without revealing their own.
- Like most social media apps, the Snapchat terms of service state that users must be 13 years of age or older, but there's no age verification process.





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## What to do

- Download Snapchat, create an account, spend some time using it, monitor the content that comes up each time you open it and then decide if it's a good idea for your child to use it. If yes, make open communication a priority.
- Show interest in what your child is doing on Snapchat and ask them to show you what they find to be most fun about it.
- Discuss with your child both why you are supportive of them being on Snapchat and what your concerns are.
- Stress that you understand that Snapchat is important to them and trust them to make smart decisions while using it. If they run into trouble, you're here to help.
- Explain that there is no privacy online and that it's your job to keep them safe.
- Create some agreements together around expectations for responsible use (including how much time they'll spend on it) and consequences for when they aren't met.
- Talk about how they should respond to discriminatory, sexualized or offensive language and the importance of speaking up when we hear it.
- Because there's no real way of monitoring activity in the same way we can with other apps, focus agreements on privacy settings. These control who a user interacts with and who can see their Snaps and/or their location. Insist that Snap Map is disabled or that they use the app in Ghost Mode.
- Remind your child that the rules of consent apply to Snapchat too. They must always get consent before sharing a photo of someone else.
- Remind your child that images don't disappear on Snapchat, it just looks like they do.
- Talk about the importance of being comfortable with the whole world seeing your Snap before sending it.
- Talk about the pressure that engaging in Snapstreaks can place on a young person. They may encourage a popularity contest and can be an unfair barometer of how important a friendship is.
- Talk in a general way about the pressure that young people may feel to send nudes or sexual Snaps when requested.
- Invite your child to think about the role they want Snapchat (and social media in general) to play in their life. FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) is real and valid, but real-life relationships and experiences are more important. And social media is supposed to be fun, not stressful.
- Decide together how often you'll have regular check-ins about how things are going on Snapchat.
- Do a reality check. Remind your child that Snaps don't represent all aspects of a person's life...just the things that make them look awesome and funny and cool.







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*What to say*

## Smart things to *not* say:

- “I think you’re addicted to Snapchat.”
- “Why would you want to be on Snapchat? It’s only used for sexting.”
- “Are you and your friends sexting?!!”
- “Do you even see your friends in person anymore?”
- “You’d better not be sending nudes.”

## Smart things to say:

- “I want social media to be a fun experience for you. I don’t mind you being on Snapchat if we have an agreement on how that will look.”
- “How much time on Snapchat each day/week do you think is reasonable for someone your age?”
- “What agreements do you think are most important? How do you see this working?”
- Snapchat looks pretty fun. Can you show me how it works?”
- “Tell me more about Snapstreaks.”
- “I know Snapchat is really important to you and your friends and that you try not to be on it too much.”
- “The last thing I want to do is micromanage what you’re doing on Snapchat and I don’t plan to because I trust that you’ll be respectful of our agreements.”
- “I came across a study saying that trophies and other rewards from Snapstreaks become connected over time to how people feel about themselves. Do you think this is true for young people?”
- “Do you think people your age feel pressure to send nudes on Snapchat? Is the experience different for boys vs. girls?”
- “You know that you can come to me if you run into trouble on Snapchat, right? I’m always here to help you and I won’t get mad.”
- “Even as an adult, I feel FOMO sometimes. I can only imagine the pressure young people feel not to miss anything that happens on Snapchat.”
- “Social media is awesome. What’s also awesome is making sure it doesn’t become the boss of us. Let’s work on that together.”

