



## Social Media Apps Parents Should Be Aware Of:

*Kik Messenger, WhatsApp, Tinder, Bumble, Holla, Live.Me, Omegle, Whisper, Yubo, Wishbone, TikTok, Fake Calculator, Snapchat, Twitter, Hot or Not, Burnbook, Ask.FM, & Instagram.*



**Kik Messenger** is a popular messaging app that does not use a traditional text messaging service.

### Why it's popular:

Children and teens do not need a cell phone if they would like to message other people. It is also free and easy to use. Kik is fast and has no character limits, message limits, or fees while using the basic features.

### What parents should be aware of:

- **Anonymity.** Kik is able to be used anonymously.
- **Predators.** In 2016, *The New York Times* reported that the app was becoming an increasing concern for law enforcement officials, with a number of instances where predators have used the app to exchange child pornography, to send explicit messages, or arrange meetings with minors.
- **Age Verification.** It is very easy to lie about one's age when downloading the app. This raises the concern that young children are on the app, in the presence of predators.
- **Personal Information.** Usernames identify people on Kik, so children or teens who are using their full name are sharing too much information.



**WhatsApp** is an instant messaging app that uses the Internet to send messages, images, audio, or video.

### Why it's popular:

There is no additional cost as it uses regular Internet data. If a child or teen does not have a cell phone, but has a device that connects to WiFi, they are able to text their friends via the app.

### What parents should be aware of:

- **Cyberbullying.** Hundreds of people can share messages in a group. This makes it easy for several people to target and cyberbully the marginalized person or people in that group.
- **Rumors.** This also provides a way to spread rumors or photos of another person to many others quickly. Private photos and conversations can be downloaded, screenshotted, and/or shared in a matter of seconds.
- **Age Requirement.** Anyone can create an account, and there is no filter for adult content. Anyone can view any content sent to them, and there are no features that ensure users meet the age requirement of being 16 or older.

- **Predators.** This is where “friends” of friends get added to group chats. And this “friend” is not really who they say they are. Sexual predators can easily lurk on WhatsApp.
  - **The Momo Challenge.** It has been reported that a new Internet challenge, named Momo, has been seen on WhatsApp profiles. Momo attempts to rope children into a dangerous game that insists the child do dangerous, self-harming tasks.
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**Tinder** is a smartphone dating app that accesses the phone’s GPS information to retrieve potential matches from other Tinder users nearby.

Why it’s popular:

Tinder presents users with a profile picture of a potential match, which they either swipe right if they are interested, or swipe left if they are not interested.

What parents should be aware of:

- **“Hook-Up Culture”.** Tinder has a reputation for being used mostly for hook-ups and sexual encounters, as it is most often promoted as one of the best one night stand apps.
  - **Predators.** It is fairly easy to lie about one’s age, allowing predators to set their age younger in order to gain access to younger users’ profiles.
  - **Facilitates Face to Face Meetings.** Tinder reveals a user’s location and allows people to private message each other to arrange a meeting once both users swipe right.
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**Bumble** is a location-based social and dating application that facilitates communication between interested users.

Why it’s popular:

Teens are instantly attracted to meeting fun, new people. On Bumble, only female users can make the first contact with male users. This feature is attractive to young people. In same sex matches, any user can make the first contact.

What parents should be aware of:

- **Predators.** Sexual predators lurk on Bumble with the hopes of chatting with minors. With location sharing and private messaging, Bumble puts children and teens at risk.
- **Private Messages.** Cyberbullying, inappropriate language, and harassment are prevalent in private messages sent on the app
- **Excessive Use.** Connections expire every 24 hours which encourages users to check the app daily.
- **Fake Accounts.** Children and teens have been known to lie about their age and create fake accounts on apps like Bumble.



**Holla** allows users to meet new people from around the world over video chat, for a designated amount of time.

Why it's popular:

Children and teens are drawn to the “unique and exciting” way to instantly meet new people and discover the world.

What parents should be aware of:

- **Predators.** Connecting with strangers over video chat is the perfect platform for predators to lurk and find victims.
  - **Age Verification.** The Terms of Service state that a person must be 13 years or older to create an account. The app, however, has no age verification methods. This creates opportunity for a minor to connect via video chat with someone far older.
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**Live.Me** allows users to stream live video of themselves to an anonymous audience of fellow users.

Why it's popular:

Becoming noticed is a driving factor of this app. It is referred to as one of the top broadcasting apps where users are able to meet stars, become stars, grow a fan base, meet friends, date, play games, and send virtual gifts in order to catch broadcaster's attention.

What parents should be aware of:

- **Sexual Images and Videos are Readily Available.** The goal of doing these live broadcasts is to gain as many views and followers as possible. This means that, in some cases, the riskier the behavior, the higher the “entertainment” value.
  - **App Store rating.** The App Store rated Live.Me to include the content, “Infrequent/Mild Profanity of Crude Humor, Infrequent/Mild Alcohol, Tobacco, or Drug Use or References, Violence, and Frequent/Intense Mature/Suggestive Themes.”
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**Omegle** is a chat site/app that puts two strangers together in their choice of a text chat or video chat room.

Why it's popular:

Being anonymous is often attractive to teens, and Omegle provides this opportunity. It's “interest boxes” also let users filter potential chat partners by shared interests.

What parents should be aware of:

- **Strangers.** The whole premise of the app is to speak with strangers. There is no registration required. This puts children and teens at risk of running into predators.
- **NOT Meant for Children and Teens.** The app is filled with people searching for sexual chat. Some prefer to do so live through the video chat. Others offer links to porn sites through the text chat.

- **Inappropriate Language.** Since chats are anonymous, they are often much more explicit than those with a user who can be identified.
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**Whisper** is an app where users can post confessions, along with their deepest, darkest secrets.

Why it's popular:

Whisper is anonymous, giving children and teens a sense of security when posting any secrets through the app.

What parents should be aware of:

- **Location Sharing Feature.** The app offers a location sharing feature for any users interested in meeting in person, putting into question how anonymous the app really is.
  - **Text, Chat, Photo, and Video.** The app encourages users to share their secrets through any of these methods, meaning users can also chat with other "whisperers."
  - **Predators.** Predators have been known to use Whisper to contact victims.
  - **Cyberbullying.** The nature of Whisper makes it easy for children and teens to bully others, including school faculty.
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**Yubo**, previously known as 'Yellow,' is meant to meet new people. Users are presented with profiles and swipe 'left' if they would like to be friends, and swipe 'right' if they would like to pass. If both users swipe left, they are able to live video stream each other.

Why it's popular:

Yubo is free, easy to use, and allows teens to connect with people around the world with shared interests.

What parents should be aware of:

- **Geographic Pairing.** Yubo is matching users with other people who are geographically near them, facilitating face-to-face meetings.
  - **Minimum Age Limit** – Although the app prompts a user who enters a birthday under 13 with a message that says 'Sorry, it looks like you're not eligible for Yubo...but thanks for checking us out', there is still the potential that they could go back in and enter a false date to access the app.
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**Wishbone** is used to compare two things, by being presented with 2 'cards' and being asked to choose a preference. Users are also able to produce their own cards for others to select their preference.

Why it's popular:

Wishbone is advertised as the "go-to app for comparing anything your heart desires!" The app covers everything from fashion, celebrities, humor, music, and pretty much anything you can think of.

### What parents should be aware of:

- **Zero Monitoring** – there aren't services that monitor Wishbone, nor are there any parental controls in the app to filter inappropriate surveys.
  - **Inappropriate Content.** Sexualized content, inappropriate language and alcohol/drug references are very easy to find.
  - **Easy Access.** A user does not have to make an account to use the Wishbone app.
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**TikTok** is an app that allows users to create and share 15 second videos, which then replay in a continuous loop

### Why it's popular:

TikTok has the ability to showcase incredible talents, and can also be a fun, entertaining experience.

### What parents should be aware of:

- **Mature Content.** The app is open to the world, so mature content can (and does) appear in the stream.
  - **Age Verification.** TikTok is rated 12+ on the Apple app store. There is no system in place to verify a user's age, so anyone can download it. Because of the access to inappropriate content, and the use of popular music that may contain explicit language, this is not an app for young kids.
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**Fake Calculator** is a disguised photo vault where children or teens can keep photos in a more personal, safe place.

### Why it's popular:

Fake Calculator is posing as something it isn't. The app looks like a normal calculator, making it easy for children and teens to hide their inappropriate photos.

### What parents should be aware of:

- **Secretive Pictures.** If your child has the Fake Calculator app, chances are, they have pictures on their phone that they do not want you to see. Typically, these would include inappropriate photos of themselves or others, or photos depicting illegal activity.
- **Countless Photo Vault Apps.** There are numerous calculator apps with the same goal of hiding content; however this app closely resembles the Calculator on an iPhone, making it harder to detect.



**Snapchat** is a messaging app that lets users share photos, videos, texts, and drawings.

Why it's popular:

When sending a photo, video, or message, Snapchat lets a user set an amount of time the receiver can view the message, until it "disappears." Messaging tends to load much faster than traditional text messaging on a cell phone.

What parents should be aware of:

- **SnapMap.** This is Snapchat's location sharing feature. This feature updates the user's location on a map in real-time, each time the Snapchat app is opened. In other words, a user does not have to be actively posting on the app for their location to be updated.
  - **Disappearing Messages.** Although youth today are under the impression that content on Snapchat "disappears", media that is sent is still able to be retrieved.
  - **Deceptive Practices.** Snapchat was fined by the Federal Trade Commission for deceptive practices regarding the "disappearing messages" feature.
  - **Sexting.** The Snapchat app is often used by teens to send inappropriate photos of themselves.
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**Twitter** is an app where users post and interact with messages known as "tweets." Users can follow high profile celebrities, News sites, industry professionals, comedians, friends, etc.

Why it's popular:

Twitter is free and easy to use, and spreads information fast. It also allows children and teens to keep tabs on their favorite celebrities.

What parents should be aware of:

- **Tweets appear immediately.** Although you can delete them -- it's possible that other users could repost or take a screenshot in the span of time it takes to hit delete.
  - **Beware of "sub-tweeting."** Sub-tweeting is when teens use Twitter to gossip about others. Sub-tweets don't specifically say the name of their target, but everyone knows who's being discussed. It is a form of cyberbullying.
  - **Location Services.** Twitter's location-sharing feature makes it too easy for children and teens to post their whereabouts.
  - **Mature Content.** There are loads of mature content, mature language, and drug-and-alcohol-related content on Twitter, and it's up to users to avoid seeking it out.
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**Hot or Not** encourages users to rate the attractiveness of other users based on their photos, on a 1-10 scale.

Why it's popular:

The app is free and teens are drawn to the satisfaction of judging other people based on their photos.



### What parents should be aware of:

- **Cyberbullying.** Children using the app can be subjected to cyberbullying based on appearance.
  - **Sexually Explicit Content.** Users may find themselves being sent sexually explicit images, or being pressured to send nude or revealing images of themselves.
  - **Low Self-Esteem.** The app focuses on objectifying or rejecting others, and it's therefore no surprise that teenagers who use the Hot or Not app can end up with low self-esteem.
    - Per its own website, "Hot or Not is the original game that lets you check people out, be checked out, and see the Hottest people around. Hot or Not will show you how popular you and your friends are, as well as a list of the hottest people nearby..."
  - **Age Verification.** Despite being strictly for people aged 13 and over, the Hot or Not app does not verify a user's age. This means that there is no way of guaranteeing that a child or teen won't be targeted by someone older than them.
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**Burnbook** allows its users to post anonymous rumors through audio messages, texts, and photos.

### Why it's popular:

Burnbook is anonymous. A user does not have to sign in or create a username, allowing children and teens to post everything and anything that is on their mind. A user would search for "communities" — schools — near your location, and then join a community where they are free to post anything on any topic.

### What parents should be aware of:

- **Cyberbullying.** The app is notorious for targeting individuals and groups of people, causing issues within schools. This anonymous platform is essentially perfect for posting rude or mean comments online about others.
  - **Sexually Explicit Content.** There have been many instances of sexual references through anonymous posting on the app.
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**Ask.FM** is an app that lets users ask questions and answer those posted by other users – with the option to do so anonymously.

### Why it's popular:

Although there are some friendly interactions on the app, there are still a lot of mean comments and creepy sexual posts. This iffy content is part of the site's appeal for teens.

### What parents should be aware of:

- **Cyberbullying.** The site has been linked to the suicides of several teens, with the ease of posting rude or threatening comments.
- **Anonymity.** Users can decide whether to allow anonymous posts. If allowed, the opportunity for cyberbullying widens.



**Instagram** is a platform that lets users take photos, edit and share those photos as well as videos- either publically (where all users are able to view them), or with a network of approved followers. Users can 'like' and comment on posts.

#### Why it's popular:

Instagram unites the most popular features of social media sites: sharing, seeing, and commenting on photos. Instagram also lets you apply fun filters and effects to photos.

#### What parents should be aware of:

- **Public Profiles.** By default, Instagram sets a user's profile to 'public,' meaning anyone on Instagram is able to view their photos.
- **Teens are on the Lookout for "Likes."** Teens use the amount of 'likes' and comments on their photos to validate their popularity and determine how they feel about themselves.
- **Finsta.** Short for "Fake Instagram", this is a second Instagram account that teens make for only their closest friends to follow. These accounts have been used to bully others online, with posts directed toward, or about other people.