



How to Talk with Your Child about Apps

Often, children just want to keep up with the apps that their peers are using. They may not realize how dangerous usage of some apps can be. We recommend sitting down with your child and talking through any new apps they'd like to download.

Discuss the pros and cons of each, keeping in mind that "because everyone else has it" does not mean an app is safe. Be sure to listen to what they have to say. Their research and passion may surprise you!

Sometimes, talking about an app can turn into a very important conversation about safety, sex or mental health. No matter what you decide when it comes to allowing your child to use an app, conversation is the key.

Some parents are making a tech contract. The document, which is created collaboratively with your child, can help set expectations around and provide guidance for your child's online activity. Visit pwcva.gov/cac for contract examples.

It's important for parents to monitor their child's social media usage from an abuse prevention perspective to protect them from potential harm, such as online predators or harmful interactions. Social media platforms can expose children to inappropriate content, cyberbullying, and even grooming behaviors by adults with malicious intent. By staying involved, parents can ensure their children are engaging in safe, positive online experiences, recognize warning signs of abuse, and provide guidance on how to respond to uncomfortable situations. Open communication and monitoring help create a protective environment for children in the digital world.



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Please be sure to do your own research and
formulate decisions you deem appropriate for your
family.

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**APP
ALERT!**



Keeping up with the latest applications your children want to download and use can be a struggle. Trends change, social media platforms evolve and new apps can explode onto the scene in a matter of days. It can be difficult to tell which apps are a threat to your child's wellbeing. To assist, we've compiled a list of popular social media apps trending today. Some you will probably recognize, but a few may be new to and/or surprise you.

SNAPCHAT



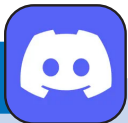
is a photo & video sharing app that promises users their photo or video will disappear even though that is not entirely true. Snapchat stores and allows users to view content for up to 24 hours. The GPS-powered Snap Map enables friends (and potentially even strangers) to know your child's location. There has also been a recent uptick in drug dealers using Snapchat to connect with young people, as they think it's "safer" than texting or emailing. According to Snapchat, they are expanding efforts to root out the sale of illegal substances.

YOUTUBE KIDS



While generally safer than YouTube, YouTube Kids is not entirely safe. It is still community-created content and anyone with an account can upload to the platform. YouTube utilizes algorithms and content reviews to make sure content meets their standards. The content is not approved prior to upload. In the time it takes for the content to be seen, reported, reviewed and removed, your children may have seen it. It is not 100% risk-free, but it is safer option.

DISCORD



is a messaging platform for teens to hang out and talk. Discord "servers" operate like a chat room and use a voice and text chat tool. While Discord was originally used as a gaming chat, it has evolved. Adult content can be discussed in the chat, but the platform allows users as young as 13 to establish accounts. Discord may expose children to inappropriate content, such as hate speech, pornography, bullying, online predators, negative body image and conversations about suicide. Even though it is popular among teens, Discord is also widely used by adults, which means that adult content on the app is common.

TIKTOK



is more than just silly dances and lip-syncing — it can also present tons of inappropriate content like sexual discussion, profanity, violence and viral trends that could put children in physical danger. It also presents the opportunity for strangers to interact with children via comments and DMs. Be sure to keep up with TikTok slang and the latest updates to their parental controls since it has limited privacy settings.

CALCULATOR



looks like a harmless app but it's a fake calculator or a "vault app" which hides content on phones and tablets. It can be used to hide photos, files and other apps that children don't want their parents to know about. This app requires a passcode to gain entry. Whether they're hiding off-limit apps, inappropriate photos or adult themed memes, vault apps can be dangerous. There are many developers making vault apps available for download. The best option is to remain vigilant and aware.

AUDIO MANAGER



While parents may see this app and think it holds their teen's music files or controls the volume on their smartphone, this is another vault app. When you press and hold the Audio Manager app, a lock screen is revealed behind it and users can hide messages, photos, videos and other apps.

INSTAGRAM



(IG) is a popular photo and video - sharing platform owned by Facebook. Like Snapchat, Instagram has disappearing messages and photos. They have also developed their own version of TikTok called Reels — short videos set to music or viral audio clips. Children can access inappropriate content in a matter of seconds, including pornography. Remember a private account does not prevent explicit searches — it only prevents unauthorized users from viewing your child's posts.