

A Parent's Guide to Social Media

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Site	Why it's popular	What parents need to know
TEXTING APPS		
<p>1. GroupMe GroupMe is an app that doesn't charge fees or have limits for direct and group messages. Users can also send photos, videos, and calendar links.</p>	<p>Teens use the app as a one-stop shop for interacting with their friends, from scheduling events to sending each other money. Its main claim to fame may be its emojis and open search for GIFs: there are tons, including lots that are available for in-app purchase.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is for older teens. The embedded GIFs and emojis have a lot of adult themes, such as drinking and sex. • Control over content. Since there is no way to delete past posts, if a kid says something he or she regrets, there is no way to take the post down. • Stealth potential. Some users like GroupMe for its stealth potential, since on-screen notifications pop up without content, which is appealing to some kids.
<p>2. Kik Messenger Kik is an app-based alternative to standard texting that kids use for social networking. It's free to use but has lots of ads.</p>	<p>It's fast and has no message limits, character limits, or fees if you just use the basic features. Kids can quickly and efficiently add cool Web content -- memes, viral videos, images, and more -- to their texts without any message or character limits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's loaded with ads and in-app purchases. Kik's ability to link to other Kik-enabled apps within itself is a way to drive "app adoption" (purchases) from its users for developers. The app also encourages new registrants to invite everyone in their phone's address book to join Kik, since users can only message those who also have the app. • Stranger Danger is an issue. Kik allows communication with strangers who share their Kik usernames to find people to chat with. There's also a Kik community blog where users can submit photos of themselves and screenshots of messages (sometimes displaying users' full names) to contests. A recent report names Kik the "de facto app for child predators." • It uses real names. Teens' usernames identify them on Kik, so they shouldn't use their full real name as their username.
<p>3. WhatsApp Let's users send text messages, audio messages, videos and photos to one or many people with no message limits or fees.</p>	<p>The price is right; for teens who have a hard time keeping within the limits of a standard texting plan, the ability to send unlimited messages for free is a bonus.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's for users 16 and over. Lots of younger teens seem to be using the app, but this age minimum has been set by WhatsApp. • It can be pushy. After you sign up, it automatically connects you to all the people in your address book who are also using WhatsApp and encourages you to recruit. • Kids may need some limits. While unlimited texting may save you cash, capping kid's communication can help them stay focused on more important transmissions.

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PHOTO, VIDEO, AND MUSIC SHARING APPS AND SITES		
<p>1. Instagram A platform that lets users snap, edit, and share photos and 15-second videos – either publicly or with a private network of followers.</p>	<p>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 your photos, making them look high-quality and artistic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teens are on the lookout for “Likes.” Similar to Facebook, teens measure the “success” of their photos – even their self-worth – by the number of likes or comments they receive. Collecting a large number of followers -- and flattering comments -- is a badge of honor for most kids. • Public photos are the default. Photos and videos shared on Instagram are public by default and can contain location data. So it's important for kids to use privacy settings to limit their audience. Hashtags and location info can make photos even more visible to communities beyond a teen's followers if his or her account is public. • Private messaging is an option. Instagram Direct allows users to send “private messages” to up to 15 mutual friends. These pics don't show up on their public feeds. Although there's nothing wrong with group chat, kids may be more likely to share inappropriate stuff with their inner circles. Also, strangers can send private messages to users; kids then choose to open the message and view or discard the attached picture. • Mature content can slip in. The terms of service specify that users should be at least 13 years old and shouldn't post partially nude or sexually suggestive photos – but they don't address violence, swear words, or drugs. • Real vs. Ideal selves. Most kids feel pressured to curate their lives to project an idealized image on Instagram. Sometimes teens create alternate accounts that they call "Finstagrams" (fake + Instagram) where they share more authentic versions of themselves (in an unattractive outfit or with a silly expression) intended for a close, small circle of trusted friends. Maintaining these separate identities indicates kids feel a need to convey their true selves but don't want to ruin their perfect image on their "real" (or, "Rinstagram") feeds.
<p>2. Musical.ly Musical.ly is a performance- and video-sharing social network that mostly features teens lip-synching to famous songs but also includes some original songwriting and singing. Think video karaoke.</p>	<p>Musers, as devoted users are called, can build up a following among friends, or share posts publicly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Songs and videos can contain lots of iffy content. Because the platform features popular music and a mix of teen and adult users, swearing and sexual content are commonplace. • Gaining followers and fans is important. Teens want a public profile to get exposure and approval, and many are highly motivated to get more followers and likes for their videos. • Kids can compete in different challenges. A la the show “Lip Sync Battle,” hashtags allow users to compete against each other in challenges.
<p>3. Sound Cloud Sound Cloud is an audio platform where kids can upload, record, and share their own audio files, as well as peruse endless playlists and follow labels, musicians, curators, and fellow fans.</p>	<p>It has so much member-generated content, its claim to be the "world's largest music and audio streaming catalog" may just be true.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no ability to filter explicit lyrics. However, if you hear something that's offensive or not kid-appropriate, you can block the user who uploaded it. • Kids can create “diss tracks” about other kids. Because you can create your own music, kids can create what is called a “diss track” about another person, saying whatever they want in their song. It's published to the entire Sound Cloud community, and word can spread very quickly when one is posted, so the potential audience is very large.
<p>4. YouTube YouTube is a video sharing service where users can create their own</p>	<p>YouTube is a free to use service and a can be a great space for teens to discover</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate Content. YouTube has over a billion users and with an estimated 300 hours of footage uploaded per minute, not all of it is appropriate for children. But

<p>account, watch videos, share videos, like videos, comment on other videos and even upload their own videos.</p>	<p>things they like. For many young YouTube is used to watch music videos, comedy shows, how to guides, recipes, hacks and more. Teens also use the video sharing service to follow their favorite vloggers, subscribe to other YouTubers and celebrities they are interested in.</p>	<p>you can help minimize the risk of your child encountering content that may not be for them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyber Bullying. Unfortunately, people can experience negative comments and bullying on the service particularly through the comments function. • YouTube is a time drain. Ask any parent of a child who has access to YouTube, and you will discover that kids spend an inordinate amount of time on it. Because the type of content is so vast, it can literally take hours for a kid to view all the new content from all the people they follow.
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SELF-DESTRUCTING / SECRET APPS		
<p>1. Snapchat A messaging app that lets users put a time limit on the pictures and videos they send before they disappear.</p>	<p>Snapchat's creators intended the app's fleeting images to be a way for teens to share fun, light moments without the risk of having them go public.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's a myth that the Snapchats go away forever. Data is data. Whenever an image is sent, it never truly goes away. For example, the person on the receiving end can take a screenshot of the image before it disappears. Snapchats can be recovered, both by individuals from their own phones, as well as from the servers at Snapchat. • It can make sexting seem OK. The seemingly risk-free messaging might encourage users to share pictures containing inappropriate content. • It allows for communicating too. Snapchat allows for on-screen communication you can send with your picture, providing a more personal way of communicating than simple texts. • Provides a false sense of intimacy. Because you can text with pictures you send real-time, it can give kids a sense that they are "talking" to a person rather than simple texting. But the dangers in reading between the lines still exists.
<p>2. Whisper Whisper is a social "confessional" app that allows users to post whatever's on their minds, paired with an image.</p>	<p>With all the emotions running through teens, anonymous outlets give them the freedom to share their feelings without fear of judgment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content is often sexual in nature. Some users use the app to try to hook up with people nearby. Lot's of eye-catching, nearly nude pics accompany these posts. • Content can be dark. People normally don't confess sunshine and rainbows; common Whisper topics include insecurity, depression, substance abuse, and other dark content. • Although it's anonymous to start, it may not stay that way. The app encourages users to exchange personal information in the "Meet Up" section.

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MICROBLOGGING APPS AND SITES		
<p>1. Tumblr Tumblr is like a cross between a blog and Twitter: it's a streaming scrapbook of text, photos, and/or videos and audio clips. Users create and follow short blogs, or "tumblelogs," that can be seen by anyone online (if made public).</p>	<p>Many teens have tumblrs for personal use – sharing photos, videos, musings, and things they find funny with their friends. Tumblelogs with funny memes and gifs often go viral online. Tumblr can be used as a search engine for teens to easily find artistic media based on their interests (and the latest in memes and pop culture) Teens like to share their views online and Tumblr gives them a creative outlet to do so</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Porn is easy to find. This online hangout is hip and creative but sometimes raunchy. Pornographic images and videos, depictions of violence, self-harm, drug use, and offensive language are easily searchable. • Privacy can be guarded, but only through an awkward workaround. The first profile a member creates is public and viewable by anyone on the internet. Members who desire full privacy have to create a <i>second</i> profile, which they're able to password protect. • Posts are often copied and shared. Reblogging on Tumblr is similar to re-tweeting: a post that's reblogged from one tumblelog then appears on another. Many teens like – and in fact want – their posts reblogged. But do you really want your kids' words and photos on someone else's page? • If everyone else is doing it. Since negative content is so prevalent on Tumblr, teens can start to feel like posting inappropriate content might not have any negative consequences
<p>2. Twitter A microblogging site that allows users to post 140-280 character messages called "tweets," and follow other users' activities.</p>	<p>Teens like to use it to share quick tidbits about their lives with friends. It's also great for keeping up with what's going on in the world, both a teen's immediate world and the world at large (breaking news, celebrity gossip).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public tweets are the norm for teens. Though you can choose to keep your tweets private, most teens report having public accounts. Talk to your kids about what they post and how a post can spread far and fast. • Updates appear immediately. Even though you can remove tweets, your followers can still read what you wrote until it's gone. This can get kids in trouble if they say something in the heat of the moment. • It's a promotional tool for celebrities. Twitter reels teens in with behind-the-scenes access to celebrities' lives, adding a whole new dimension to celebrity worship and providing a not always appropriate example of the type of information you want shared with the entire world. Talk to your kids about how much marketing strategy goes into the tweets of celebrities, and explain why not all publicity is good publicity. • Don't use location services. Twitter's location-sharing features also make it too easy for kids to post their whereabouts, which has been tied to public-party notices that get out of hand and face-to-face meet-ups with strangers. • Beware of "sub-tweeting." Sub-tweeting is when people -- typically a group of popular kids at a high school -- 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 can rise to the level of cyberbullying. Make sure your kids understand why it's hurtful, and teach them to stand up for others.

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LIVE STREAMING VIDEO APPS		
<p>1. Houseparty – Group Video Chat Houseparty is a way for groups of teens to connect via live video. Think Facetime for 2-8 people.</p>	<p>Its appeal lies in its causal connectivity - it creates the feeling of a much wider world than the average video chat service by letting users join any ongoing group chat that contains at least one of their contacts. This trick lets it mimic the real-world dynamics of a party by putting you in touch with not just friends, but friends of friends—like waving to a friend in a bar and joining the group for a beer and introductions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users can take screenshots during a chat. Teens like to think that what happens in a chat stays in a chat, but that's not necessarily the case. It's easy for someone to take a screenshot and share it with whomever they want. • There is not moderator. Part of the fun of live video is that anything can happen, but that can also be a problem. It's impossible for predict what kids will see, especially if they're in chats with people they don't know well. • Excessive notifications. One of the biggest complaints teens have about Houseparty is that every time someone joins or leaves a chat, they get notified. That can be a lot of notifications as the app makes it possible to flit between "conversations" very easily.
<p>2. Oovoo Oovoo is a free video, voice, and messaging app. Users can have group chats with up to 12 people for free. The premium version removes ads from the service.</p>	<p>Teens mostly use Oovoo to hang out with friends. Many log on after school and keep it up while doing homework. Oovoo can be great for group studying and it makes it easy for kids to receive "face to face" homework help from classmates.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can only chat with approved friends. Users can only communicate with those on their approved "contact list," which can help ease parents' safety concerns. • It can be distracting. Because the service makes video chatting so affordable and accessible, it can also be addictive. A conversation with your kids about multi-tasking may be in order. • Kids still prefer in-person communication. Though apps like Oovoo make it easier than ever to video chat with friends, research shows that kids still value face-to-face conversations over online ones, especially when it comes to sensitive topics. Still, they sometimes find it hard to log off when all of their friends are on.
<p>3. Live.ly Live.ly is live video-streaming in a social-networking app that allows users to broadcast live video to online friends.</p>	<p>Live.ly is associated with Musical.ly, so because of the parent app's popularity, this app is popular too.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live-streaming poses risks. Poor choices, oversharing, and chatting with strangers can be a problem. • Privacy, safety, and creepiness are concerns. Because teens are often stream from their bedrooms to people they don't know, and they are performing for approval, there is potential for trouble. • The feedback loop can be a problem. Viewers can comment on what kids are streaming, which opens up many potential areas of trouble.