



APPS TO WATCH

Two types of apps deserve special attention from parents: ones that offer places to hide inappropriate material and ones that help strangers connect directly to your teens and tweens.



DAVE YOST
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Calculator#

This app offers secure storage for passwords, documents, photos, videos and notes. A private code is needed to access anything stored on the app.

Things to know about this app (and similar ones):

- » It has been used for sexting and pornography.



Photo Vault

This app lets users secure photos and videos, both that they have created and downloaded from the internet. It includes a private web browser and passcode access. Similar apps often show a lock on the icon.

Things to know about this app (and similar ones):

- » It has been used for hiding illicit material.



Whisper

This social media app encourages users to “confess” what’s on their mind without fearing judgment. Users can anonymously post their thoughts, join groups, make videos and chat.

Things to know:

- » The app is targeted toward teens, but many adults use it as well.
- » It accesses the user’s location information so that it can connect people within the same area. Some ask for pictures.
- » The anonymity has allowed the app to be used as a cyberbully platform.
- » All content produced on the app becomes property of Whisper.



ASKfm

This social media platform lets users create any questions they like (text only or with photos or videos) or answer other people’s questions. Users can post their questions for people nearby or send them directly to app friends, either anonymously or with their user name attached. People can chat, follow others, earn coins by posting secret content and use coins to “buy” others’ secrets.

Things to know:

- » The anonymity has allowed the app to be used as a cyberbully platform.
- » Users can connect their other social media platforms.
- » The app has no privacy restraints and allows everyone to see the user’s content.
- » It accesses the user’s location information so that it can connect people within the same area.



Tellonym

This question-and-answer app works similarly to ASKfm but relies more heavily on direct, anonymous messaging.

Things to know:

- » The anonymity has allowed the app to be used as a cyberbully platform, with many reviewers complaining of being swamped by toxic messages. App creators do not enforce policies about content.
- » There is free access to all public content and very little privacy.
- » Users are able to search for others by their location, age or gender.



Showme

Using video chat, the app lets users talk to people nearby or anywhere else in the world. It includes an option to blur yourself so that “the inner world is more important than appearance.” Users can decide whether to move to higher levels of chatting.

Things to know:

- » The app lets users talk with strangers in a 15-second intro video using their Snapchat usernames.
- » Users can see others’ age and gender before connecting, but the app doesn’t verify those details.
- » Followers can see anything users post outside of direct messages.
- » The direct messaging allows users to communicate privately, which allows for little regulation.
- » Many underage users report seeing unsolicited nudity and inappropriate behavior.



MeetMe

This social networking app aims to connect nearby people, for dating purposes or to make friends, through chat and encouragement to meet in person. The app supplies a variety of personal information on users, including full name, age, ZIP code and Facebook username.

Things to know:

- » The app accesses the user’s location information.
- » There is no information verification, which allows users to fake their identity.
- » Bots and scammers have been frequently reported by users.



Yubo

This app uses live video and text chats to help users “build a community based on personal interests.” It was created after the dating app Tinder instituted an age restriction.

Things to know:

- » The profiles are all image-based, which allows users to post false images of themselves.
- » The app accesses the user’s location information to find other users in the same area.
- » The app makes an attempt to run separate communities for 13- to 17-year-olds and those 18-25, but reviewers note many problems, such as profiles with fake ages.



LiveMe

On this app, users broadcast video live to an audience that can include anyone who has the app. Users, who can remain anonymous, can chat with the video makers in real time.

Things to know:

- » It is supposed to be restricted to those 18 or older but many younger people use the service, and reports have criticized the fact that the app lets users find pretty exact locations of potentially young users.
- » Unlike Facebook or Instagram, live broadcasting can’t be limited to friends only.
- » Moderators do not ensure all users follow the rules on sexually explicit content, hate speech and bullying.



TikTok

This social media app has gone viral among users of all ages. It's used to create video content and share with anyone on the platform. Users can post their own videos, comment on others' videos and like them. The app started with an emphasis on music – and another name: musical.ly.

Things to know:

- » Accounts automatically default to public, meaning any TikTok user can watch posted videos. However, accounts can be made private.
- » The main app is intended for users 13 or older, but in reality, younger users join. A special section of the app is meant for younger users but is rarely used.
- » The app allows for access to explicit songs and videos.



Snapchat

This top-ranking social media app allows users to send photos and videos to one another and play games. The content automatically deletes after a short time, but new features such as “stories” allow for users to see the content for up to 24 hours.

Things to know:

- » The minimum age for an account is supposed to be 13, but the birthdate that users enter is not verified.
- » The app may be used for sending explicit content. Because user content disappears, both sexting and bullying are harder to regulate.
- » Users can save chats and screenshot photos before the content disappears, so users should be aware that what they post may never actually go away.
- » The app has geolocation capabilities allowing users to see others' exact location.
- » The app does contain privacy settings to ensure not everyone can see your profile.



Holla

This app, for Android phones only, promises live, random video chat that allows users to connect with strangers from around the globe. Users can swipe to choose which people to talk with.

Things to know:

- » Reviewers have flagged the app for bullying and explicit material.
- » Paying a monthly fee gives users extra information about the people they can chat with, including their full user profiles, and lets those users search by gender.
- » The “Nearby” feature taps the user's phone location to share with others nearby.



Kik

A direct messaging app, Kik allows anyone to contact or directly message other users with pictures, videos, games and more. It is most notable for its chat feature.

Things to know:

- » There are no parental control settings, so there's no way to prevent a stranger from directly messaging your child.
- » Kik includes an in-app browser.
- » Because Kik does not require a phone number to sign up, it can be used on non-phone devices with an internet connection.



Omegle

This website uses an algorithm to connect strangers through live video and direct messaging.

Things to know:

- » Requests from strangers for personal information and sexual come-ons are commonplace. Graphic nudity is accessible.
- » Because this is a website, users don't have to download a separate app.
- » The site lets those age 13-17 join “with a guardian's permission.”
- » There are limited privacy settings and the site tracks users' IP address and times that they use the service. Chats are archived by the developer for four months.
- » Users are able to save the chat log and can share it with others.