

Internet Safety: Protecting Your Family

PARENT RESOURCES

WEBSITES

[Qustodio](#)

[Bark](#)

[Focus on the Family – Family Safety](#)

[Consumers Advocate – Review of Parental Control Apps](#)

[Crosswalk.com – Parenting in the Age of Technology](#)

[Safe Search Kids – 1st-8th Grade](#)

<http://www.commonensemedia.org>

www.bewebsmart.com

www.saferkid.com

TECH DRIVEN PARENTAL ADVICE

1. **Don't assume they know.** Children may have tech skills, but lack the wisdom needed to navigate digital potholes. Eventually, they will find themselves in the middle of a sensitive situation. Help them develop discernment, responsibility, and the tools they need to handle any situation online.
2. **Monitor devices.** Random spot checks of Instant Messaging services or the family PC, monitoring of social networks, and spot checks of mobile devices is important for young children and teens. Even the most honest teens will push their limits and take risks as a natural part of growing up and seeking to be independent.
3. **Repeat the obvious.** Despite the misguided adage, “sticks and stones,” remind your kids that words actually do hurt — a lot in fact. The hurt is multiplied when others join in a “group” slam online and cause sometimes irreparable damage to a person’s self-esteem and outlook on life.
4. **Teach conflict management.** If you find suggestive texts or inciting texts being sent to your child, talk openly and honestly about the situation around the text. Discuss ways to respond to minimize the conflict.
5. **Teach them to be proactive.** If their friends routinely text inappropriate content to your child or use offensive language, teach your child to be proactive in letting friends know not to send offensive content.
6. **Enforce consequences.** If your child is the one sending the suggestive or inciting texts, enforce consequences you’ve set in place and ban your child from mobile devices until you are convinced he/she understands the concept of responsible texting. Also, help him/her make amends. You can also set a parental control on the feature they were inappropriate on – e.g., turn off texting or the camera, or an app, etc. so they have use of their phone, but can only use it based on your parental controls.
7. **Discuss sexting.** Talk openly with your child about the dangers of sexting. Discuss the legal ramifications of sexting as well as the emotional and physical fallout of sexting.



8. **Talk about cyber bullying.** Talk openly with your child about the emotional damage caused by cyber bullying. Help them deal with online bullies, block, and report them.
9. **Warn them about strangers.** Talk seriously with your child about the physical (and emotional) danger of communicating with a stranger online.
10. **Get serious about texting.** Parental controls to monitor texting (and any online communication) is critical as young children learn the ropes of communicating with peers online.
11. **Depending on the age of your child (and their maturity level) - Involve your child.** Instead of an “us” and “them” discussion regarding responsible texting, ask your child to give input on the family ground rules for texting and even the consequences for irresponsible texting. The more you can make Internet Safety a family conversation rather than a set of rules to follow, the more logical and practical online safety will become for your child.

SOME APPS KIDS MIGHT BE USING

1. **Tinder:** An app that is used for hooking-up and dating. Users can rate profiles and find potential hook-ups via GPS location tracking. 450 million profiles are rated every day! The good news is, this app pulls information from user’s Facebook profiles, so it is more authenticated than other apps.

Problem: It is easy for adults and minors to find one another. Also, due to the rating system, it is often used for cyber-bullying, because a group of kids can target another kid and purposefully make his/her rating go down.

2. **Snapchat:** This app allows a user to send photos and videos to anyone on his/her friend list. The sender can determine how long the receiver can view the image and then the image “deconstructs” after the allotted time.

Problem: It is the #1 app used for sexting, mostly because people think it is the safer way to sext. However, the “snaps” can easily be recovered, and the receiver can take a screen shot and share it with others. Also, a lot of images from Snapchat get posted to revenge porn sites, called “snap porn.”

3. **Blindr:** A flirting app used to meet new people through GPS location services. You can send messages, photos, videos, rate the hotness of other users, etc.

Problem: There are no authentication requirements, so sexual predators can contact minors and minors can meet up with adults. And again – the sexting.

4. **Kik Messenger:** An instant messaging app with over 100 million users that allows users to exchange videos, pics and sketches. Users can also send YouTube videos and create memes and digital gifs.

Problem: Kids using the app for sexting and sending nude selfies through the app is common. The term “sext buddy” is being replaced with “Kik buddy.” Kids use Reddit and other forum sites to place classified ads for sex by giving out their Kik usernames. Also, Kik does not offer any parental controls and there is no way of authenticating users, thus making it easy for sexual predators to use the app to interact with minors.

5. **Whisper:** Whisper is an anonymous confession app. It allows users to superimpose text over a picture in order to share their thoughts and feelings anonymously. However, you post anonymously, but it displays the area you are posting from, and you can also search for users posting within a mile from you.



Problem: Due to the anonymity, kids are posting pics of other kids with derogatory text superimposed on the image. Also, users do not have to register to use Whisper and can use the app to communicate with other users nearby through GPS. A quick look at the app and you can see that online relationships are forming through the use of this app, but you never know the person behind the computer or phone. Sexual predators also use the app to locate kids and establish a relationship.

6. **Ask.fm:** Ask.fm is one of the most popular social networking sites that is almost exclusively used by kids. It is a Q&A site that allows users to ask other users questions while remaining anonymous.

Problem: Kids will often ask repeated derogatory questions that target one person. Due to the anonymity of the badgering, it creates a virtually consequence-free form of cyber-bullying.

7. **Yik Yak:** An app that allows users to post text-only “Yaks” of up to 200 characters. The messages can be viewed by the 500 Yackers who are closest to the person who wrote the Yak, as determined by GPS tracking.

Problem: Users are exposed to and are contributing sexually explicit content, derogatory language and personal attacks. Although the posts are anonymous, kids start revealing personal information as they get more comfortable with other users.

8. **Poof:** This app allows users to make other apps “disappear” on their phone. Kids can hide any app they don’t want you to see by opening the app and selecting other apps.

Problem It’s obvious, right? Luckily, you can no longer purchase this app. But, if it was downloaded before it became unavailable, your child may still have it. Keep in mind that these types of apps are created and then terminated quickly, but similar ones are continuously being created. Others to look for: Hidden Apps, App Lock and Hide It Pro.

9. **Omegle:** This app is primarily used for video chatting. When you use Omegle, you do not identify yourself through the service. Instead, chat participants are only identified as “You” and “Stranger.” However, you can connect Omegle to your Facebook account to find chat partners with similar interests. When choosing this feature, an Omegle Facebook App will receive your Facebook “likes” and try to match you with a stranger with similar likes.

Problem: Sexual predators use this app to find kids to collect personal information from in order to track them down more easily in person.

10. **Down:** This app, which used to be called *Bang With Friends*, is connected to Facebook. Users can categorize their Facebook friends in one of two ways: They can indicate whether or not a friend is someone they’d like to hang with or someone they are “down” to hook-up with.

Problem Although identifying someone you are willing to hook-up with doesn’t mean you will actually hook-up with them, it creates a hook-up norm within a peer group. Also, because of the classification system, a lot of kids will feel left out or unwanted, which can lead to anxiety, etc.

