

Kids face real dangers to their privacy online, so guardians have a reason for concern. Stranger danger isn't something kids face only when they go outside today. It's something every child with a smartphone holds in the palm of their hand, 24/7. It's important to know what your kids are doing online. We have put together a list of apps parents should know. We encourage parents and guardians to stay up to date on the different social media apps or games their kids are using and discuss online safety.

Note: This list is not indicative of all apps that pose a risk to your child nor are these arranged in order of most dangerous to least dangerous. They all have different features with varying levels of inappropriateness.

## Zoomerang



*Purpose:* Zoomerang is one of the most popular apps right now. It is a simple video creator that allows you to capture short videos, apply filters, and add special effects and

background music. You can then share these videos on social media. It is most popular for helping people create videos for Instagram and Tik Tok. Zoomerang is known for its simplified tutorials which make video creation and editing accessible to almost everyone, including younger kids with access to a child's iPhone or any mobile device.

*Why Parents Should Be Worried:* Zoomerang has location tracking. This can allow online predators to see where your child is located when using the app. The Zoomerang app is rated E for Everyone, but as is the case anywhere where your child can share videos of themselves, there is risk involved. It is easy to screenshot portions of a video to manipulate them and to take brief moments out of context. Cyberbullying does occur regularly utilizing this tactic.

## Parlor



*Purpose:* Parlor shares that they are a social talking app and that its purpose is for people to have amazing conversations with each other. It allows people to message each other and share photos.

*Why Parents Should Be Worried:* The Parlor app is becoming confused with Parler, an app that has recently been banned and one that has received extensive media coverage. There has been much concern as Parler was used by many for conversations about violence and guns.

## Among Us



*Purpose:* Among Us is an online multiplayer social deduction game. It takes place in a

space-themed setting and players take on one of two roles. They then try to determine who the imposters are. It requires four to ten players to start a game.

*Why Parents Should Be Worried:* In 2020, the game was hacked, and the hacker messaged players with promotions to visit his YouTube channel and server. They both contained racist language, gore, pornography, and extremist political views. The hacker also sent disturbing messages right within the game. In addition, parents might be concerned about their children playing multiplayer games with strangers as you never know who these players might be and what they may share throughout the game. The game features a text chatroom for use during emergency meetings to discuss who might be the imposter. Profanity and violent language can be common. Also, many players move to Discord or Zoom to talk while playing - opening the door to conversations with adult strangers.

## TikTok



*Purpose:* TikTok is an app for creating and sharing short videos. Users can create short music videos of 3 to 15 seconds and short looping videos of 3 to 60 seconds. It encourages users to express themselves creatively through video. Special effects can be added to the videos.

*Why Parents Should Be Worried:* Thirteen is the minimum age, but there isn't a real way to validate age so anyone can download the app. Also, parents express concern that there is a lot of inappropriate language in the videos so it's not appropriate for young children. Lastly, by default, all accounts are set to public so strangers can contact your children. For more information on Tiktok, check out our [Complete Parent's Guide to TikTok](#).

## YouTube



*Purpose:* YouTube is a place to house and share your videos. You can control privacy settings. It's also a great resource for educational videos and entertainment.

*Why Parents Should Worry:* YouTube videos aren't screened before publication, allowing kids to find plenty of inappropriate content. Also, comments on videos can be extremely inappropriate.

## Tellonym



*Purpose:* This is an anonymous messenger app. It calls itself "the most honest place on the internet." This app is extremely popular in middle schools and high

schools and it allows kids to ask and answer questions anonymously.

*Why Parents Should Worry:* It is a regular occurrence to see cyberbullying, violent threats, and sexual content. It also offers unmonitored access to the internet. The age restrictions are inconsistent ranging from 12 to 16.

### **Bigo Live**



*Purpose:* Bigo is a live-streaming app. It is rated for teens 17 and up. Users can vlog about their lives, live stream video gameplay, and host their own shows.

*Why Parents Should Worry:* There is no age verification and users have to provide personal info like their age and location. This is a place where bullying, nudity, violence, and profanity are common.

### **IMVU**



*Purpose:* This is a virtual world game like SIMS. Users interact with each other as avatars. IMVU stands for Instant Messaging Virtual Universe.

*What Parents Should Worry:* There is nudity and sexual encounters in areas that are for 18+, but there is sexual talk and behaviors in the regular area of IMVU as well. There is a Chat Now feature that randomly pairs users with other users which can lead to inappropriate pairings and interactions. All profiles are public, and there can be bullying and predators trying to get other users to share their phone numbers and send pictures.

## Houseparty



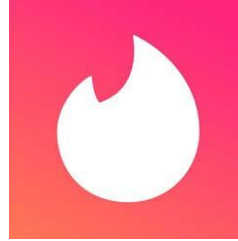
*Purpose:*

Houseparty is a video chatting app that's pretty open. Friends can communicate with each other through live video and texts in chat groups.

*Why Parents Should Be Worried:*

There's no screening and the video is live, so there's nothing to keep kids from inappropriate content. Users can send links via chat and even take screenshots. There's also nothing keeping friends of friends from joining groups where they may only know one person.

## Tinder



*Purpose:* Tinder's

developers describe the app as "the fun way to connect with new and interesting people around you." But it's mainly used as a dating app or an anonymous hook-up locator by 20-somethings, college students, and even younger teens and tweens.

*Why Parents Should Worry:* The app is rated for ages 17+ but Tinder's privacy policy allows teens as young as 13 to register (the app connects with Facebook — which is also technically for ages 13+ — to pull in photos for users' Tinder profiles). Tinder helps people find others in their geographic location and allows users to view each others' photos and start instant messaging once both people have "liked" one another. The geo-location features and anonymous nature of the app put kids at risk for catfishing, sexual harassment, stalking, and worse.

## Ask.fm



*Purpose:* This app allows users to interact in a question-and-answer format — with friends, peers, and anonymous users alike.

*Why Parents Should Worry:* The app is rated for ages 13+ and is most popular in Europe but is catching on in the U.S. Some kids have used the app for hurtful cyberbullying that has been linked to suicides.

## Kik Messenger



*Purpose:* Kik is a mobile app that people can use to text with friends at high speed and with more of a "face-to-face feel"

than regular texting (users' profile pictures appear in a little bubble next to their text, and they can quickly text photos, sketches, or even pre-designed greeting cards to individuals or groups).

*Why Parents Should Worry:* The app is rated for ages 17+, but there is no age verification so anyone can download it. Like some other instant messenger apps, Kik allows your teen to connect with others using just a username (rather than texting from her phone number). But it begs the question: Should teens be texting with people beyond their phone contacts? Reviews in the App Store and Google Play store reveal that many people use Kik to meet strangers for sexting. The app has also been connected with cyberbullying.

## Voxer



*Purpose:* This walkie-talkie PTT (push-to-talk) app allows users to quickly exchange

short voice messages. They can have chats going on with multiple people at a time and just have to tap the play button to hear any messages they receive. Although it largely has an adult following, including some people who use it for their job, it's becoming popular among teens who enjoy its hybrid style of texting and talking.

*Why Parents Should Worry:* Hurtful messages from cyberbullies can be even more biting when they're spoken and can be played repeatedly. Surprisingly, the app is rated for ages 4+ in the App Store.

## **Snapchat**

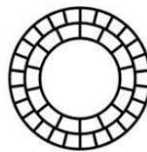


*Purpose:* Snapchat

is an app that allows users to send photos and videos that disappear after they're received. It's rated for ages 12+. The filters and special effects allow users to alter pictures.

*Why Parents Should Worry:* Snapchat has been around since 2011 and popularized the trend of "disappearing messages." However, kids may not always fully understand that nothing really disappears on the internet - especially when a screenshot is just a quick button tap away. In addition to providing a space to send nudes, Snapchat also presents other dangers for teens. The GPS-powered Snap Map enables friends (and potentially even strangers) to know your child's exact whereabouts.

## **Vsco**



*Purpose:* Vsco is a photo creation app that gives users the tools to shoot, edit and post images to a profile, kind of like *Instagram*.

*Why Parents Should Worry:* You should know that you have to manually turn on privacy settings and

limit location sharing. There are also in-app purchases for more serious photo editing tools that could cost you some serious money if your kid decides to download them.

## Whisper



*Purpose:* This 17+ app's motto is: "Share Secrets, Express Yourself, Meet New People." It has a similar feel to the now-defunct PostSecret app, which was discontinued shortly after its release because it was filled up with abusive content.

*Why Parents Should Worry:* Whisper lets users set up anonymous accounts to make their messages or confessions overlay an image or graphic (similar to e-postcards), which other users can then "like," share, or comment on. While it allows for creative expression, it can also take overly personal content viral. The app also shows a user's location. Although

the app is geared toward older teens and adults, younger children are finding their way to it.

## Tumblr



*Purpose:* Many children and young teens are also active on this 17+ photo-sharing app. It can also be used for sharing videos and chatting.

*Why Parents Should Worry:* Common Sense Media says Tumblr is "too raunchy for tykes" because users can easily access pornographic, violent, and inappropriate content. Common Sense also notes that users need to jump through hoops to set up privacy settings — and until then, all of a user's photo and content is public for all to see. Mental health experts say that Tumblr can be damaging to adolescents' mental health because it tends to glorify self-harm and eating disorders.



## Instagram



*Purpose:* This hugely popular photo-sharing site is owned by Facebook, so you may be more familiar with it than with other photo-sharing apps. Users can add cool filters or create collages of their photos and share them across Facebook and other social media platforms.

*Why Parents Should Worry:* The app is rated 13+ and may be slightly tamer than Tumblr, but users can still find mature or inappropriate content and comments throughout the app (there is a way to flag inappropriate content for review). "Trolls" — or people making vicious, usually anonymous comments — are common. A user can change the settings to block their location or certain followers, but many users are casual about their settings, connecting with people they don't know well or at all. Check out

[connectsafely.org's "A Parents' Guide to Instagram."](https://connectsafely.org/a-parents-guide-to-instagram/)

One of Instagram's primary dangers is the sheer amount of inappropriate content kids can access in just a matter of seconds, especially porn. Parents may overlook this, but remember that a private account does nothing to prevent explicit searches - it just prevents certain users from viewing your kid's posts. Instagram has also added disappearing messages and photos.

## Look



*Purpose:* Look is a free video messaging app. Users can send videos, texts, emojis, and gifs. They can also draw on and use filters on their videos.

*Why Parents Should Worry:* With Look, strangers can message kids pretty easily, and because there are no content filters, kids can come

across inappropriate content. Users have reported cyberbullying activity and have found it difficult to delete their accounts.

## DISCORD



### *Why Parents*

*Should Worry:* Discord is a huge place for teens to hang out and talk about gaming. So, why is Discord so dangerous? Because it can expose kids to all sorts of inappropriate content, from hate speech and porn to bullying and online predators. And even though it's popular among teens, Discord is used by more than just kids, which means that adult content on the app is rampant. It can be easy for kids to get involved in a Discord server and make "friends" and then be influenced by sketchy adults.

## Yik Yak



### *Why Parents Should*

*Worry:* One of the most dangerous messaging apps for kids of the past decade has recently made a resurgence. Yik Yak is an anonymous chatting app that lets users within a five-mile radius read publicly posted messages. Anonymous means no user names, no handles, no real names, and no photos - so imagine how wild things can get in an environment with no accountability. Yik Yak is also a breeding ground for bullying, especially when it becomes popular on school campuses.

## Omegle



**omegle**

### *Why Parents Should*

*Worry:* Omegle is an anonymous video chatting platform that pairs you with a complete stranger somewhere in the world. What can be found on Omegle can be extremely dangerous: kids can be exposed to nudity and even real-life sex acts on screen.

Predators can lurk on the site, grooming children and saving photos and videos from their encounters.

## **Hoop**



*Why Parents Should Worry:* Hoop allows kids as young as 12 to form connections with total strangers. By swiping through profiles - which include the person's age, gender, and photos - users can pick who they'd like to start a conversation with. They can then request that person's Snapchat username with the tap of a button to continue the conversation there. While adults are also able to use the app, Hoop claims that users over 18 won't be shown kids' profiles. Still, this seems a little too close for comfort.

### **Watch for these potentially dangerous social media apps too:**

- Reddit
- Facebook
- Twitter
- QZone

- Tout
- Spreely
- Triller
- MeWe
- Gab
- Rumble
- social
- IRL
- GETTR
- WeChat
- Wishbone
- Marco Polo

### **Watch for these live streaming apps too:**

- Houseparty
- Big Live
- Uplive
- Clover
- REALITY
- Quibi
- Twitch
- Tango
- Yubo
- Livestream
- Nonolive
- YouNow
- Spoon
- 17Live
- SuperLive
- MICO
- Imo live

- OK Live
- Hakuna
- Likee
- Coco
- ly
- Camsurf
- Omega
- Hola
- Marco Polo
- Cheers
- Squad
- Byte

**Watch for these Chat apps too:**

- Viber
- Telegram
- Caffeine
- Clubhouse
- Friends
- Fam
- Threema
- Wink
- Itsme
- BOSS Revolution
- Chatjoy
- Imo
- Nowchat
- Signal
- ICQ
- Hangouts
- Addchat
- Wizz
- BOTIM
- BiP
- Anonymous Chat Room