

Great Minds Together

# Parent's Guide To Social Media Platforms



# Introduction

Social media platforms are websites or apps that allow users to create, share, and interact with content and each other.

Popular platforms among children and teens include:

**Instagram:**

Photo/video sharing, messaging, Reels.

**TikTok:**

Short-form video creation and sharing.

**Snapchat –**

Photo/video messaging with disappearing content.

**YouTube –**

Video streaming and uploading.

**WhatsApp –**

Multimedia messaging.



# Discussing Online Risks

*Social media is a powerful tool for connection, creativity, and community—but it comes with risks. With the right balance of guidance, trust, and open communication, you can help your child build healthy online habits that last a lifetime.*

Here are some ideas of topics to discuss with your child/young person:

## **Cyberbullying**

- Encourage open communication if your child is being harassed.
- Save screenshots as evidence, report the behaviour.

## **Inappropriate Content**

- Discuss what's okay and not okay to view, post, or share.
- Use content filters when available.

## **Screen Time and Mental Health**

- Monitor signs of overuse: anxiety, sleep issues, low self-esteem.
- Use screen time limits and device-free zones (e.g., bedrooms at night).

## **Online Predators & Scams**

- Talk about the danger of interacting with strangers.
- Reinforce: never share personal info, passwords, or photos with strangers.



# Instagram



*Instagram is a free social media app for sharing photos, videos, and messages. It's owned by Meta (formerly Facebook) and widely used by teens and young adults.*

Minimum Age Requirement

**13**

The official minimum age to use Instagram is 13 years old, in compliance with child privacy laws

Screen Time & Usage



Instagram can be addictive but there are tools to manage time:  
Daily time limits: *Encourage balance with the "Your Activity" tool.*  
Quiet mode: *Pauses notifications during focus hours*

## Key Features:

Feature	Description
Feed	Where users see posts from accounts they follow.
Stories	Photos/videos that disappear after 24 hours.
Reels	Short, engaging video clips.
Direct Messages (DMs)	Private messages between users.
Comments & Likes	Users can interact with posts.
Explore	A discovery page based on interests and activity.



# Instagram

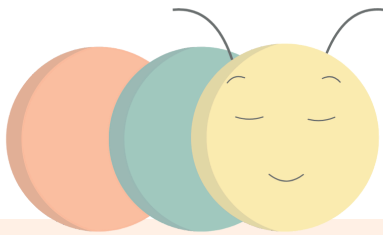


## Privacy & Safety Settings

### Make the Account Private

Only approved followers can see your child's posts and stories

Go to: *Settings > Privacy > Account Privacy > Private Account*



### Restrict or Block Accounts

Use the Restrict feature to silently limit unwanted interactions.

Use Block to stop all interactions from specific users

### Control Who Can Contact Them

Limit DMs to "People You Follow" or turn them off

Filter offensive comments/messages with keyword blockers



### Turn Off Location Sharing

Avoid tagging location in posts/stories



# TikTok



*TikTok is a short-form video platform where users create and share videos (usually 15 seconds to 3 minutes, though longer videos are now allowed). Popular content includes dances, comedy, challenges, tutorials, and trending audio clips. TikTok is highly algorithm-driven meaning that content is shown based on user behaviour.*



The official minimum age to use TikTok is 13 years old, in compliance with child privacy laws



- Inappropriate content
- Screen time addiction
- Online predators
- Dangerous challenges & trends

## Key Features:

Feature	Description
For You Page (FYP)	The main feed personalized by TikTok's algorithm
Following Tab	Videos from accounts the user follows
Likes, Comments, Shares	Ways to engage with content
Duets & Stitches	Remix or respond to other people's videos
Direct Messages (DMs)	Private messaging (age-restricted)
Live Streaming	Allowed for users 18+



# TikTok

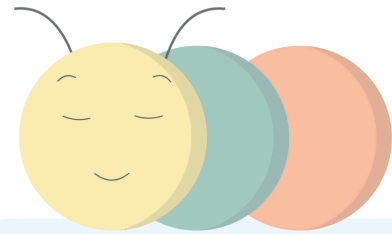


## Privacy & Safety Settings

### Make the Account Private

Only approved followers can view your child's videos.

Go to: Profile > Menu > Settings and Privacy > Privacy > Private Account



### Limit Who Can Comment or Message

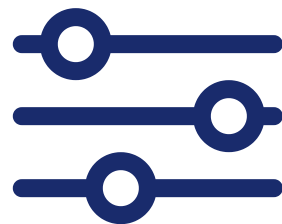
You can restrict interactions to friends only or no one

### Use Family Pairing (Highly Recommended)

Link your TikTok account with your child's to control:

- Screen time limits
- Content filters (Restricted Mode)
- Direct messages
- Search access
- Privacy settings

Set up under: Settings > Family Pairing



### Enable Restricted Mode

Helps filter out mature or inappropriate content.

Go to: Settings > Content Preferences > Restricted Mode



# Snapchat



*Snapchat is a multimedia messaging app where users send photos, videos, and messages—called "Snaps"—that disappear after being viewed. It's especially popular among teens for its playful filters, disappearing messages, and private sharing.*

Minimum Age Requirement

13

The official minimum age to use Snapchat is 13 years old, in compliance with child privacy laws

Risks to Be Aware Of



- Disappearing messages
- Location sharing (Snap Map)
- Inappropriate content
- My AI chatbot
- Peer pressure & addiction

## Key Features:

Feature	Description
Snaps	Photos or videos sent to friends that disappear after viewing
Stories	Snaps shared with all friends, visible for 24 hours
Snap Map	Shows real-time location of friends (if enabled)
Chat	Private messages that disappear after reading
Streaks	Keeps track of how many days two users have Snapped each other
Discover & Spotlight	Public content from creators and influencers
My AI	A chatbot that interacts with users (recently introduced)





# Snapchat

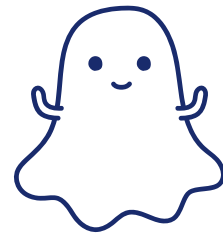


## Privacy & Safety Settings

### Who Can Contact Them

Set it to 'Friends Only':

Go to: Settings > Privacy Controls  
> Contact Me > My Friends



### Report & Block Tools

Teach your child how to block users  
and report abusive or inappropriate  
content

### Disable Snap Map or Use Ghost Mode

Location sharing can be  
dangerous if not used wisely.

Go to: Settings > Snap Map >  
Ghost Mode



### Who Can View Their Stories

Limit this to friends only or a  
custom list

### Turn Off Quick Add

Prevents strangers from randomly  
adding your child.

Go to: Settings > See Me in Quick Add  
> Toggle Off



# YouTube



*YouTube is the world's largest video-sharing platform. Users can watch, upload, comment on, and share videos on virtually any topic—music, gaming, education, humour, DIY, and more.*



The official minimum age to use YouTube is 13 years old, unless you are using YouTube Kids



- Inappropriate content
- Unfiltered comments
- Advertisements
- Screen time overuse

## Key Features:

Feature	What It Does
Home Feed	Personalised content based on viewing history
Search	Find videos on almost any topic
Subscriptions	Follow favorite creators or channels
Comments	Public messages under videos
Live Streams	Real-time broadcasts from creators
Shorts	Short, vertical TikTok-like videos
Playlists	Group of videos organised by user or creator



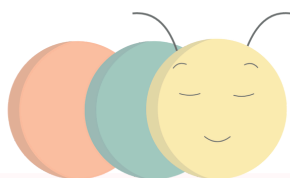
# YouTube



## Privacy & Safety Settings

### Use YouTube Kids (Recommended for under 13)

- Age-filtered content (preschool, younger, older)
- Timer limits
- Search can be turned off
- Parent approval required for new content



### Restricted Mode (For regular YouTube)

Helps hide potentially mature content.

Go to: Settings > General > Restricted Mode

(Can be locked with a passcode)



### Supervised Accounts (For ages 9–13+)

Google offers ‘Supervised Experiences’ that allow access to YouTube with limited content, no comments, and controlled watch history. Set up via: Google Family Link app



### Disable Autoplay

Prevents the next video from auto-playing—a great way to reduce endless watching



# WhatsApp



*WhatsApp is a free messaging app that allows users to send text messages, voice notes, photos, videos, documents, and make voice/video calls over the internet. WhatsApp is owned by Meta.*



**16+** in the UK and EU (per WhatsApp's terms)  
However, many younger children use it, often to stay in touch with friends and classmates



- Inappropriate Content
- Group Chat Drama
- Privacy Concerns
- Stranger Contact
- Disappearing messages

## Key Features:

Feature	Description
1:1 Chats	Private messages between users
Group Chats	Up to 1,024 participants; everyone can see
Voice & Video Calls	Free, encrypted calling over Wi-Fi/data
Status Updates	Like Stories—photos/texts that disappear
Disappearing Messages	Optional setting for auto-deleting messages after 24 hours, 7 days, or 90 days
End-to-End Encryption	Only sender and receiver can read messages—not even WhatsApp
Feature	Description



# WhatsApp



## Privacy & Safety Settings

### 1. Adjust Privacy Settings

Go to: Settings > Privacy

- Last Seen & Online: Choose "My Contacts" or "Nobody"
- Profile Photo: Set to "My Contacts" only
- Groups: Restrict to "My Contacts" or "My Contacts Except..."
- Status: Limit who can view their status
- Blocked Contacts: Easily block unwanted users



### Teach Them to Block & Report

Show them how to:

Block a contact (Settings > Privacy > Blocked)

Report suspicious or abusive messages

### Discuss Group Chat Etiquette

Talk about:

Respecting others' boundaries

Not oversharing or forwarding sensitive content

Leaving toxic or inappropriate groups



### Disable Disappearing Messages

Unless there's a clear need for it, turn off disappearing messages to keep communication more transparent