SAFER
SCHOOLS
TOGETHER

RAISING DIGITALLY RESPONSIBLE YOUTH

A PARENT'S GUIDE





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This is an interactive document. Click the underlined links to read more or navigate to the correlating section of the document.

Introduction

Our current world climate is constantly connected to technology. What do we need to know as parents to protect our children and teach them responsible and appropriate uses of technology? The parameters of rules and expectations that we put in place at home will undoubtedly guide our children's sense of digital responsibility.

Raising children in a digital era can seem overwhelming at times. Technology has entered our lives at a rapid pace over the past several years and continues to evolve. The reality is that apps and technological devices will change, but the behavior stays the same. Moderation is key to managing technology use in our homes. This does not need to be an "all or nothing" approach with either absolute prohibition or full unchecked usage.

It is beneficial to maintain an open, transparent, and ongoing dialogue with our children regarding the internet, technology, social media, and video games Remaining approachable could be the difference between whether our children come to us when issues or uncomfortable situations arise rather than feeling alone in the process of going to their peers to seek comfort and advice instead.

Technology is here to stay, whether we like it or not. The digital reputation of today's students, or how they choose to represent themselves online, is being evaluated and assessed by future employers or admissions departments. The goal of this parent guide is to help introduce the major social media platforms, video games, and relevant trends that are either being used already or have the potential to be used by our children.

Stay the course. We want to prepare our children for their tech-infused futures and walk down this digital journey alongside them. Good luck!

General Parenting Tips

There are some general parenting tips that can help navigate a household that respects digital boundaries. Some of these include:

- Keep phones and devices out of the bedroom. Sleep is important for growth and according to this study by Dr. Ben Carter, 89% of adolescents have at least one device in their bedrooms - most of which are used around bedtime - doubling their chances of getting insufficient sleep. Sleep disturbance in childhood is known to have adverse effects on health, including poor diet, obesity, sedative behavior, reduced immune function and stunted growth, as well as links with mental health issues.
- If possible, have a central charging station for all portable household digital devices. The kitchen table or island, living room, or another common area in your house is a great place to keep *all* household devices charged at night, including your own! By setting an example for your kids that you don't need to sleep with your device(s), it helps our kids understand that they don't need to either!



Photo by Driven By Decor.

- Know their passwords - it is our parental right. You paid for the device that you gave your child, which means - you guessed it! You own it! You have a right to spot-check devices that belong to you, including the ones that you gave your child.

- Stay educated. If your child comes to you and asks to download an app you're unfamiliar with, download the app and try it out first. Play around with it and do your research! If your child already has an app or game, ask them to teach you about it!
- Put tape or a sticky over the laptop or tablet camera when not in use.



Photo by Review Geek.

- Try to build a culture of openness and trust in establishing a two-way dialogue about technology and social media. You want to be approachable to your children **when,** not if, an issue comes up in their digital lives.
- Technology isn't going anywhere, try to introduce technology into your home and your children's lives at a pace you feel comfortable relative to your child's age and emotional maturity.



- We are not our child's best friend. We are responsible for ensuring their safety in the online world just as much as we are responsible for ensuring their safety in the offline world!
- Google yourself and your family. Any names, addresses, emails, phone numbers, or social media usernames that are associated with your family can be searched online. See what shows up before others do.
- Remind your children of the permanence of anything posted online or sent electronically. Not everything we post or send online stays, but we don't get a choice of what stays and what doesn't!

These tips are intended to be used in part or whole alongside your personal parenting methods. You as a parent know what is best for your child. It's important to put our children's well-being first, and allowing yourself to have a strong understanding of digital responsibility will enable your child to also have a strong understanding of digital responsibility so they can make better decisions online and offline.

If you would like to attend a parent session on raising digitally responsible youth, how to keep our children safe online, and understanding current trends, please reach out to your school/school district or PAC and ask them to request a proposal from Safer Schools Together.



The Essentials

There are many components to the online world that are generally known and understood by most digital users, however, here are three essential terms that we need to understand to take control of our digital responsibility:



Hashtag

A hashtag is a symbol (#) added before a word or phrase to create a searchable category indexed by social media and becomes discoverable by other users. Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok are the primary platforms where hashtags are used. Hashtags are a way of making it easier to find, follow, and contribute to a conversation.



Username

A username is a unique online identity that is chosen to represent someone online. Most platforms make you choose a username when you create an account.



Passwords

We all know the challenge of trying to remember our password for a website or an app and it's easy to fall into habits of using the same passwords for all our logins. This is a dangerous habit, especially if it is something easily guessable such as a dog or our kid's name and their birthday. We should remind our children ***not to share their passwords with their friends***! This is the number one reason behind accounts getting "hacked". Use different passwords for each platform you have an account for and make sure that they are strong with a mix of numbers, letters, and special characters (!@#$%^&*).

HINT: Try a password manager! There are many free apps available. A password manager stores your passwords on a digital keychain and can help you manage passwords (especially really strong ones) so you don't have to!

Sexting Vs. Sextortion

There is no doubt that we are seeing a tremendous impact that smartphones are having on our everyday lives. The use of text messaging especially has skyrocketed since the influence of smartphones. Research shows that over 15 million texts are sent every minute, and this number is expected to continue to increase.

The term ‘sexting’ has emerged as the use of text messages to send sexually explicit photographs and messages. Sexting is also commonly done over popular apps such as Facebook Messenger and Instagram Direct Messages, but we have seen it widely popularized through Snapchat due to its ability to send photographs and messages that can only be seen once for only seconds before it “disappears” into cyberspace.

Sexting has its dangers to acknowledge how it can permanently impact the lives of our youth. One of the most dangerous scenarios that we see occur repeatedly, especially in teenagers, is sextortion. Sextortion is when non-physical forms of coercion are used to extort non-consensual sexual favors from the victim. Sextortion can happen to anyone who chooses to sext – it’s not always a stranger you’ve never met, it can also be someone close to you. It is crucial to understand when you choose to engage in sexting, you are subjecting yourself to sextortion.





SOCIAL MEDIA APPS TO KNOW



Snapchat ("Snap")



Since its release in 2011, Snapchat has remained to this day the most popular social media application that our youth are using to communicate and share their digital lives. Snapchat is the de facto medium of communication for students grade 6-12. The reason for its popularity is that it turned text communication into a visual experience that allows users to send disappearing photos that leave behind no evidence and don't (for the most part) become part of a youth's digital footprint.

The foundation of Snapchat is the disappearing photo or video that vanishes into thin air after it has been opened. Users can set a viewing time of up to 10 seconds or an infinite amount of time after which, once viewed, it will be deleted from the recipient’s device and as the company claims, from its servers.

Snapchat allows users to take still photos, record short videos, add text, and create drawings and send them to a personalized and typically private list of friends. However, nothing stops the recipient from taking a screenshot or using a different device to take a picture of the image or video. Note: if you

take a screenshot using the recipient device, within Snapchat, it will notify the sender that you've taken a copy.

Despite news headlines that suggest that Snapchat is just a "sexting" app or one that is ONLY used to send nude photos, this is not the case and represents a very small usage of the app.

Snapchat Lingo

Snaps

A user takes a photo/video using their digital device/smartphone in real-time. The user can select an amount of time between 1-10 seconds or choose infinite time for the receiver to view the photo/video. A user can elect to have the photo/video they have just taken to be saved into their photo gallery or simply sent via Snapchat without being saved on their device.

Stories

A user can add the photo/video to their "story". Depending on the user's privacy settings, the photo and videos added to a story can be viewed by all Snapchat users or just those on their friends' list for only up to 24 hours.

Chat

A user can type a text message within the Snapchat app to their friends using this feature. Once both parties have viewed the message, the message will vanish – the chat can also be manually changed within each conversation to disappear after 24 hours instead. Photos from the camera roll or gallery of the user's photo can be uploaded and sent within the chat. Group chats often exist between multiple friends.

Streaks

Seen within the chat log screen, a person's "Snapchat Streak" is the number of consecutive days that the account owner and a friend have sent at least but no less than 1 snap per day to each other. If they do not snap each other in 24 hours, they lose their streak with their friend (a huge deal!).

Snap Map

Within the Snapchat app is a feature called the Snap Map. Here, you can view Snaps of sporting events, celebrations, breaking news, etc. However, perhaps the most concerning the content you can view on this map where your friends are…right now. You can share your locations with everyone you are "friends" with so you can see exactly where they are and what they are doing (driving, sleeping, listening to music, etc.) in real-time plotted on a map.

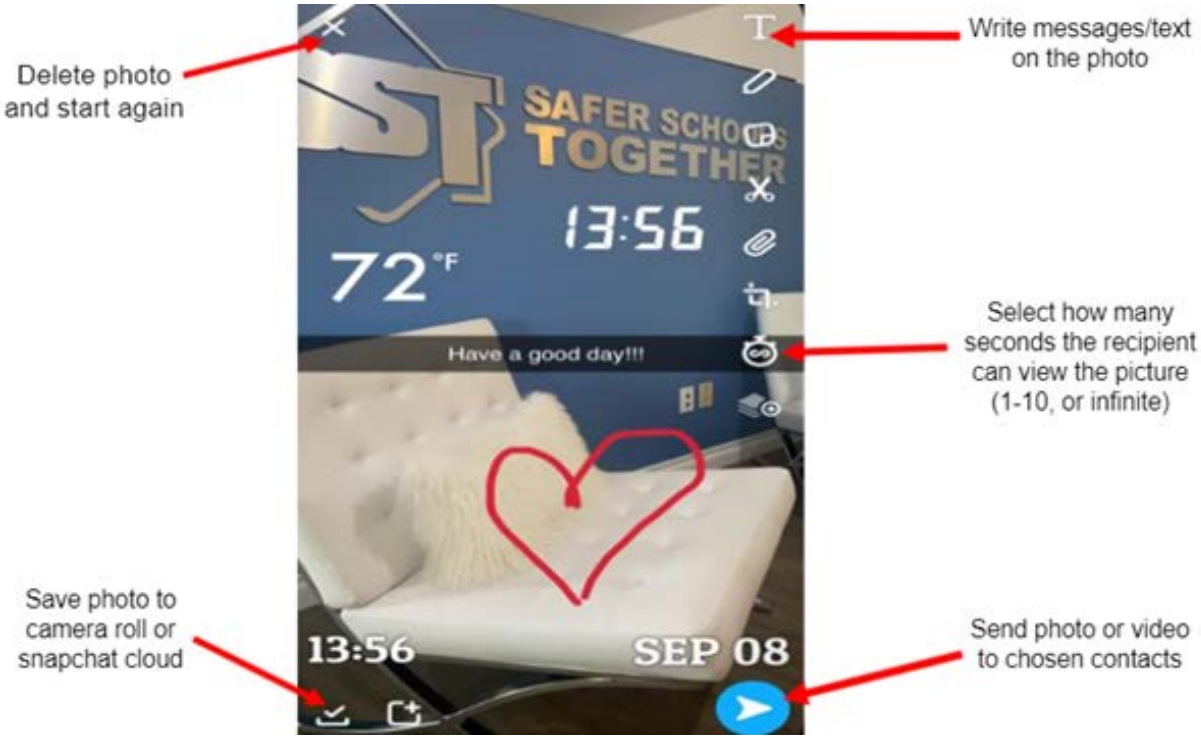


These are all of Ashley's friends who have Snapmap enabled. They are represented by the Bitmoji that they designed.

This is why it is so important that our children are only communicating on Snapchat with close friends that they know in real life.

Within Settings, you can turn off the ability for others to see your location by enabling "Ghost Mode" – or only allow it to be viewed by their best friend and/or parents.

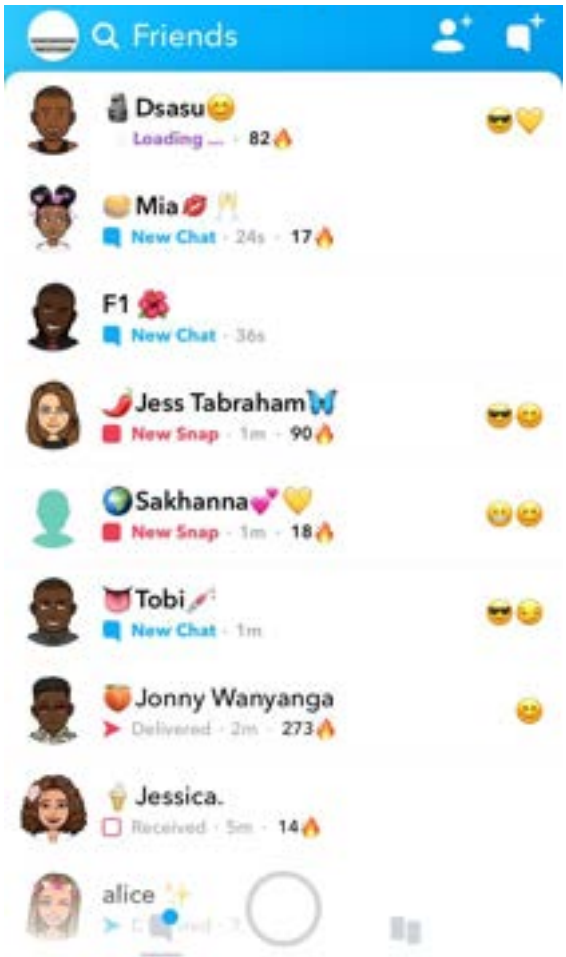
After taking a photo on Snapchat you will see:



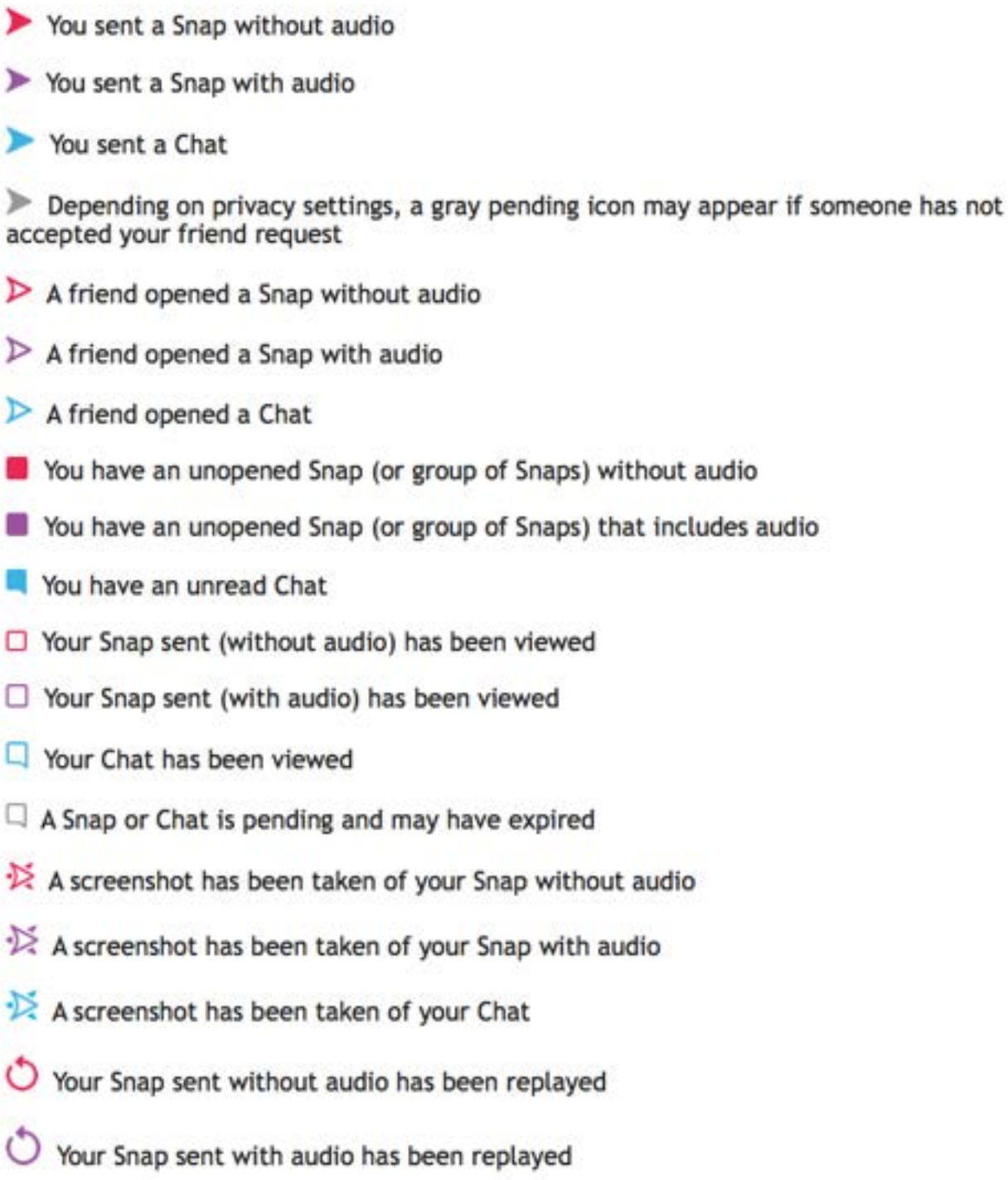
Message Screen (Friends Only):

Here is an example of what the Snapchat Chat screen could potentially look like within a Snapchat account.

Use the Chat Screen Icon Guide and the Friend Emoji charts on the following pages to see who this student interacts with the most.



Chat Screen Icon Guide



Courtesy of Snapchat.

Chat Screen Icon Guide

Friend Emojis are determined by Snapchat to keep track of the status of a user's friends. These can change over time based on the interactions between users. Friend Emojis can also be altered in the settings of Snapchat.



Someone has replayed this person's snaps in the past 24 hours.



You send the most snaps to each other (aka #1 best friends).



You have been #1 best friends with each other for two weeks straight.



You have been #1 best friends with each other for two months straight.



You just became friends with this person.



You send a lot of snaps to someone they also send a lot of snaps to.



You send the most snaps to the same person that they do.



You don't send them many snaps but they send you a lot.



You send this person a lot of snaps, but less than your #1 best friend.



You are on a Snapstreak - increases with number of consecutive days.



100 day Snapstreak.

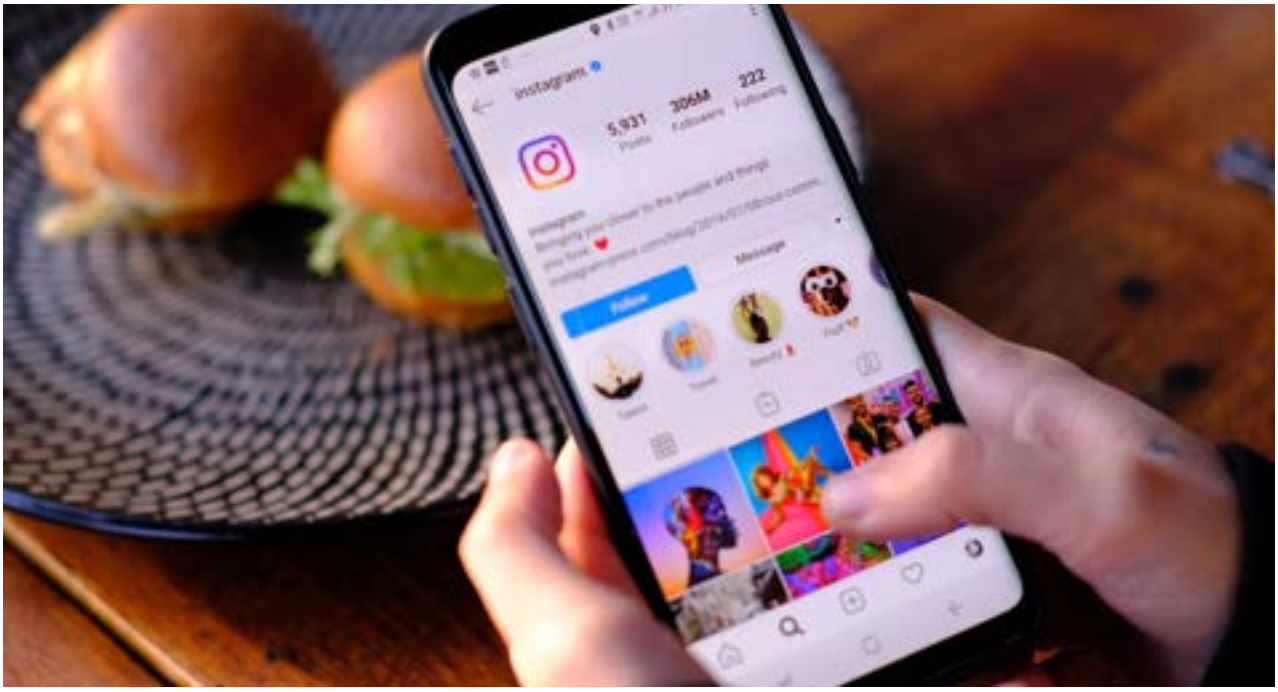


Your Snapstreak is about to end.



This friend has a birthday today.

Instagram ("IG")



Owned by Facebook, the popular photo-sharing app Instagram has over 1 billion monthly active users. If you see a youth scrolling up with their thumb on their smartphone looking at photos, chances are they are looking at Instagram.

Hashtags (#) are used often on this platform. This gives people a way to be introduced to and follow other users with similar interests.

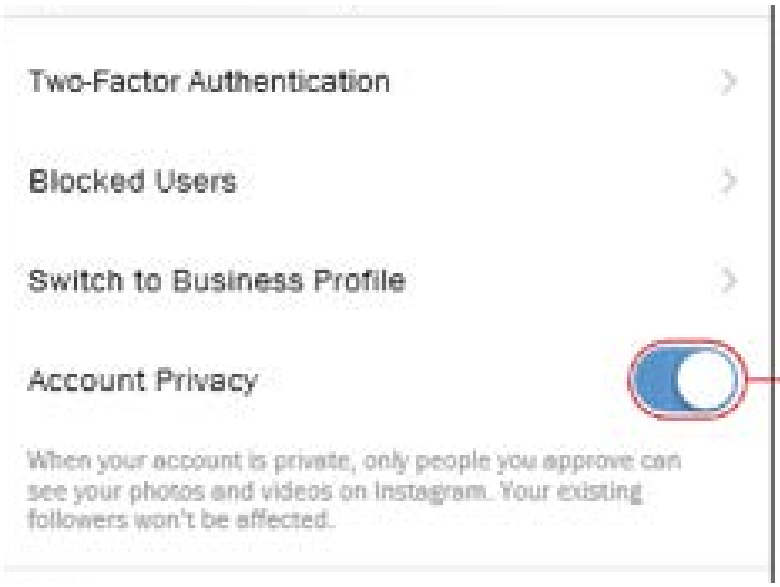


Privacy Settings on Instagram

On Instagram, users either share posts with everyone by having a public account or only share posts with people that they have approved to follow them with a private account.

Suggested Privacy

We recommend that all students should have a private Instagram account for safety reasons. The exception might be a grade 11-12 student wanting to build their digital brand and establish an account that university recruiters and employers can find.



Enable Private Account in Privacy Settings

Instagram Stories

Users can post videos and/or photos for the public or their followers to see which are visible for 24 hours. You can also send videos and/or photos that will disappear after being viewed once. This concept was copied from the very popular Snapchat usage that has quickly gained usage among youth. Users can see who has watched their Instagram Stories.

IGTV

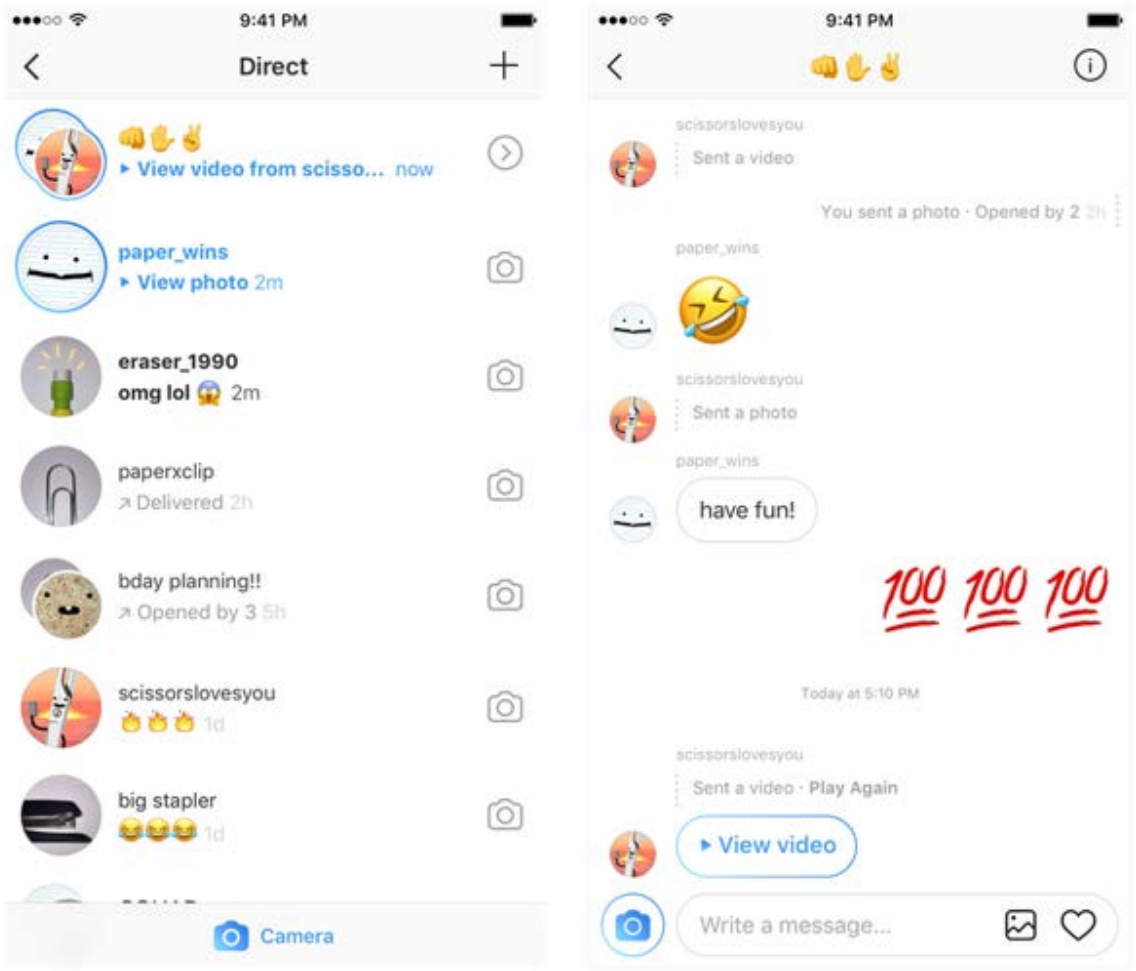
Instagram also joined the live broadcasting market and allows users to live stream videos to their followers. If a profile is public, anyone can watch these videos.

Instagram Reels

Instagram Reels have recently been added to Snapchat - these are short videos with music included very similar to the style of TikTok videos.

Direct Messaging

Direct Messaging (DMs) is a private message inbox within the Instagram app. This is a feature which allows users to privately communicate similar to text messaging. This is where children can receive private messages from their friends, participate in group chats, or even receive messages from strangers. There is no way to turn the DMs off at this time.



TikTok



Formerly known as Musical.ly, TikTok is currently one of the world's most popular video-sharing social networking applications and is centered around short videos with popular songs or sounds added. TikTok reigned as the most downloaded app for 9 quarters and with over 2.6 billion downloads, it's not going away any time soon.

TikTok has strategically marketed to younger audiences, and although users must be 13 years of age to sign up, the content isn't being filtered. Age-inappropriate content is inevitably reaching 32.5% of its estimated audience that are between the ages of 10-19 as well as potentially younger audiences.

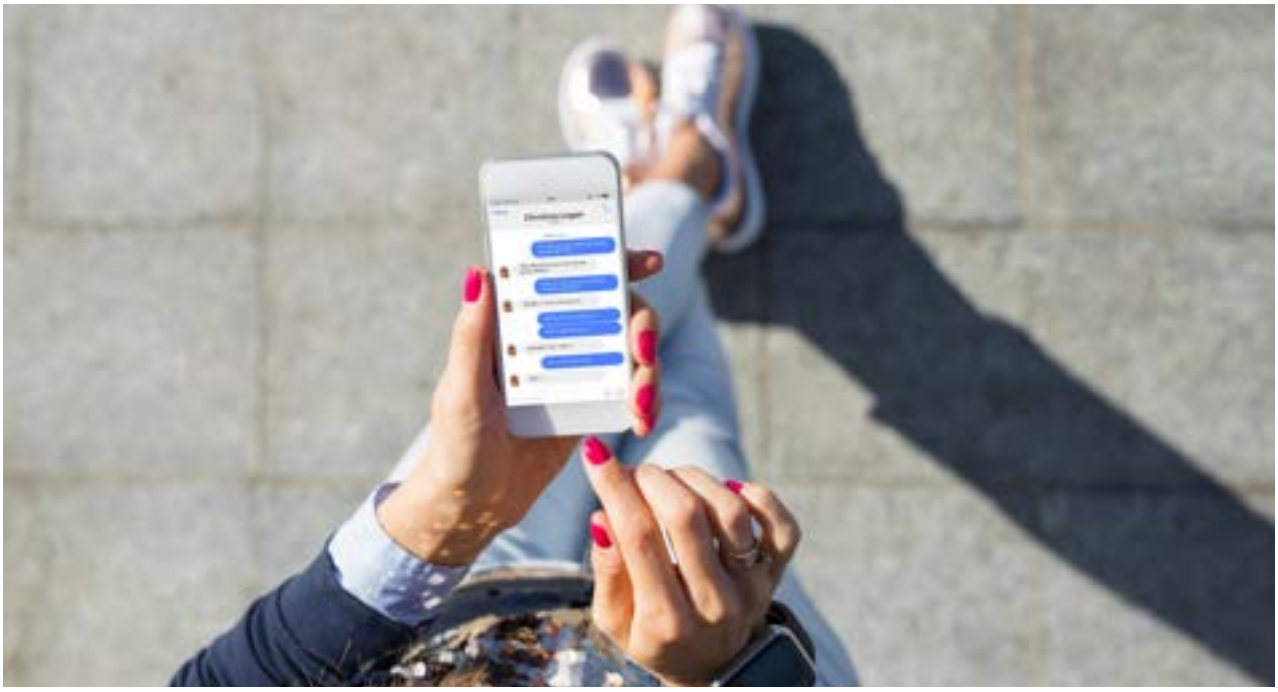
The average time a user spends on TikTok is 52 minutes per day. This time is spent either creating and sharing short videos or watching the existing plethora of TikTok videos uploaded to the platform already. Either way, it's being done for nearly an hour every day. This time is similar to but exceeds amounts spent on other social media platforms and apps such as Instagram (28 minutes) and Snapchat (30 minutes).

There is also a growing number of adults on TikTok. More than 1 in 10 (64.4%) TikTok users are adults between ages 20-49 years old. Adults joining the app are not necessarily there to create a safe space for TikTok's younger audiences and may not even realize that children of potentially all ages, if not just ages 13 to 18, can see the content they choose to post. Although TikTok states in their Terms of Service that any inappropriate content will be taken down by moderators, it may take hours, days, or even not happen at all. This is something to consider when keeping in mind that more than 1 billion TikTok videos are viewed every day.



With the increasing popularity of video sharing apps, there are a couple of different apps to look out for that are similar to TikTok such as Triller - an American-based app with over 250 million downloads and the ability to share videos to music or sounds similarly to TikTok.

Facebook/Facebook Messenger



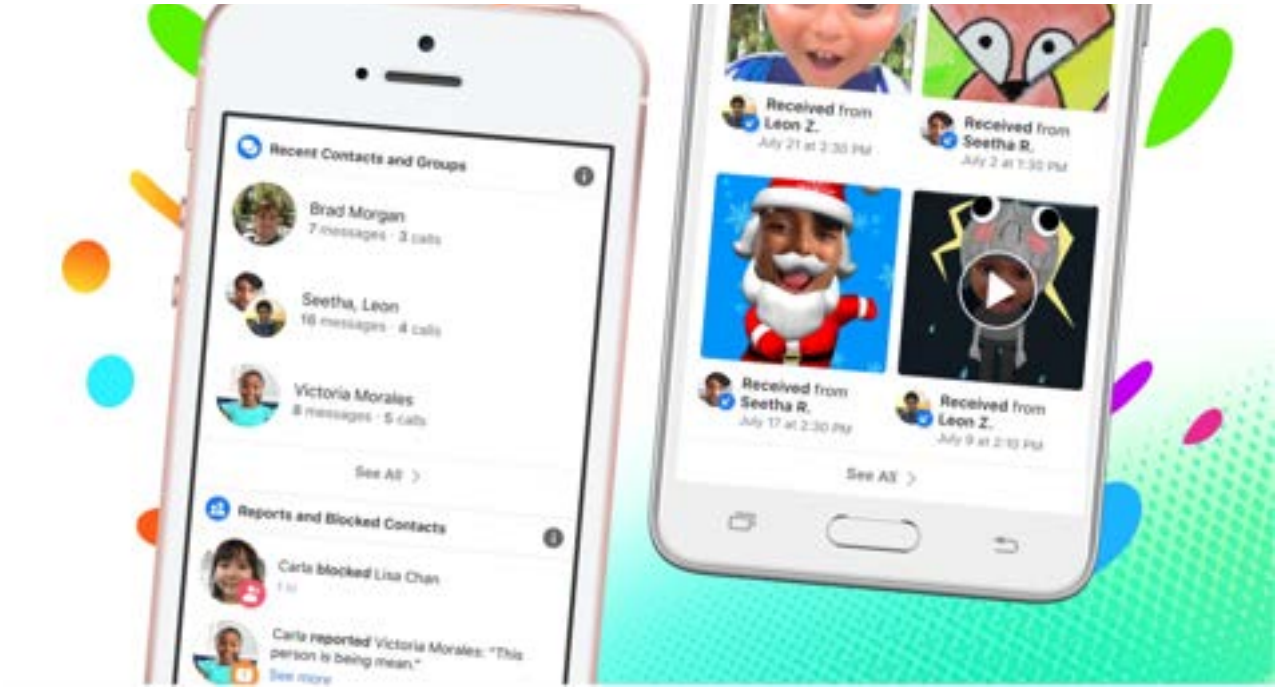
Although less popular among kids in comparison to other social media apps, Facebook and Facebook Messenger are still very active and important to note.

Facebook is a social media platform that allows users to stay connected with friends and family online. Since it's creation in 2004, Facebook stands at over 564 million downloads and now owns popular social media app Instagram.

Alongside it's typical posting interface, Facebook has a separate app called Facebook Messenger, which is exclusively the direct messaging service within Facebook that automatically connects with user's 'Friends Lists'. Because Facebook Messenger is integrated into the desktop version of Facebook but not in the mobile version of Facebook, the separate Facebook Messenger app has over 700 million downloads and is used on mobile more frequently than the standalone Facebook app.



Facebook Messenger Kids



In 2017, Facebook released Facebook Messenger Kids - an application for children to communicate with pre-approved friends and family through their parent's own Facebook account. Facebook Messenger Kids features include:

- Recent Contacts and Chat History: Allows parents to see who their child is chatting with, whether they are video chatting or sending messages and how frequently those conversations happened over the past 30 days.
- Log of Images in Chats: Allows parents to see the most recent photos and videos their child has sent and received in their inbox.
- Reported and Blocked Contacts History: Allows parents access to a list of the reporting and blocking actions their child has taken in the app.
- Remote Device Logout: Allows parents to see all devices where their child is logged in to Messenger Kids and log out of the app on any device through the Parent Dashboard.
- Download Your Child’s Information: Allows parents to request a copy of their child’s Messenger Kids information.

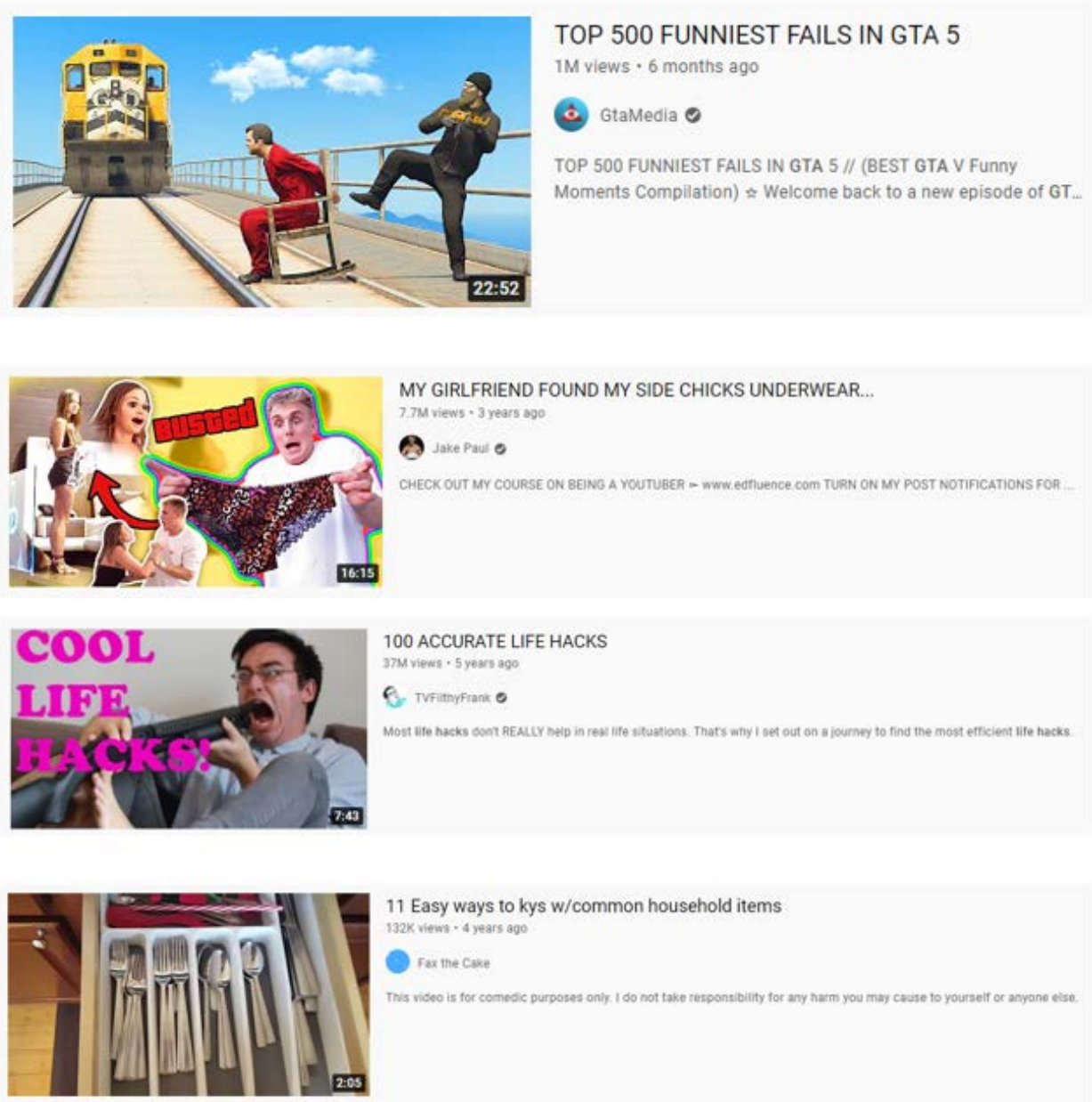
YouTube



PewDiePie, MrBeast, Like Nastya, James Charles, Trish Paytas, Logan Paul, and Filthy Frank: these names may or may not be familiar to you, but if your child spends time on YouTube, they have likely come across videos by these YouTube "famous" video creators before.

The over-the-top humor, outrageous pranks, and clickbait video thumbnails have made these YouTube creators extremely popular and influential. Owned by Google, consider YouTube the Google of video. Created in 2005, YouTube is currently the second most visited website in the world (second to Google) with over 21.9 billion monthly visits and almost 5 billion videos watched every day.

YouTube can be used as a way for users to pass the time, express themselves, learn new skills, and watch content they enjoy such as sports, video games, etc. However, it can also be very easy to cross over into watching less than appropriate topics and content. Parents should set parameters on video watching and moderate access to age-appropriate videos.



These are just a few examples of some of the videos that could potentially appear as "Suggested Videos" on the front page upon visiting YouTube.

Users can watch YouTube passively without being logged into an account or can sign in to track the type of videos they watch and like, subscribe to channels, and upload their own videos.

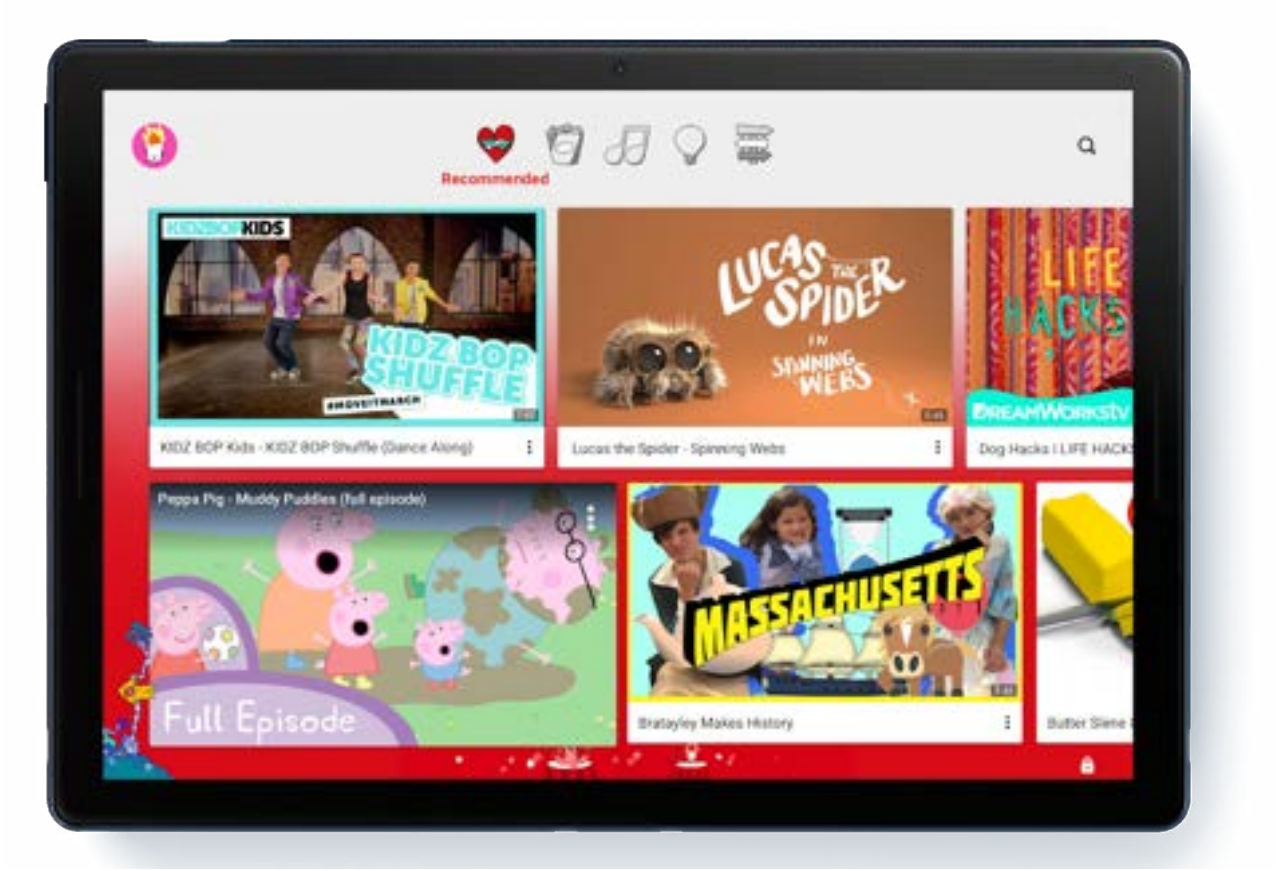
Uploading Content - Privacy Settings

- For one to create an account, the minimum age requirement is 13 years old. This age parameter, like other social media platforms and applications, is not typically monitored or enforced.
- When uploading videos, there are three different modes of video privacy - public, private, and unlisted.
- Public videos can be searched, watched, and shared with anyone in the world. Private videos can only be seen by the uploader and users that they choose. Unlisted videos can be viewed and shared by users who have a direct link to the video.

Controlling Inappropriate Content from Being Viewed

- Remember: no moderation or filtering solution is 100% foolproof; there is always the possibility of exposure to mature content.
- The best solution YouTube offers on its website/application is being logged into a Google account and turning on "Restricted Mode".
- "Restricted Mode" is an optional setting that you can use to help screen out potentially mature content that you may prefer not to see or don't want others in your family to see.
- Access the settings on the phone by opening the YouTube app and tapping on the display picture in the top right.
- From there, the settings can be accessed. "Restricted Mode" can block content that has been flagged by other users for inappropriate content.
- In the "My Channel" option, users can also change who can view things such as liked videos, created playlists, and subscriptions.

YouTube Kids



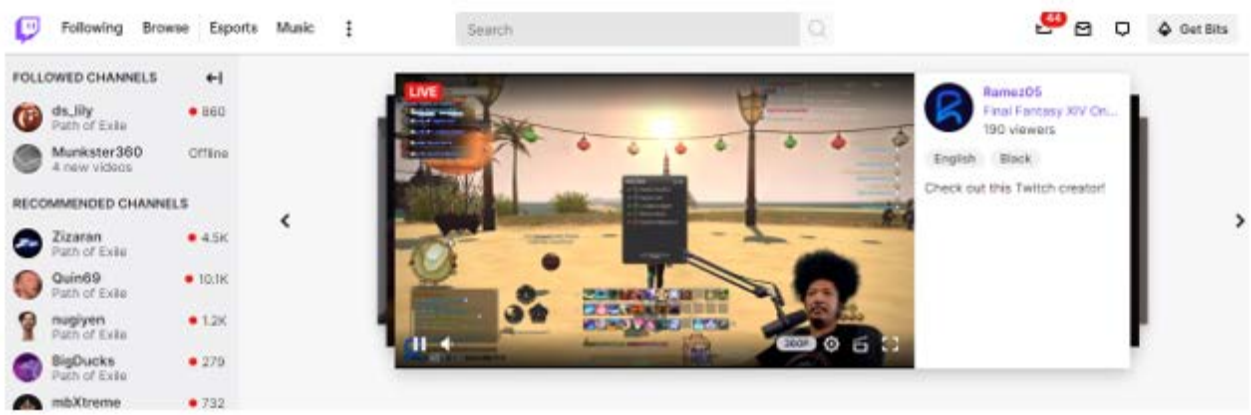
For younger audiences, YouTube has created an app that is specifically aimed at youth from approximately ages 3-8. The videos on YouTube Kids are heavily censored and focus more on family-friendly entertainment and learning. YouTube Kids is a separate application from YouTube and must be set up using an adult's email address. From there, the adult can set up profiles for their children and can even control in-app searching. Parents can also set viewing timers. YouTube Kids can be a good platform to introduce our youngest to digital media on our terms.



Twitch



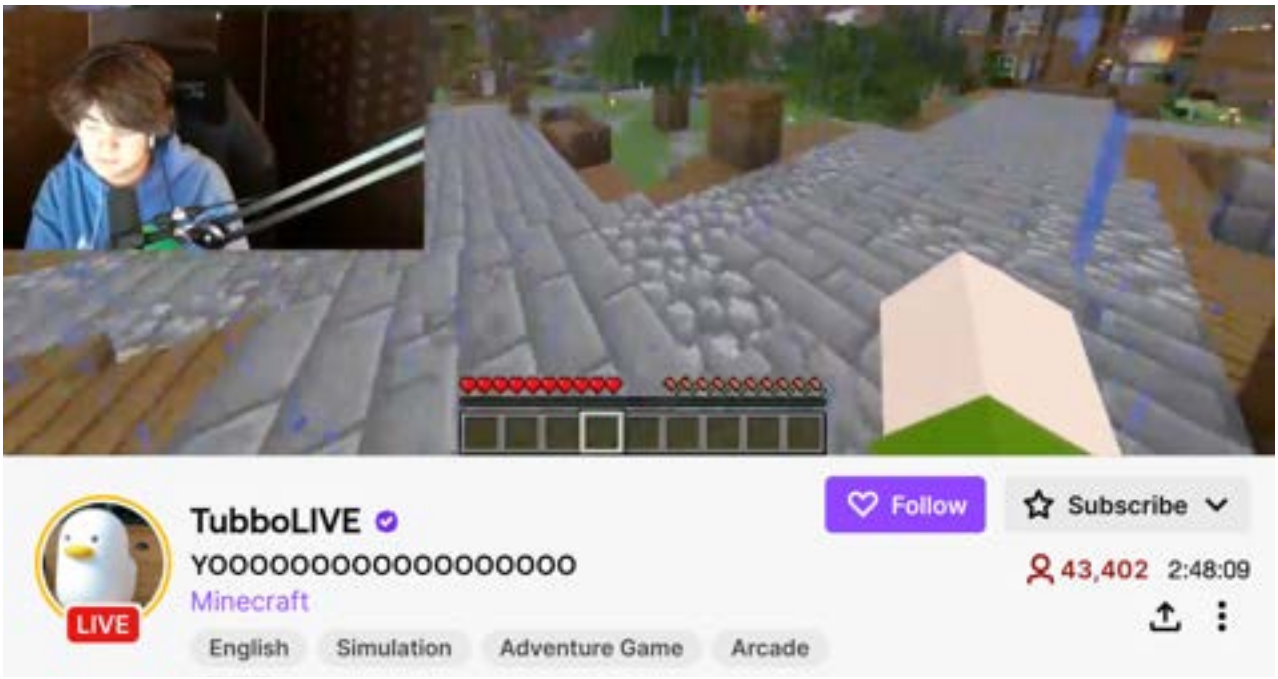
Twitch is a video live streaming service that primarily focuses on video games. During a stream, there is a streamer who is the person conducting the broadcast with or without live webcam footage and typically playing a video game. Viewers can chat with the streamer and other users in the stream's live chat log, in which other viewers can type back, or the streamer may respond by voice. More than 28 billion chat messages have been sent using Twitch. The average Twitch user can be found using Twitch for 95 minutes per day which can include watching or streaming.



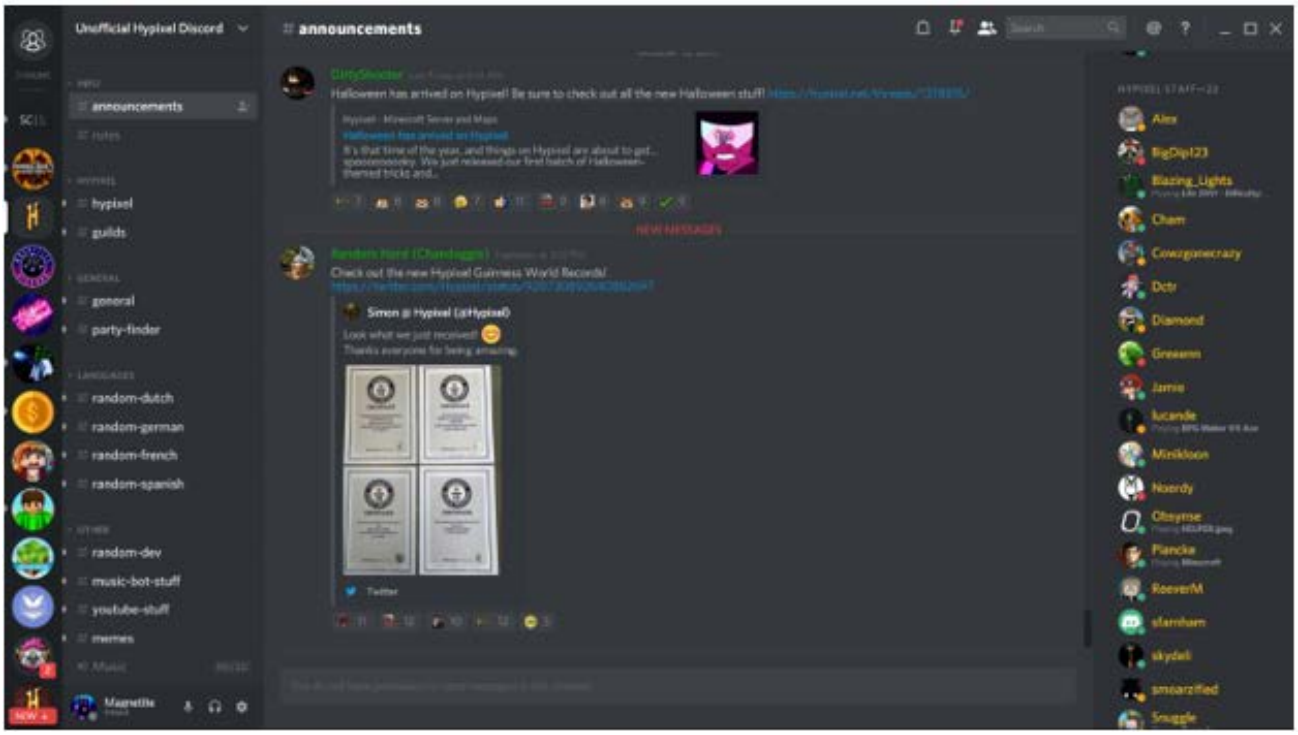
Twitch is generally free to watch and following streamers is also a free feature, however, there are certain paid subscriptions that you can use to give streamers a set amount of money per month to support their stream (Subscriptions), as well as single-time donation payments called 'Donations' and 'Bits'. These can be purchased for real-world currency through the Twitch website/app and spent within the site towards any streamer who has this feature enabled.

Because Twitch is owned and operated by Amazon, any user with an Amazon Prime account is eligible for Twitch Prime and is given one free Subscription pass (worth $4.99) per month. This can be used in the same way a regular Subscription is used.

Although gaming is still the most popular topic on Twitch, there are also other topics such as 'Just Chatting', 'Music', 'Art', and 'Pools, Hot Tubs, & Beaches'. It's important to note that although some channels may restrict viewers to ages 18+ (only monitored by a button confirming you are over 18, no actual age verification occurs), many streams that do not have an age restriction still broadcast inappropriate content.



Discord



Discord is a free voice and messaging application that is available as a desktop, browser, and mobile application (iOS and Android). Typically, Discord is used as a space for gamers to chat either by instant message, voice chat, or video chat. Discord is now being used for many different types of online communities such as YouTuber/Influencer chat channels, art communities, and a place to meet new people.

Within Discord, users can create or join 'Servers' where they can invite as many people as they would like to engage in chat together. Voice chat can be used as either open mic or push-to-talk - a feature that only allows others to hear you by enabling voice via the designated button set by a user on their keyboard or mouse. Users can also share their computer screens within Discord.

The "Rules" (that no one follows)

Although many social media platforms and apps have a User Minimum Age Agreement either in order to sign up or outlined in their Terms of Service, these are typically bypassed by younger users in order to bypass this effort.

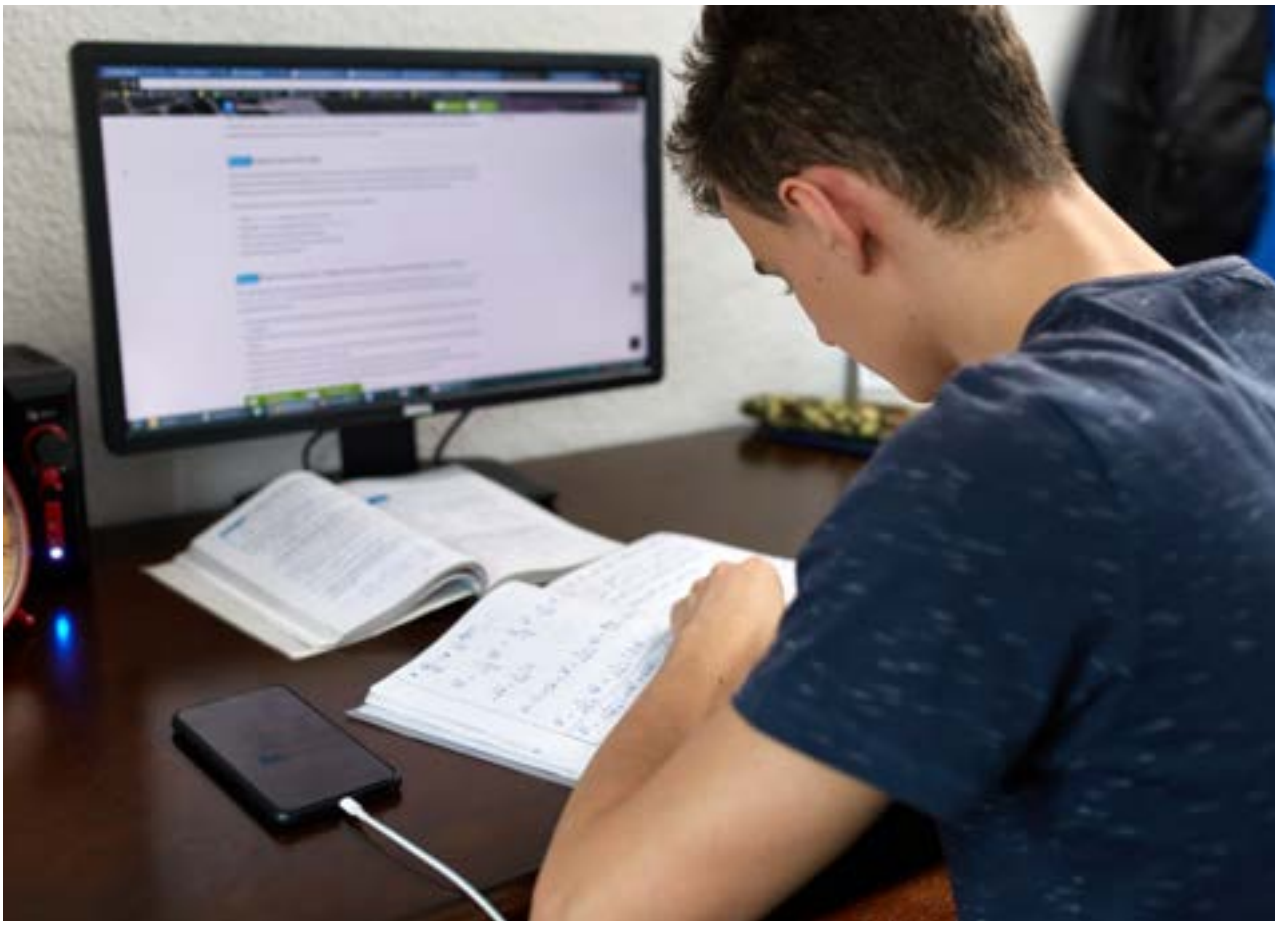
Popular Social Media Services User Minimum Age Agreements:



Vault Apps



Vault Apps are mobile applications designed to hide private photos, videos, or other applications on a device usually by using the icon of another app such as a calculator, camera, or notes. Vault Apps are popular amongst teens in order to protect their mobile privacy to use app locking, private bookmarks, incognito browser, cloud backup, and more. However, teens should be reminded that using technology is a privilege, not a right. They are not entitled to full privacy on their device for their own safety.



Internet, Texting, and Social Media Lingo & Slang

Lingo	Translation
Lit	Cool/Awesome
Extra	Over-the-top
Fire	Cool/Awesome
Shade	Disrespectful manner
Go-Off	To hype someone up
Low-Key	Quiet/Modest
Salty	Being upset over nothing
Stan	A crazed fan
Thirsty	Sexually eager
Tea	Gossip
Shook	Shocked/Surprised
Wig	Cool/Awesome
Yikes	Uh oh
AMA	Ask me anything
ASL	Age/Sex/Location
Fit	Outfit
No Cap	No lie
BF/GF	Boyfriend/Girlfriend
F4F	Follow for follow

Lingo	Translation
DTF	Down to f**K
Tho	Thought
Emo	Emotional
HundoP	100% sure
Mukbang	Popular eating videos
WYA	Where you at?
Faded	Drunk/Intoxicated
Fave/Fav	Favorite
Fierce	Awesome
Cancelled	Bad publicity
FML	F*** my life
KMS/KYS	Kill Myself/Kill Yourself
Dead	Funny/Unbelievable
FWB	Friends with benefits
GTG/G2G	Got to go
Bet	I agree
Flex	Showing off
BFF	Best friend forever

Internet, Texting, and Social Media Lingo & Slang (Continued)

Lingo	Translation
Thicc	Desirable
Squad	Group of friends
Slay	Succeed
Roasted	To be dissed
BTW	By the way
qq	A texting term for crying
Weak	Amused
Finsta/Spam	Secondary social media account
Cray	Crazy
Cuffed	Locked down in a relationship
TBH	To be honest
GTFO	Get the f*** out
Handle	Social media username
NP	No problem
IDK	I don't know
ILY/ILU	I love you
JK	Just kidding

Lingo	Translation
MOFO	Mother f*****
NBD	No big deal
Yeet	To throw something
Mood	Relatable
Deets	Details
DGAF	Don't give a f***
RN	Right now
HBD	Happy Birthday
IDC	I don't care
IMO	In my opinion
IMU	I miss you
LOL	Laughing out loud
Molly	MDMA
Noob	Inexperienced
NVM	Never mind
POV	Point of view
RT	Retweet
Sick	Crazy/Awesome
Stoked	Excited

Internet, Texting, and Social Media Lingo & Slang (Continued)

Lingo	Translation
NM	Nothing much
OMW	On my way
Ppl	People
Selfie	Picture of yourself
STFU	Shut the f*** up
YOLO	You only live once
Txt	Text
W/E	Whatever
Cyber	Sex online
Swag	Being or having something cool
Troll	Internet bully
TTYL	Talk to you later
Taking a L	Taking a loss
Taking a W	Taking a win
WDYM	What do you mean



If you have any questions about lingo or slang and their respected translations, please contact Safer Schools Together toll-free at 1-866-554-0848 or info@saferschoolstogether.com.



VIDEO GAMING



Video Gaming

Video games with mature content advisories were once tightly policed by retailers across the continent using the ESRB Ratings Guide, similar to age restrictions on R-Rated movies. Unfortunately, alongside the proliferation of technology growth and unlimited access to video content, enforcement of these ratings is non-existent. It is not uncommon to hear of some parents deciding to buy Grand Theft Auto for their 12-year-old when they've asked! Grand Theft Auto V has in-game exposures to graphic violence, sexually explicit content, alcohol and drug abuse, and strong language (see Top 10 Most Violent Video Games).

The Bad News

Research generally suggests that prolonged exposure to violent video games can make people feel more aggressive, desensitized to violence, and feel less empathetic.

The Good News

Video games can provide several possible cognitive benefits including increasing response time performance and hand-eye coordination, practice in visual-spatial skills, stronger visual memory, becoming better at pattern recognition, and using trial and error to problem solve more often.

Moral of the Story

Content matters! As parents, we need to be involved in which games our children are playing. Enforcing time limits and self-regulation while minimizing the exposure to inappropriate and violent content is important. We want to reinforce prof-social games that can test and grow our children's creativity and enhance cognitive skills while remaining age-appropriate to our children's emotional maturity.

The Ratings Guide from the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)

ESRB ratings have three parts:

- **Rating Categories** suggest age appropriateness
- **Content Descriptors** indicate content that may have triggered a particular rating and/or may be of interest or concern
- **Interactive Elements** inform about interactive aspects of a product, including the users' ability to interact, the sharing of users' location with others, if in-app purchases of digital goods are completed, and/or if unrestricted internet access is provided



2020 Top 10 Most Violent Video Games

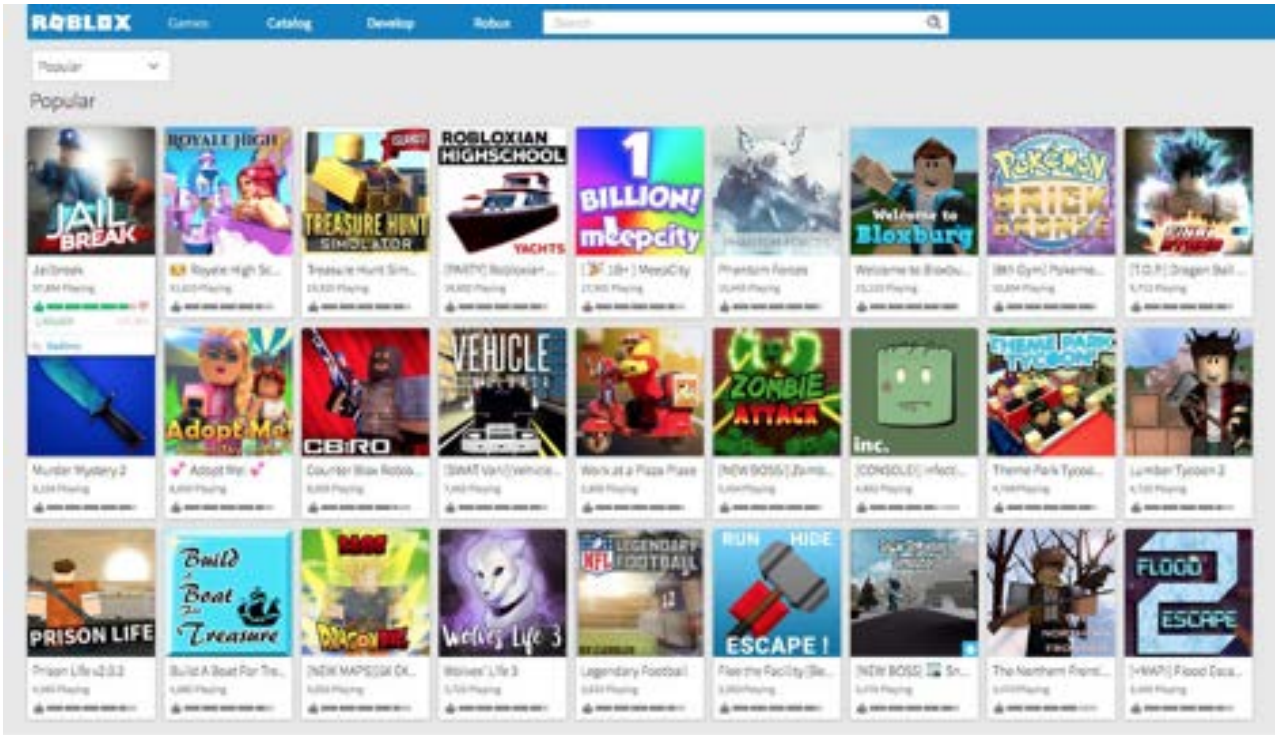
1. Until Dawn
2. Mortal Kombat Series
3. Grand Theft Auto Series
4. Red Dead Redemption 2
5. God of War
6. DOOM
7. Resident Evil Series
8. Call of Duty Series
9. GORN
10. Hellblade

We encourage parents to do their research on any video games before allowing your children to play them. A detailed description of all of the above games can be found through Google online. Two of the most popular games played by our youngest children aged 4-13 are Roblox and Minecraft. Both of these games can be played in single-player as well as Multiplayer Online. It is a multiplayer mode that includes chat and messaging features, which parents should be aware of and monitor at their discretion.

Roblox



Roblox is a downloadable interactive game platform that allows users to play multiple types of games inside the Roblox world. It is a creative, Lego-style sandbox environment.



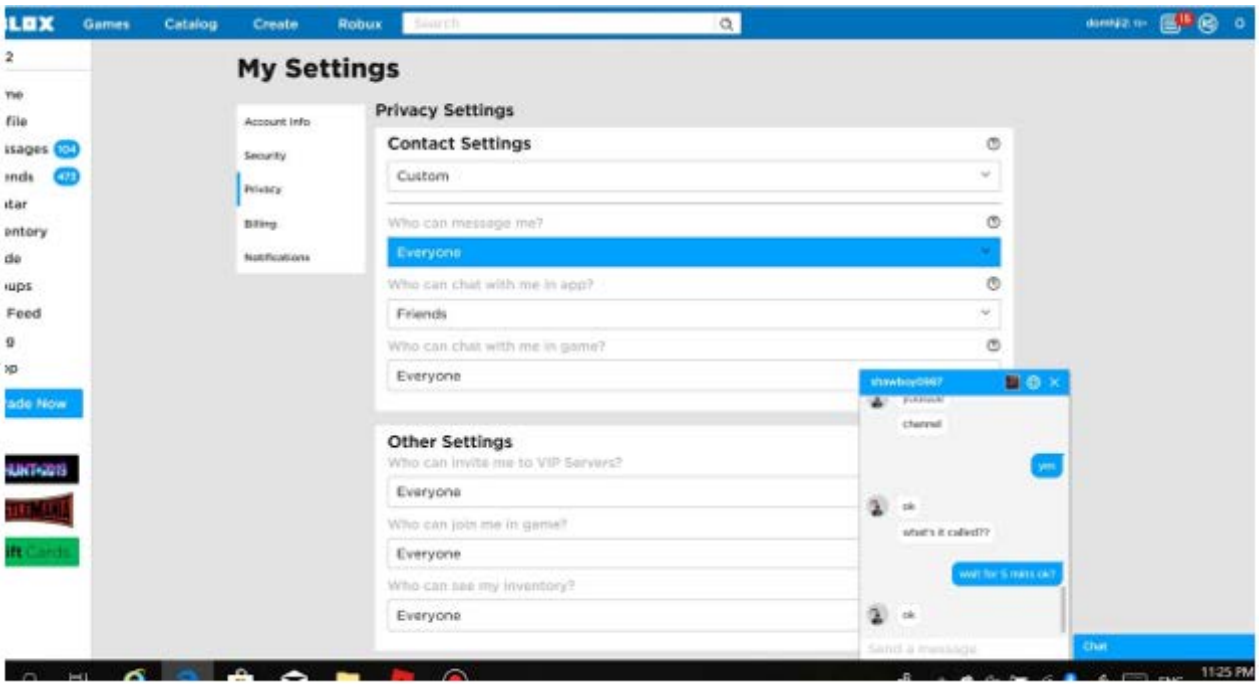
Roblox has built-in capabilities for friends lists, messaging users, and in-game chat. The chat function works differently depending on the users' age - for users 13 and under, the chat is built off a list of "whitelisted" words, preselected by the developers as safe for children to use. If the user is over 13 (or sets their birthday so it appears they are) then chat is more open-ended, however, there

is still a built-in "blacklist" function that attempts to keep curse words and derogatory terms out of the chat.



Swearing Example

Roblox privacy settings also permit us to control who is allowed to interact with our child. The user can adjust whether everyone, friends, or no one has access to communicate both inside games and using the platform's messaging system. By setting the appropriate age category and ensuring privacy settings are updated, parents can limit the interaction of users with the account.



Minecraft



Minecraft is one of the most accessible video games available, as it has sold more than 200 million copies across PC, game consoles (Xbox, Playstation, and Nintendo Switch), and smart devices. It is very easy to learn and can be played anywhere. Minecraft can be played either in the online world or offline.

Game Modes

- **Survival**

  The player can level up, search for resources, and craft different weapons, tools, and structures. Players have to fight hunger and monsters during the night.

- **Hardcore**

  Same as Survival Mode but the player only gets one life.

- **Creative**

  The user cannot die and has access to all the blocks and items available. With this, they can create whatever they want. The player also has the ability to fly to get from place to place faster.





An example of what a Minecraft house can look like.



Players online can work together to build some amazing creations. Each block was individually placed to create this.

Online Play and Chat



Multiplayer allows players to play alongside friends. They can build, mine, create, and even fight each other in some servers. All of the game modes that exist in single-player also exist in multiplayer, as well as the game difficulties. Players are always prompted to choose between single-player or multiplayer. When playing multiplayer, the user must select the server they wish to play on. When playing on an open server, the user can interact with anyone else. This includes the chat function as displayed below.



Minecraft does have child-friendly servers available, which you have to request to be included on. This ensures random players will not come into the servers as they will not have access. Single-player is the safest option, as no one can join or chat with a single-player user.

Moral of the Story

Minecraft is, for the most part, an appropriate game for children - especially in single-player Creative Mode.

Fortnite



Amongst one of the most popular video games available today, since it's release in 2017 by Epic Games, Fortnite has accumulated over 350 million players globally. Fortnite is available to download for free on PC, game consoles (Xbox, Playstation, Nintendo Switch), and as a mobile game for smart devices on iOS and Android.

Game Modes

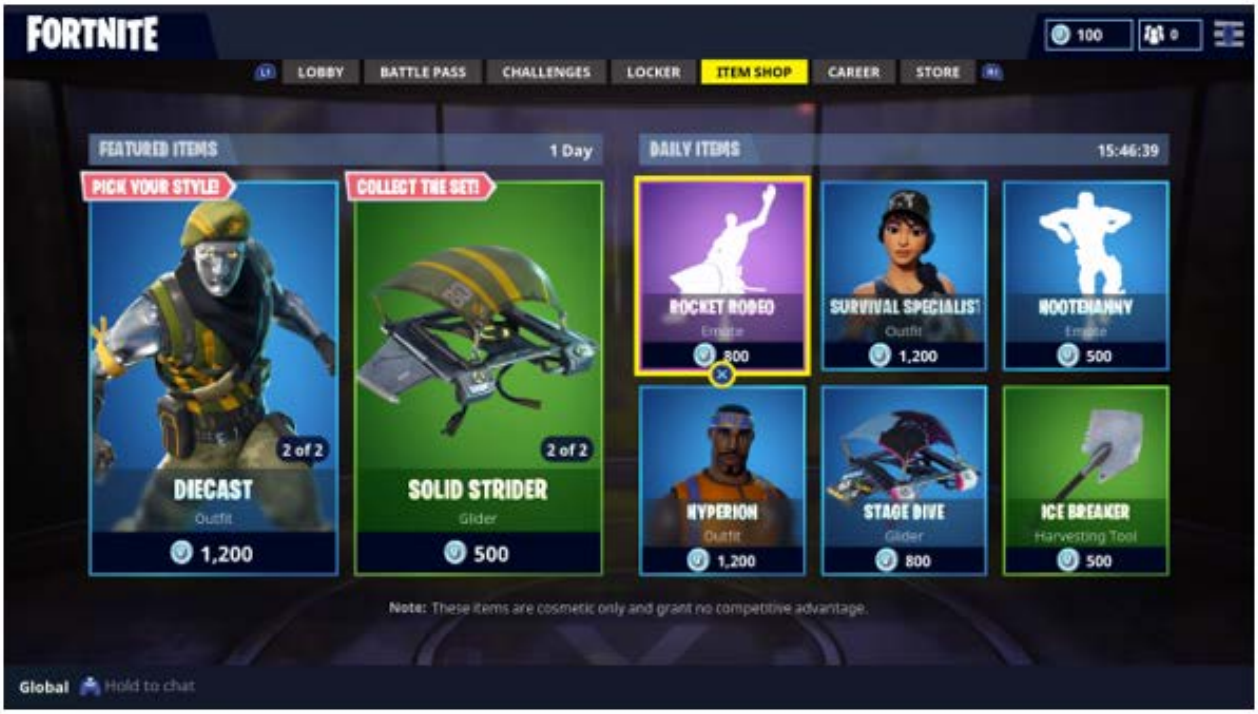
- **Fortnite: Battle Royale**

  A Battle Royale game mode allows up to 100 players to compete in a player-versus-player setting. Players can play alone (Solo), with a friend (Duo), or in a group of 4 (Squad). The objective is to pick up weapons, ammunition, and bandages to kill off other players and be the 'last man standing'. Players can hide out in buildings and even collect resources to build their structures and traps.

- **Fortnite: Creative**

  Creative mode in Fortnite is much like other Creative Modes which act as a sandbox-style game that allows players to build maps with free reign on what to put in their game, different types of game modes, and game time.

- Fortnite: Save the World
  This game mode allows 4 players to work together towards a common objective on various missions against zombie-like husks. Some of the objectives include fighting off the computer-generated "zombie husks", save survivors, and defend equipment.



Although Fortnite is technically 'free-to-play', it is important to note that Fortnite is a game that includes micro-transactions. Players can opt-in to purchase a game pass that gives them special items, allows them to earn certain achievements, and gives them 'loot boxes', boxes to open that include in-game items such as special emotes, dances, and skins. The currency in this game is called "V-Bucks" and can be purchased with real-world currency.

Online Play and Chat

Players can communicate in-game through both text chat functions as well as a voice-chat function. Players can mute other players if they do not wish to hear from them or can mute themselves if they do not wish to be heard. There is no moderation in either the text chat or the voice chat functions.

Moral of the Story

Fortnite should be played with close parental supervision by children who are emotionally mature enough to handle the content of the game. Fortnite should not be played by children who are not at an age that is equipped to handle unmoderated text or voice chat, gun violence, or high-stress situations.

Valorant



Valorant is fairly new to the gaming scene, but since it's release by Riot Games in June of 2020, the game has accumulated over 13.5 million monthly players. Valorant is currently available for download on PC and not yet available on game consoles or smart devices.

Valorant is a 5 player Vs. 5 player team First Person Shooter (FPS) game where precise gunplay meets unique character abilities. Although technically 'free-to-play', like it's competitor Fortnite, the game includes micro-transactions where players can opt-in to purchase a game pass that gives them special items, allows them to earn certain achievements, and buy gun skins and effects.

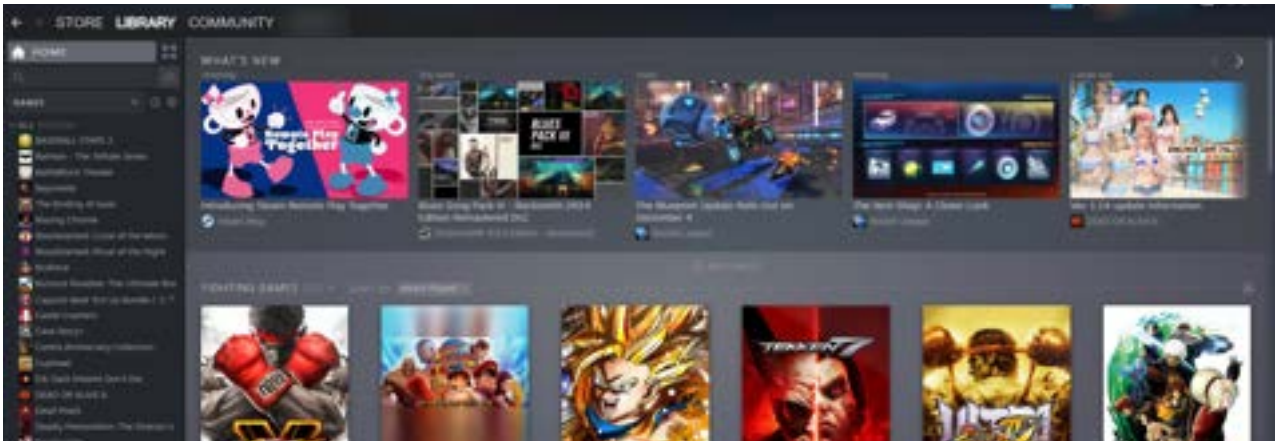


Steam



Steam is a free downloadable software where users can purchase and download both paid and free games online. Steam acts as a cloud-based gaming library where games are stored and can be downloaded on any device that is associated with the user's Steam account.

Although gaming communications and ratings are based on the individual games that are downloaded, Steam also has its own community where users have profiles and can be identified by individualized usernames and profile photos. Much like social media, Steam profiles can be public or private. Users can also leave comments on Steam profiles and utilize Steam's private messaging service, which includes both voice and text chatting.



Doxing

Doxing (or 'Doxxing') is most commonly known for its use in association with video games that have online multiplayer capabilities but has also become popularized among other subcultures of the internet such as forums, live streaming sites, and mainstream social media. It's important to be aware of doxing when using any form of the internet and understand how it can be prevented.

Doxing is a form of online abuse where identifying or sensitive information of an individual is released online with malicious intent. Typically, information such as one's first and last name, home and/or work address, family members, or even banking information is revealed to the internet in an attempt to intimidate the victim or even subject them to dangerous and vulnerable positions both online and in the real world. Motivations of doxing can include personal, competitive, or political reasons. Doxing does not discriminate and web users of all ages, genders, and internet experiences can be targeted. Doxing is also one of the few forms of cyberattacks that can cause direct, serious, and lasting harm to its victims.

Searching and obtaining an individuals' publicly available information and re-posting it online is not technically considered a cybercrime or attack, however, doxing can become illegal if this publicly available or private information is obtained through illegal methods such as hacking or extortion. Other facts that may cause doxing to cross the line into illegality is harassing or intimidating the victim, invading their privacy, or having the victim assaulted.



In order to avoid having your information doxed, it's important to follow a few best practices of using the internet, including any video games that your child may be playing:

- Don't use legal or identifying first, middle, or last names as usernames.
- Don't post photos or videos of the interior or exterior of your home that may include identifiers such as your address, where your doors, windows, or bedrooms are located within the property, license plates, mail, or locks.
- Don't post photos or videos with any identifying factors to your child's school such as the school name, class schedules, and times, or classmate's faces that have not given permission for their photo or video to be shared - this includes online learning.
- If you are going to leave your home for an extended period of time such as a vacation, be cautious about who you share this information with including the dates that no one will be home.
- Don't list day, month, or year of a birthday publicly.
- Don't post photos or videos of your computer screens, desk stations, or any other personal area where you may expose sensitive information such as mail, email, bank statements, contracts, or personal photos.
- Be cautious of identifying factors to the clothing you wear in photos or videos you choose to share such as school hoodies or uniforms, work uniforms, after school programs, or local causes.
- Always set accounts to private when possible in order to control who you are allowing to view your photos, views, and other information you choose to share online.



Parent Resources

As parents, it can be hard to keep up with all the new social media websites and applications, video games, movies, music, and everything our children have exposure to when given access to the internet. There are resources such as Safer Schools Together and Common Sense Media that can be a huge help when trying to understand current trends of the online world.

Safer Schools Together

Safer Schools Together's Parent Resources includes a library of many constantly updated resources such as this Raising Digitally Responsible Youth: A Parent's Guide, Sexting Safety Agreement, Protect Your Privacy, Social Media Checklist for Parents, Family Media Agreement, and more.

Common Sense Media

Common Sense Media is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to helping kids thrive in a rapidly changing world. Their valuable resources include detailed explanations and reviews of movies, books, video games, TV shows, social media, apps, and more from experts as well as contributing parents and students. If you are unsure if your child is emotionally mature enough for a movie, book, video game, TV show, social media platform, etc. it is worth checking out Common Sense Media to review the content and age recommendations.