

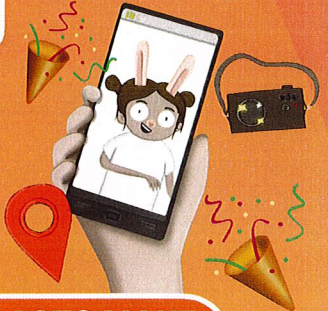
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Snapchat is a photo sharing app for mobile phones and tablets. The app allows users to share images, videos and chat with friends through voice call or text message. Users can share images and videos directly to specific friends, or through a 'story' shared with their entire friend list, which documents the previous 24 hours. In a study, Snapchat was ranked the 4th most negative app in terms of having an impact on young people's health and wellbeing, with children feeling that they can use the app Snapchat to "make you look pretty."



What parents need to know about SNAPCHAT



EXPOSING YOUR CHILD'S EXACT LOCATION

The 'Snap Map' lets you share your EXACT location in real-time through a map on the app. The user's location updates when the app has been opened on the device. There is a warning on the Snapchat website about uploading images and videos to 'Our Story' stating that "snaps you submit to 'Our Story' can still show up on the Map, no matter which location setting you choose!" When uploading to 'Our Story', your child's image or video could appear in "Search results and Stories on or off Snapchat - today or in the future."

ADDICTIVE SNAPSTREAKS

'Snap Streaks' are gained when snaps have been sent back and forth consecutively between friends. The longer that snaps are sent between users, the longer the streak becomes. Furthermore, Snapchat rewards users who have achieved high Snap Streaks, by gifting emojis, adding incentives for users to keep the streaks. Children invest time into making their streaks as long as possible, which can put an incredible amount of pressure on both themselves and their friendships.

SEXTING

While Snapchat's gimmick is that all photos, videos and text disappear eventually, users still have the capability to screenshot or record anything which has been sent to them. Users may sometimes forget that screenshotting is possible and send a compromising image or message to somebody who they think they trust. Due to 'Snaps' disappearing, (users can even send a one-second photo or video), Snapchat has become the chosen platform for children and young people to send sexually explicit images or 'selfies'. Once a photo/video has been screenshotted, or recorded using another device or software, this can lead to further dangers, such as blackmail and cyberbullying.

It is illegal to make, possess, download, store and share sexual images, photos and videos of a person under the age of 18. This also includes any sexual images, photos and videos that a child may have taken of themselves. However, if a young person is found creating or sharing images, the police can choose to record that a crime has been committed, but taking formal action isn't in the public interest.



EXTRAS TO MAKE YOU STAY

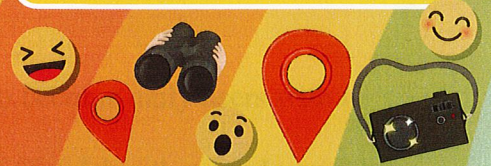
Aside from taking photos and videos, Snapchat has other elements to keep users coming back for more. 'Snap Games' is a feature within the app where users can play minigames with others on their friends list. The games function is easily accessed by tapping on the rocket button during a conversation. Another feature on the app is 'Snap Originals', which allows users to watch content created by Snapchat, celebrities and other accounts, including a mixture of comedy shows, drama, news and more. These features are designed to encourage users to stay on the app, which may be quite addictive.

DAMAGE TO CONFIDENCE

Snapchat's selection of filters and lenses are seen as a great way to enhance your 'selfie game'. Although the filters are often created to promote entertainment and humour, using the 'beatify' filters on photos can set unrealistic expectations and create feelings of inadequacy. Children may strive for admiration and appreciation by sending these 'edited' photos to their friend list. Judging themselves against other users on the app might threaten their confidence or self-worth.



Top Tips for Parents

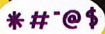


THE RISKS OF SEXTING

It can be slightly awkward talking about this topic with your child, but if it helps them protect themselves, it is worth it. Talk to them about the consequences of sexting and make sure that they're aware of the risks. Ensure your child knows that 'Snaps' can be screenshotted. Teach them that if they post anything potentially embarrassing or harmful (either of themselves or someone else) it can have severe consequences as the message, image or video can be shared further.

REPORTING A STORY, LENS, FILTER, SNAP OR MESSAGE

If your child comes across inappropriate Snapchat content sent directly to them or in another person's story, advise them to report it immediately. This may include an inappropriate lens, filter, message or snap. To report an offensive lens, they should open the app and select the lens they want to report. An info button will appear above the lens. Click this, followed by the flag icon. This will send a report to Snapchat for further investigation. Reports can also be made on the Snapchat support website: support.snapchat.com.



USE 'GHOST MODE'

We highly recommend enabling 'Ghost Mode' on the app so that your child's location will no longer be visible to anyone on the 'Snap Map'. To enable this, go onto the Snap Map and tap the cog in the top-right corner. Here, change the setting to 'Ghost Mode'.

HOW TO DELETE A MESSAGE

Advise your child never to send any negative messages (or images through gallery in the chat on the app) as screenshots can still be taken. You should also advise your child to screenshot any negative comments they receive as the sender can also delete them. To delete a message, simply press and hold the sent message and press delete.

TURN OFF 'QUICK ADD'

'Quick Add' helps friends find each other on the app. This is based on mutual friends or if their number is in their phone book. Explain to your child that this feature can open up their profile to strangers. We highly recommend that your child turns off the 'Quick Add' feature. This can be done in the settings.

RESTRICT STORY VIEWS

Your child can add videos and images to their 'Story' throughout the day which will last for 24 hours. By default, anyone in a user's friends list can see their story. We recommend checking the privacy settings to ensure that this has not been edited. This can simply be done in the app's settings under the 'Who Can View My Story' section. The options to choose from are 'My Friends', 'Everyone' or 'Custom' - we suggest that it is set to 'My Friends'.



Teen Snapchat statistics

- People under the age of 25 use Snapchat for 40 minutes on average every day, more than Instagram's latest stat for the same demographic
- Snapchat ranks as the most popular social media site among teenagers
- Users 25 and younger visit Snapchat over 20 times per day

Source: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)

Teen social media statistics

- 91% of 16-24 year olds use the internet for social networking
- Social media use is linked with increased rates of anxiety, depression and poor sleep
- Social media has been described as more addictive than cigarettes and alcohol

Source: [1](#), [2](#)

What is a Streak?

- A Streak is given to users who have sent each other Snaps consistently for two days or more
- A fire emoji (🔥) will appear next to a friend's name along with a number. The number indicates how many days you have consistently messaged that user back and forth

Snapchat can be addictive for teens

According to ABC News:

- Snapchat has mechanisms in place to incentivize teens to become daily users with a phenomenon called the Streak
- Experts say Streaks can create a concerning hierarchy of friendship that can leave some teens afraid to disappoint others if they drop a Streak
- "The more you cannot leave one day without being on social media, the more your identity gets wrapped up in it [and] the more likely it's going to have negative effects," an expert warned

According to Business Insider:

- Snapchat Streaks have become the most important metric in social media for teens
- Because teens invest so much time in their Streaks, it's common to ask friends to "Streak" for you if you're unable to log on — for example, if you got your phone taken away

- “One of my friends actually called me while I was sleeping to make sure our Streak would still be going,” a student said. “He called me four times and woke me up to keep the Streak alive. He was like, ‘Are we still Streaking?’”
- “A big part of [Snapchat Streaks] is social acceptance,” a 15-year-old student admitted. “Having more streaks makes you feel more popular”

According to Psychology Today:

- It is not uncommon to hear a tween bragging about the number of streaks they have going as well as about the length of each of these streaks. The longer the streak, the higher it’s perceived value
- It is not uncommon to find a 12-year-old user who set up a Snapchat account (without their parents knowing). Streaks may really matter to your tween. Suddenly asking your tween to stop keeping up their Streaks could really stress them out

“Snap Map” lets people locate your teen

- This feature lets teens “pinch to zoom” on their story page and view the map where their friends are posting from
- Predators and scammers use geolocation to know where your kids are at (and when you’re not home, for a possible robbery)

Teens share their Snapchat usernames with strangers

- Many teens add their Snapchat username into their Instagram bio which can be very dangerous
- Even if an Instagram profile is private, anyone can see what is in the bio. This makes it easy for strangers to follow along on someone’s Snapchat profile

Teens share their Snapchat passwords with friends

- In order to maintain a Streak, teens and tweens will share their Snapchat login credentials with friends
- Friends with your password can make inappropriate posts on your account that can negatively affect your future in a big way

Potential negative effects of Snapchat & social media

Anxiety & depression: Research suggests that young people who spend more than 2 hours per day on social media are more likely to report poor mental health, including psychological distress (symptoms of anxiety and depression).

Sleep: Numerous studies have shown that increased social media use has a significant association with poor sleep quality in young people. Using phones, laptops, and tablets at night before bed is also linked with poor quality sleep.

Body image: Body image is an issue for many young people, both male and female. Studies have shown that when women in their teens and early twenties view Facebook for only a short period of time, body image concerns are higher compared to non-users.

Cyberbullying: Bullying during childhood is a major risk factor for a number of issues including mental health, education and social relationships, with long-lasting effects often carried right through to adulthood.

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO): FOMO has been robustly linked to higher levels of social media engagement, meaning that the more an individual uses social media, the more likely they are to experience FOMO.

Best & worst social media apps for teens' mental health

Best:

- YouTube
- Twitter
- Facebook

Worst:

- Snapchat
- Instagram

What parents say about Snapchat

New Snapchat Discover Stories regularly have sexually explicit images and articles — not for kids! We decided to let our oldest daughter (13 at the time) have the popular app, Snapchat a year or so ago in the context of sending fun filtered videos and pictures to her trusted friends. However, the app has gone through many revisions since we first allowed it. It now has Discover Stories with pictures and links to articles which appear front and center when you open the app. For the past week or so, I have tried to look at these every day to see what these articles are promoting. Many have steamy almost nude graphics which are visible before snapchatters click through. This is the norm, not the exception. And the article names are often sexually explicit —

“Celebs tell stories of how they lost their virginity,” “4 Emojis for Steamy Sexting,” “A Guide to Lady Parts for Guys,” and more. One this past week was about orgies.... These explicit, often trashy articles and pictures have been present every single day I have looked. The app says it is appropriate for kids ages 12+ but in my opinion as a parent, this is definitely not the case! If you are considering for your tween/ teen, I recommend opening an account first for yourself and monitoring the articles for a week or so. Then decide what you feel is appropriate for you family.

BE A PARENT. I have read a lot of reviews on Snapchat. I’m frankly appalled at the parents that say my kid use it appropriately there’s nothing wrong with it. I’d have to ask how do you know your kid is using it appropriately? The videos the pictures they all disappear within 5 to 10 seconds of someone sending them. However there are ways to save the pictures that people want to save that you send them. So if your 13 or 14 year old girl or boy is sending inappropriate content of any kind, it can be saved and sent out to the world. It is very easy to friend people on it. It is very easy to connect with people that your family have no clue who they are. *It is not that I don’t trust my children. But I do not trust their thirteen-year-old judgement. They are not developmentally mature to make the right decisions without guidance. Snapchat provides 0 ways for a parent to guide their child. As an adult with my adult children I have fun with it. But it is not something I’m willing to let my 13 year old daughter be apart of. I’m willing to bet that most of these parents that think it is just fine haven’t picked up their child’s phone and gone through their content on much of anything. That’s a generalization. I get it. But please look at your kids phones and text messages and Facebook and Instagram. It is your job and you’re right as a parent.*

Source.

What can parents do?

- Know your child’s username, follow them, get involved, have discussions, and monitor their Snaps
- If your student can easily navigate the new update, make them the expert and have them teach you more about the app
- Have your student watch our Parent University videos that will show them that anything they post on social media (including Snapchat) has the ability to last forever
- Demonstrate the ways that negative posts can come back to hurt their reputation in the future
- Remind your teen that it’s okay to be silly and have fun on social media as long as they are positive (with a little bit of gratitude)

RSPH and the Young Health Movement (YHM) published a report called [#StatusOfMind](#), which examines the positive and negative effects of social media on young people’s health. The report includes a list of social media platforms, according to their impact on young people’s mental health.

How Parents Can Talk to Their Kids About Snapchat:



Dr. Lina Velikova

Lina Velikova, MD

Snapchat is a very fast and addictive social network that can negatively impact teens' and tween's self-esteem. It is designed to encourage people to post things daily and be connected at all times. The major problem is that people usually post idealistic photos on Snapchat, thereby creating pressure on everybody else to do the same.

Teens may easily feel dissatisfied if they don't look fit and beautiful like others on Snapchat. The dissatisfaction may lead to a number of mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders and many more.

Another issue with Snapchat is cyberbullying. Unfortunately, it is not so rare among teens, plus it makes it more difficult to trace since all of the Snapchat posts disappear very quickly.

The most important thing for parents is not to judge or undermine the importance of social media to their kids. Instead, they should talk to their kids about social media and encourage them to be happy with the way they are. Spying on kids may affect their trust and cause even more problems in the future. The best (and hardest) strategy is to teach them how to be safe online and have occasional conversations to check for potential alerts.

How To Get Your Kids Out in the World and Off Their Phones:

Laurie A. Couture, LMHC



Laurie A. Couture, LMHC

Snapchat and the screen medium itself have the same addictive effect on the human brain as opioids. Adolescents and young adults are more vulnerable to behavioral addictions than adults because the prefrontal cortex, the part of our brain that can put the brakes on impulsive behavior, does not complete development until the mid-20s. Due to their heavy use of screens and apps like Snapchat, teens are also missing out on face-to-face social connections with family and friends, physical activities, time in nature, solitude and hands-on activities that are crucial to optimal neurological, psychological, social and physical development.

I recommend that parents think outside the box and focus on what nature intends for their child's development. Families who seek out educational alternatives such as hands-on, project-based or arts-based schools and homeschooling can help their child escape some of the pressure of the public school peer group and expectations that social media is a requirement for friendships. Assist your teens with setting up activities, groups and events at your home or in the community where teens can have real life experiences and time to connect and have fun.

Conclusion:

It's important for parents to have open communication about all social media. We especially encourage this for for Snapchat. The pressure to post perfect looking photos or keep up with their "streaks" can be harmful for teens and tweens' self esteem. Talking with your kids about having self-confidence and the importance of knowing their worth outside of social media is a good way to combat the negativity that often comes from Snapchat. SmartSocial.com has placed this app in the Red Zone as it can be harmful to users. Parents should monitor their teens and tweens use of the app if they allow them to have it on their phone.

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