

What Apps Are Your Children Using and What Do They Do?

Texting and instant messaging aside, do you know what your child is doing on the computer and on his or her smart phones? As a parent, I am sure that you are seeing less of your child's face, and more of the top of their head as they hunch over the latest gadget, while communicating with friends- at least we assume that they are conversing with friends.

Let's take a quick look at some of the most popular apps being used by teens.

1. **Ask.fm**- (developer's minimum age of 13). People can post questions and answer other's posted questions. The poster may do so anonymously if they wish. Anyone, including those without an ask.fm account can see what's posted on a profile.

Concerns: Total strangers may interact with your child. Also, this has been an avenue for anonymous teasing and cyber bullying.

2. **Facebook**- (developer's minimum age of 13). People are able to connect with family and friends online. Although this social networking site is falling behind newer sites in use, it is still popular.

Concerns: Although there are many settings that promote privacy, many users are not aware of exactly how much information that they are sharing with the public. Strangers may "request" to "friend" your child where they would be able to see all of your child's information on their profile. People continue to use this site to bully, threaten, and intimidate others by creating fake profiles, posting mean messages, pretending to be someone else.

3. **Instagram**- (developer's minimum age of 13). People are able to filter and post pictures and videos to upload on this social networking site.

Concerns: Posts may contain pictures or videos of children without their knowledge. Users can also share their location with others. This site can also be used to bully, threaten, and intimidate others. Users should realize that their posts can end up anywhere.

4. **KiK**- (developer's minimum age 17; ages 13-18 must have parental consent). This app is a texting service that lets texts and pictures be sent without being listed in the phone's history.

Concerns: Children may use this app to hide their information from their parents. Strangers can still contact your child by sending friend requests and kids sometimes text inappropriate images that are less likely to be found out by parents.

- 5. Omegle-** (developer's minimum age 17; ages 13-18 must have parental consent; however, it is unknown if verification is done). A free online chat room, for texting and also video chatting. Users are able to communicate with total strangers.

Concerns: Kids sometimes think that it is safer to share secrets with strangers. With newer software, the person can make up a "fake stranger" for others to talk to. The bottom line is that you cannot be sure if the person that you are video chatting is real or not.

- 6. ooVoo-** (developer's minimum age of 13). Users can have video chats with up to 12 people at a time, send instant messages, and text each other.

Concerns: Users are able to talk to many people at the same time. This site can also be used to bully, threaten, and intimidate others. Users can "video" the screen and use the material in the future without the other person's knowledge.

- 7. Poof-** An app for your phone, you can use it to hide any apps that you do not want others to see.

Concerns: This app will hide other apps that you may not want them to use. If you see the Poof Icon- they are hiding something from you.

- 8. Snapchat-** (the site reports that those who are 13-18 should get permission from a parent, and no one under the age of 13 should use the site; however, no age is requested upon sign-up). Users are able to send pictures to be viewed by others for up to 10 seconds and then they disappear. They are said to be "gone forever".

Concerns: Children can be misled to believe that they are safe to post anything without repercussions. Users may also take a screenshot and be free to share it on other social networking sites. This site can also be used to for sexting and bullying. It was also discovered that Snapchat had saved thousands of these pictures when they were hacked in 2014. The bottom line is that those pictures are never truly deleted!

- 9. Snaphack-** An app that goes along with Snapchat. This saves all pictures that have been shared on Snapchat without the other user's knowledge.

Concerns: Users may believe that there are no remaining pictures out in cyberspace. When in reality; someone has saved them for possible future use.

- 10. Vine-** This app allows users to upload 5 second videos that replay over and over again (looping). The videos are shared and reshared with others.

Concerns: This site can also be used to bully, threaten, and intimidate others.

- 11. Whisper-** This app encourages users to anonymously post confessions of their secrets without consequences.

Concerns: This site can give children a misguided sense of safety. The app allows private messages to allow strangers to talk to your child. Anyone with the app in your geographic area can see your Whisper; therefore, it is a real possibility that someone may be able to identify the user.

- 12. YikYak-** (developer's minimum age requirement is 17). This app allows the user to remain anonymous and post comments that can be seen by the first 500 people within a 5 mile radius.

Concerns: Translation: "I can be mean, and no one will know it's me."