

September 2023



RAISING DIGITALLY RESPONSIBLE YOUTH

a guide for parents and caregivers



SAFER
SCHOOLS
TOGETHER



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INTRODUCTION

Our current world climate is constantly connected to technology. What do we need to know as parents/caregivers 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 and being a trusted adult to the children in our lives could make 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 and/or admissions departments. The goal of this parent/caregiver 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 by staying informed. Good luck!



Photo by Julia M Cameron.

GENERAL PARENTING TIPS

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

- Keeping phones and devices out of the bedroom. Sleep is important for growth and according to 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 sleep¹. Sleep disturbance in childhood is known to have adverse effects on health, including poor diet, obesity, sedentary behavior, reduced immune function, and stunted growth. It has also been linked to mental health concerns².
- If possible, have a central charging station for all portable 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 modeling digitally responsible behavior and setting an example for youth that you don't need to sleep with your device(s), it helps children understand that they don't need to either!



Photo by Driven by Décor.

- Know their passwords – it is your parental right. You paid for the device that you gave your child, which means...you guessed it! You own it! You have the 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 that you're unfamiliar with, download the app and try it out yourself 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 and how it works!
- Put tape or a sticky note/sticker over the device camera when not in use.

¹ [Bedtime use of media devices more than doubles the risk of poor sleep in children -- ScienceDaily](#)

² [Children and Sleep | Sleep Foundation](#)



Photo by ReviewGeek.

- Build a culture of openness and trust in establishing a two-way dialogue about technology and social media between you and your child. You want to be approachable to your children **when**, not if, a concern 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 with, 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 online stays, but we don't get to decide 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/caregiver 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 as well so they can make better decisions online and offline on their own.

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 Together³.

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 and follow other users/posts within a particular category or contribute to a conversation.

³ [Request a Training \(saferchoolstogether.com\)](https://saferchoolstogether.com)



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, and this username is typically unique to this individual user (may not be used by others, unless that username is no longer in use).



Passwords

We all know the challenge of trying to remember our passwords for a website or an app and it's easy to fall into the habit of using the same passwords for all our logins. This is a dangerous habit, especially if it is something predictable such as a dog name or home address. 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 ensure they are strong with a mix of numbers, letters, and special characters (!@#\$\$%^&*).

TIP: Try a password manager! There are many free password manager apps available in the iOS app store, Google Play store, and in the form of browser extensions. Password managers store your passwords on a digital “keychain” and can help you to manage passwords (especially really strong ones), so you don't have to!



SEXTING VS. SEXTORTION

There is no doubt that smartphones are having a tremendous impact on our everyday lives. The use of instant messaging especially has skyrocketed since the introduction of smartphones and social media. Research suggests that over 41 million messages are sent out **every minute**⁴, and this number is expected to continue to increase.

The term ‘sexting’ has emerged as the use of text messages and instant messages to send sexually explicit photographs, videos, and messages has become more prevalent. Sexting is also commonly found 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/videos and messages that can only be seen once for only a few seconds before it “disappears” into cyberspace – unless, of course, someone was to take a screenshot and distribute it to others...

⁴ [Text, Don't Call: Messaging Apps Statistics for 2022 \(kommandotech.com\)](https://www.kommandotech.com/text-dont-call-messaging-apps-statistics-for-2022/)

Sexting has several dangers to acknowledge regarding 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 for our youth to understand that when they choose to engage in sexting, they are subjecting themselves to sextortion.

Video by YouTube user FBI – Federal Bureau of Investigation.



SOCIAL MEDIA APPS TO KNOW

SOCIAL MEDIA APPS TO KNOW

Snapchat (“Snap”)

Since its release in 2011, Snapchat has remained one of the most popular social media applications that our youth are using to communicate and share their digital lives. With over 293 million daily active users worldwide and over 5 billion Snaps created every day⁷, Snapchat is the de facto medium of communication for students in grades 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 (almost) no evidence and for the most part, don’t become part of a youth’s digital footprint.

The foundational feature that makes Snapchat desirable to youth is the disappearance of photos/videos that vanish after they have been opened. Users can set a viewing time of as little as 1 second up to 24 hours after which, once viewed, it will be deleted from the recipient’s device and as the company claims, from Snapchat’s servers⁸.

Snapchat allows users to take still photos, record short videos, add text, and create drawings to send 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 screen recording of the video. **Note:** if you take a screenshot using the recipient device, Snapchat will notify the sender that you’ve taken a copy.

Despite news headlines that suggest 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.

Video by YouTube user Simple Alpaca.

⁷ [Snapchat Demographic Stats: How Many People Use Snapchat in 2023? \(backlinko.com\)](https://backlinko.com/snapchat-demographic-stats-how-many-people-use-snapchat-in-2023/)

⁸ [Do Your Snapchats Really Delete After Being Opened? - PSafe Blog](https://psafeblog.com/do-your-snapchats-really-delete-after-being-opened/)

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 that they have just taken to be saved into their photo gallery, their 'My Eyes Only' folder, 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 photos/videos added to a story can be viewed by all Snapchat users or just those on their friends' list for up to 24 hours.

Chat

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

Streaks

Seen within the chat log screen, a user'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 with each other within 24 hours, they lose their streak with their friend (this is a huge deal to today's youth!)



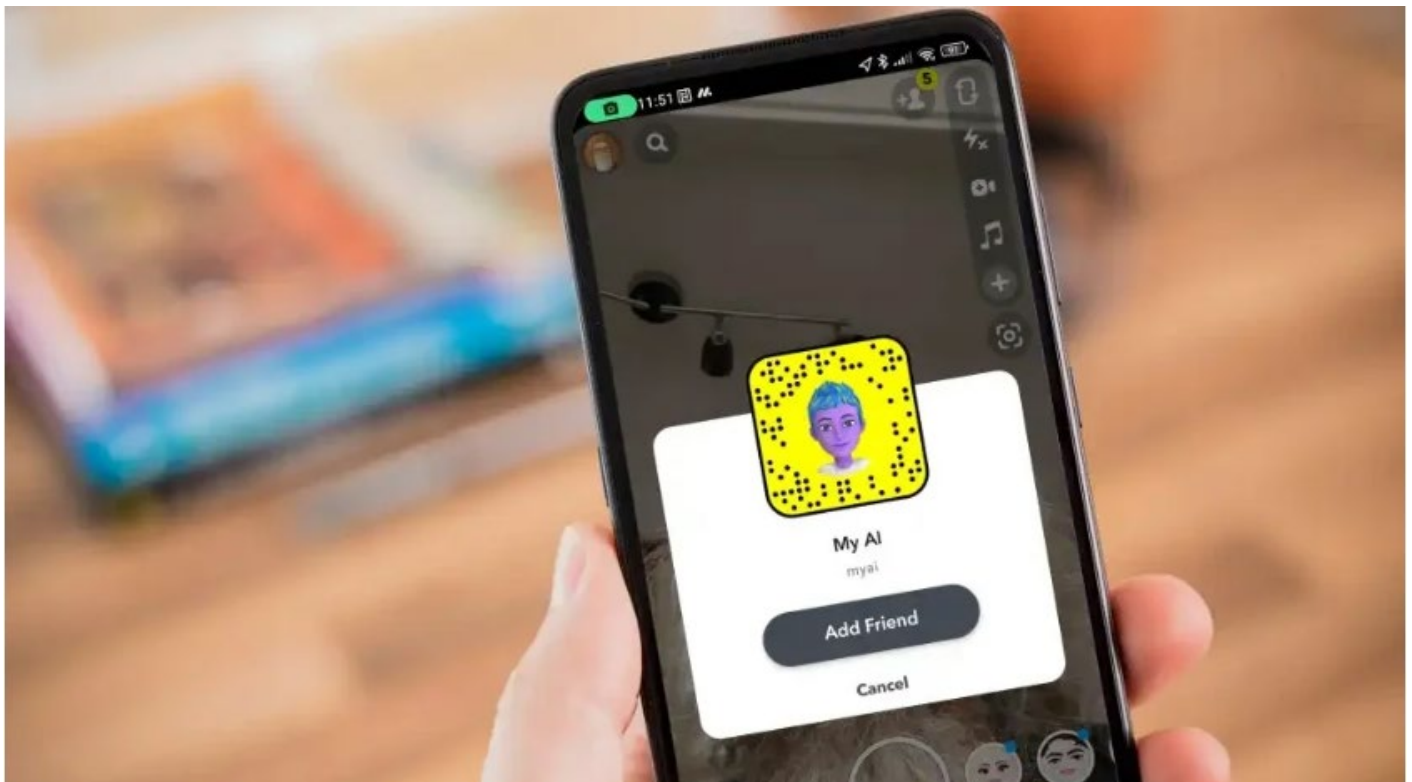
My AI

As the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) increases, we can expect to see a surge in the development of new AI services. Most recently, Snapchat rolled out its own AI bot, called My AI. This new AI bot is powered by OpenAI's ChatGPT technology but has additional safety enhancements and controls that are unique to Snapchat.⁹ What differentiates Snapchat's AI from services like ChatGPT or Midjourney is a user can customize the bot's name as well as the way it looks reducing the perception of interacting with an AI system.

With My AI, users can leverage a variety of AI capabilities. To access My AI, users need to access the Chat screen. From the Chat screen, users will then be able to select My AI and ask the AI bot a variety of questions. Some examples of how My AI can be used include asking for advice, requesting help to plan a trip or find directions, as and asking for simple suggestions such as 'What to make for dinner?'¹⁰ If a user has shared their location with Snapchat, My AI will be able to provide specific information including nearby location recommendations.¹¹

Users currently have the option to send feedback to Snapchat by pressing and holding on any response from the AI bot. This allows users to share more on what they'd like to see more or less of while Snapchat continues to train the My AI bot.¹²

Currently, there is no verified way, nor has SST found a way to permanently remove My AI from a user's Snapchat account. We encourage parents/guardians to talk to their children about the risks associated with having conversations with AI, and how AI should not replace a trusted adult, parent, or adviser if they are experiencing a difficult situation.



⁹ [What is My AI on Snapchat and how do I use it?](#)

¹⁰ [What is My AI on Snapchat and how do I use it?](#)

¹¹ [What is My AI on Snapchat and how do I use it?](#)

¹² [What is My AI on Snapchat and how do I use it?](#)

Snap Map

The Snap Map allows users to view Snaps of sporting events, celebrations, breaking news, etc. in their communities and around the world. This feature is available within the application itself, as well as being accessible via a web browser without even needing to log in to the app¹³. Perhaps the most concerning content viewable from this map, however, is where your friends are...exactly where they are...in real-time. Users can share their locations with everyone on their “friends” list so they can see exactly where their friends are and what they are doing (driving, sleeping, listening to music, etc.) in real-time on a virtual map.



This is an example of what the Snap Map looks like to a user from the mobile application while logged into their account.

These are all of Ashley’s friends who have Snap Map enabled. They are represented by the Bitmoji¹⁴ they designed for themselves.

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

Within the Snapchat Settings, users can turn off the ability for others to see their location by enabling something called Ghost Mode or only allowing their location to be viewed by certain friends (I.e. their best friend) and/or parents/caregivers or other trusted adults.

Ghost Mode is a full privacy mode that makes a user’s presence on the Snap Map visible to the user alone. This disallows other users from viewing their location, including users on their friend list.

The Snap Map is often used by SST threat analysts and law enforcement to find missing students by asking peers of the missing student to share their Snap Map with us.



¹³ [About - Snap Map \(snapchat.com\)](https://www.snapchat.com/about/snap-map)

¹⁴ [Bitmoji](https://www.snapchat.com/about/bitmoji)

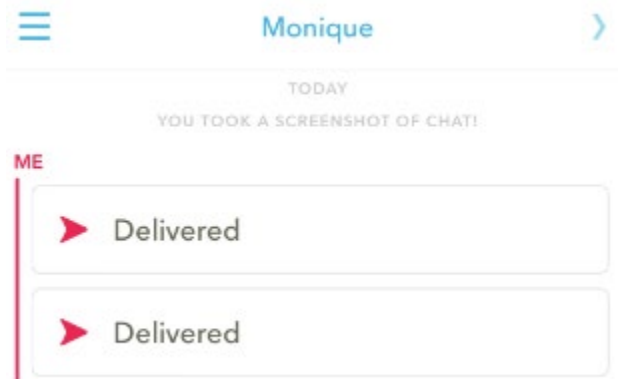
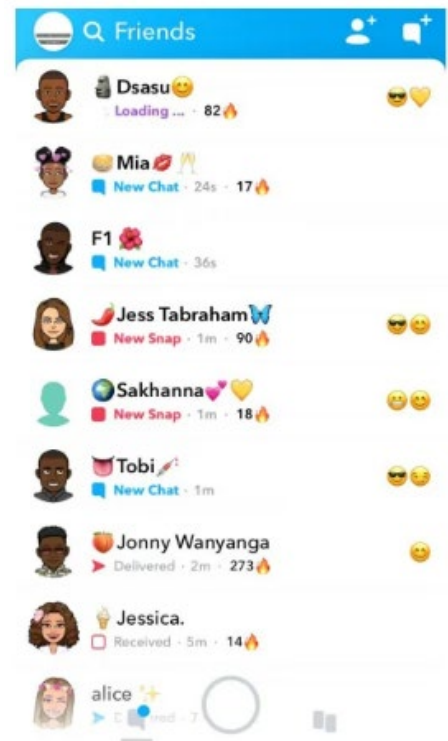
Message Screen

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 whom this user interacts with the most.

To test your knowledge, try answering the following questions (answers in footnotes at the bottom of this page):

- What does a blue-colored notification mean?¹⁵
- What does a pink-colored notification mean?¹⁶
- What does a purple-colored notification mean?¹⁷
- Who is this user's best Snapchat friend?¹⁸
- What is a Snapchat best friend?¹⁹
- Who has the longest Snap Streak with this user and how many days has this Snap Streak lasted?²⁰
- Who was the last person this user sent a message to and when?²¹
- Does this user currently have a Snap Story? How do you know?²²



- Are the Snaps to Monique incoming or outgoing?²³
- What type of Snaps were sent to Monique (Photo, Video, or Text)?²⁴
- At the top of the Snapchat with Monique, there is a notification that a screenshot was taken of the chat – who can see this?²⁵

¹⁵ Text or audio communication.

¹⁶ Photo communication.

¹⁷ Video communication.

¹⁸ Dsasu (indicated by yellow heart).

¹⁹ The person this user has sent and received the most amount of Snaps to/from.

²⁰ Jonny Wanyanga (273 days).

²¹ Jessica (5 minutes ago).

²² Yes; indicated by the round photo in the upper left-hand corner of the screen.

²³ Outgoing as they say 'Delivered' rather than 'New Snap' or 'New Chat'.

²⁴ Photo.

²⁵ Both the user who took the screenshot and Monique.

Chat Screen Icon Guide

Sent Icons

-  You sent a Snap without audio
-  You sent a Snap with audio
-  You sent a Chat
-  Depending on privacy settings, a gray pending icon may appear if someone has not accepted your friend request

Opened Icons

-  A friend opened a Snap without audio
-  A friend opened a Snap with audio
-  A friend opened a Chat

Received Icons

-  You have an unopened Snap (or group of Snaps) without audio
-  You have an unopened Snap (or group of Snaps) that includes audio
-  You have an unread Chat

Viewed Icons

-  Your Snap sent (without audio) has been viewed
-  Your Snap sent (with audio) has been viewed
-  Your Chat has been viewed
-  A Snap or Chat is pending and may have expired

Screenshot Icons

-  A screenshot has been taken of your Snap without audio
-  A screenshot has been taken of your Snap with audio
-  A screenshot has been taken of your Chat

Replay Icons

-  Your Snap sent without audio has been replayed
-  Your Snap sent with audio has been replayed

Photo courtesy of Snapchat

Friend Emoji 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 Meta²⁶, the popular photo- and short video-sharing app Instagram has over 500 million+ daily active users²⁷. 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.

Video by YouTube user Simple Alpaca.

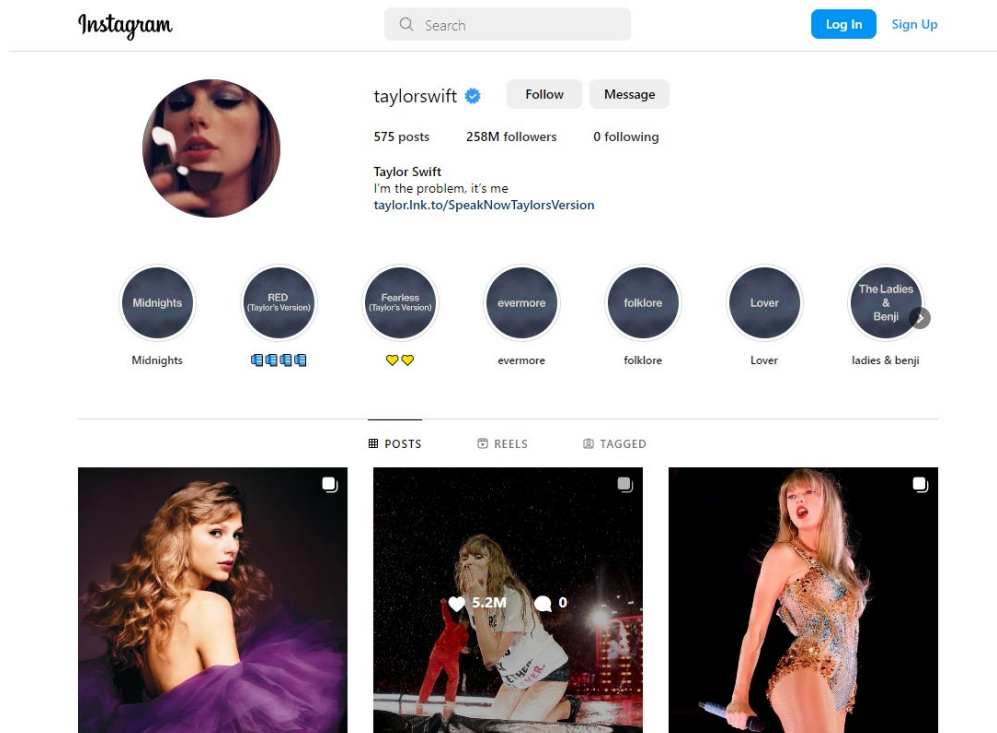
²⁶ [Meta Platforms - Wikipedia](#)

²⁷ [How Many People Use Instagram? 95+ User Statistics \(2023\) \(backlinko.com\)](#)

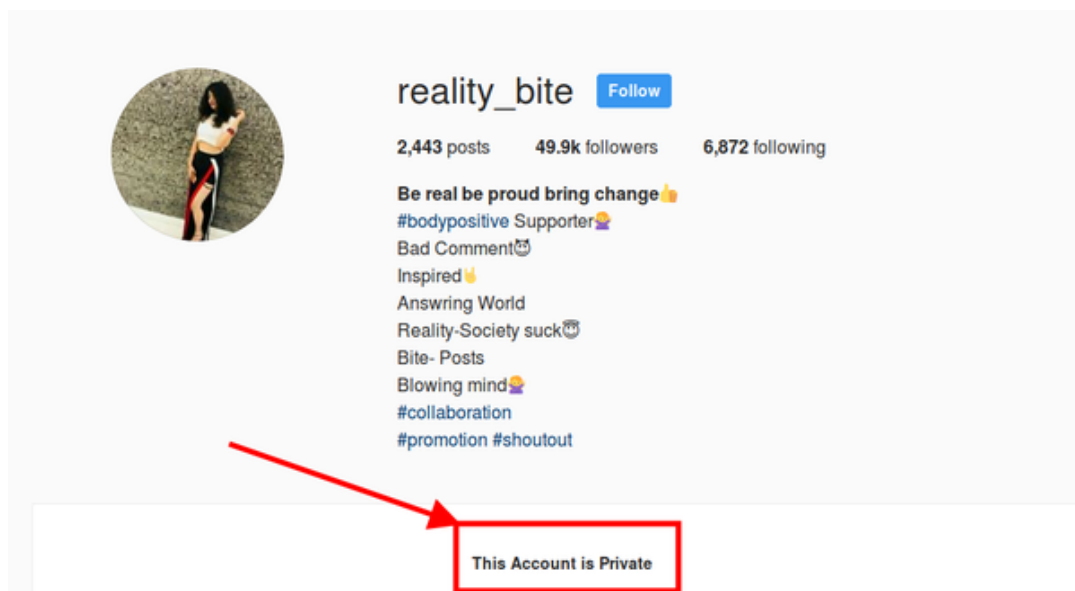
Privacy Settings on Instagram

On Instagram, users either share posts with everyone by having a public profile or only share posts with people they have approved to follow them with a private profile. SST strongly suggests children have private profiles until they are ready to start using their profile as a portfolio for prospective jobs, admission to post-secondary institutions, and other personal/professional projects.

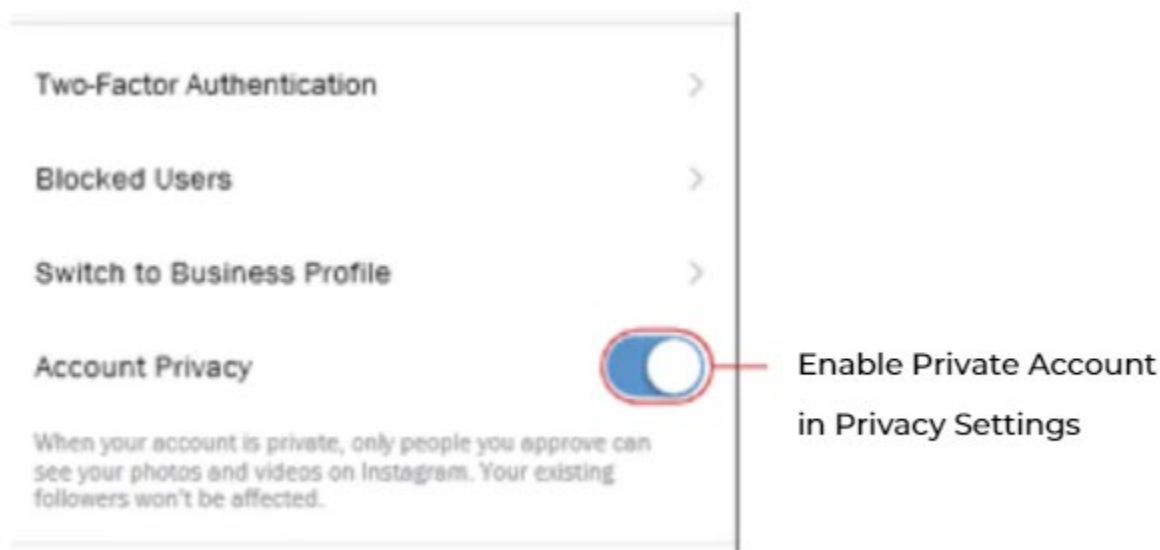
A public profile will show the account's content publicly on Instagram, even without logging in:



A private profile will show the account but not the content they post:



Having a private account on Instagram requires users to go to their account settings. There, under ‘Account Privacy’, users can toggle the Account Privacy switch.



Instagram Stories

Users on Instagram have the ability to post photos/videos to their “Stories” for the public or just for their followers to see. These stories are only visible for 24 hours. This concept was copied from the very popular Snapchat app that has quickly gained traction among youth. Users can see who has watched their Instagram Stories, and can receive poll questions, messages, and reactions from other users.



Photo by NapoleonCat.

Instagram Reels

Instagram Reels were added as a feature in 2020 and were originally 15 seconds long²⁸. These are short videos with music included, very similar to the style of TikTok videos. Instagram Reels can now be up to 90 seconds and can also be cross shared on Meta's other platform Facebook. Instagram Reels are the fastest-growing feature worldwide and are expected to have over 1.22 billion users each month²⁹.

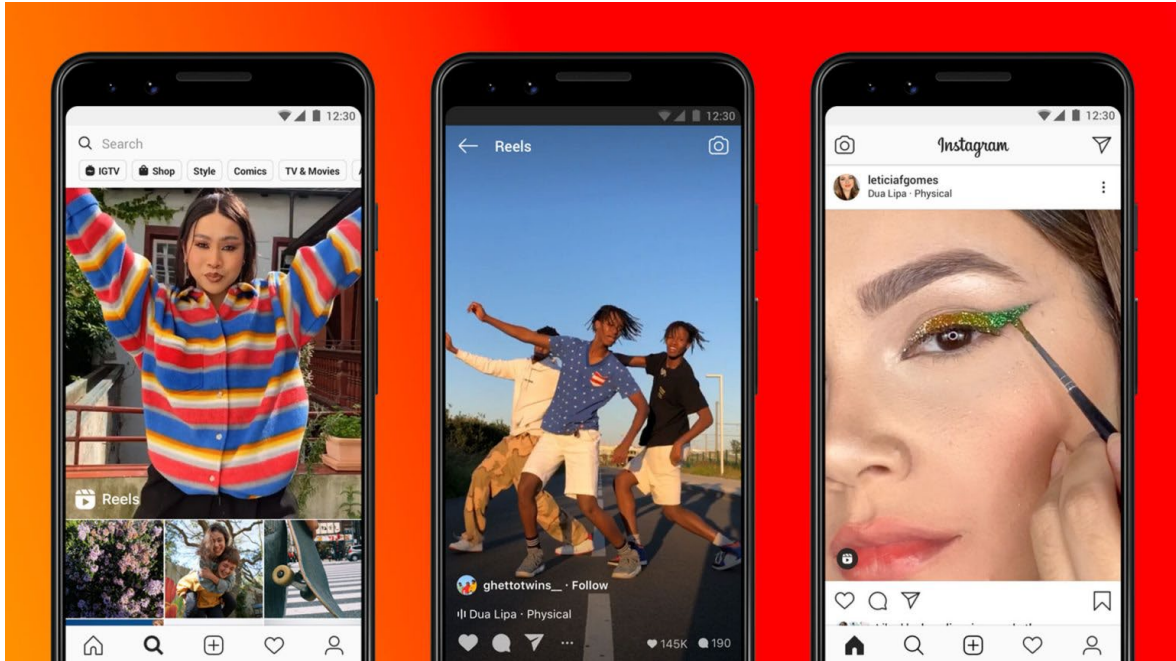
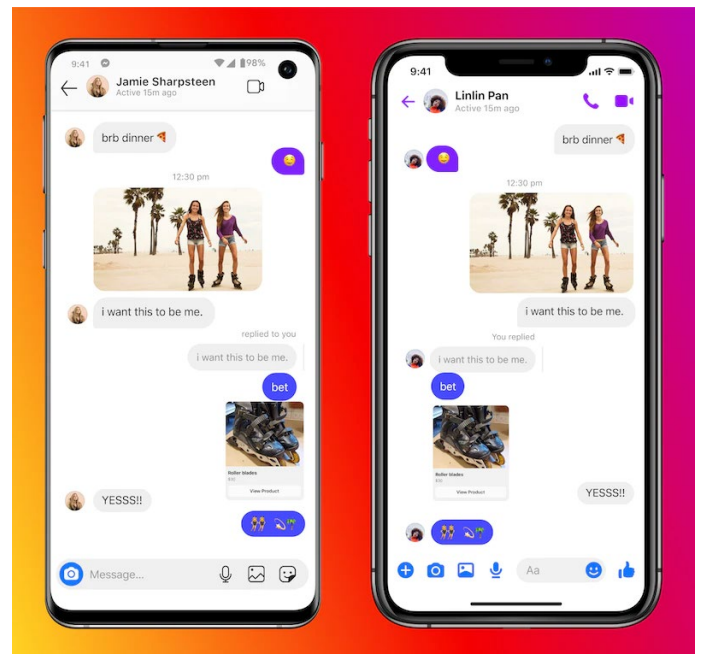


Photo by BuddyMantra.

Direct Messaging (“DMs”)

Direct Messaging, or ‘DMs’, is a private message inbox within the Instagram app. This is a feature that allows users to privately communicate, like text messaging. This is where youth can receive private messages from their friends, participate in group chats, or even receive messages from strangers. There is currently no way to turn the Instagram DMs off.

It is important to note that photos, videos, and voice recordings can be sent through Instagram DMs, including from accounts that aren’t mutual (doesn’t follow the user/the user doesn’t follow them).



²⁸ [Instagram Reels - BrandMentions Wiki](#)

²⁹ [24 Instagram Reels Stats That Might Surprise You \(hootsuite.com\)](#)

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 globally in 2022 with 672 million downloads³⁰ that year after 9 quarters of holding the same title³¹ and over 3.5 billion downloads since the app's inception³². Despite several incidents of data breach allegations³³ and being banned in several countries³⁴, TikTok is not going away anytime 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. However, TikTok does offer some form of parental control under their Family Pairing feature³⁵. Age-inappropriate content is inevitably reaching 37.3% of its estimated audience that is under the age of 18³⁶, as well as audiences who are potentially younger than the required 13 years of age, as it is quite easy for younger app users to lie about their age.

The average time a user spends on TikTok is 95 minutes per day³⁷; this is an increase of 43 minutes per day from 2022's statistic of 52 minutes³⁸. 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 100 minutes every day. This time is similar to but exceeds the amount of time spent on other social media platforms such as YouTube (47.5 minutes), Snapchat (30.8 minutes), and Instagram (30.6 minutes)³⁹.



Video by YouTube user Simple Alpaca.

³⁰ [Most Popular Apps \(2023\) - Business of Apps](#)

³¹ [TikTok Remains the Most Downloaded App in Q1 2021, According to New Data | Social Media Today](#)

³² [How Many Downloads Does TikTok Have in 2023? \(App Stats\) - EarthWeb](#)

³³ [TikTok sued for billions over use of children's data - BBC News](#)

³⁴ [Which countries have banned TikTok? | Mashable](#)

³⁵ [How to Use TikTok's Parental Controls \(howtogeek.com\)](#)

³⁶ [TikTok User Statistics \(2023\) \(backlinko.com\)](#)

³⁷ [9 Stats About Average Time Spent on Tiktok 2023 \[New Data\] \(businessdit.com\)](#)

³⁸ [10 TikTok Statistics You Need to Know in 2022 \[New data\] \(oberlo.com\)](#)

³⁹ [Average Time Spent On Social Media in 2023 \(by Platform\) \(oberlo.com\)](#)

There is also a growing number of adults on TikTok. More than 56% of users are between the ages of 25-54⁴⁰ 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 potentially children of all ages, if not just ages 13 to 18, can see the content they choose to post.

Although TikTok states in its Terms of Service⁴¹ 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 day⁴².



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 Triller⁴³ - an American-based app with over 250 million downloads⁴⁴ and the ability to share videos with added music or sounds similar to TikTok.

YouTube has also followed this trend with YouTube Shorts, which can be found on Page 21 of this guide.

⁴⁰ [Global TikTok user age and gender distribution 2023 | Statista](#)

⁴¹ [Terms of Service | TikTok](#)

⁴² [33+ Amazing TikTok Statistics You Should Know in 2023 \(techjury.net\)](#)

⁴³ [Home | Triller](#)

⁴⁴ [15 Triller Statistics, Facts, and Figures to Get to Know the Platform \(influencermarketinghub.com\)](#)

Facebook & Messenger

Although less popular among youth in comparison to other social media apps, Facebook and Messenger are still very active and important to note. Both owned by Meta, Facebook and Messenger can be used together under Facebook's web browser platform, or separately in their own respective apps from the iOS App Store or Google Play store.

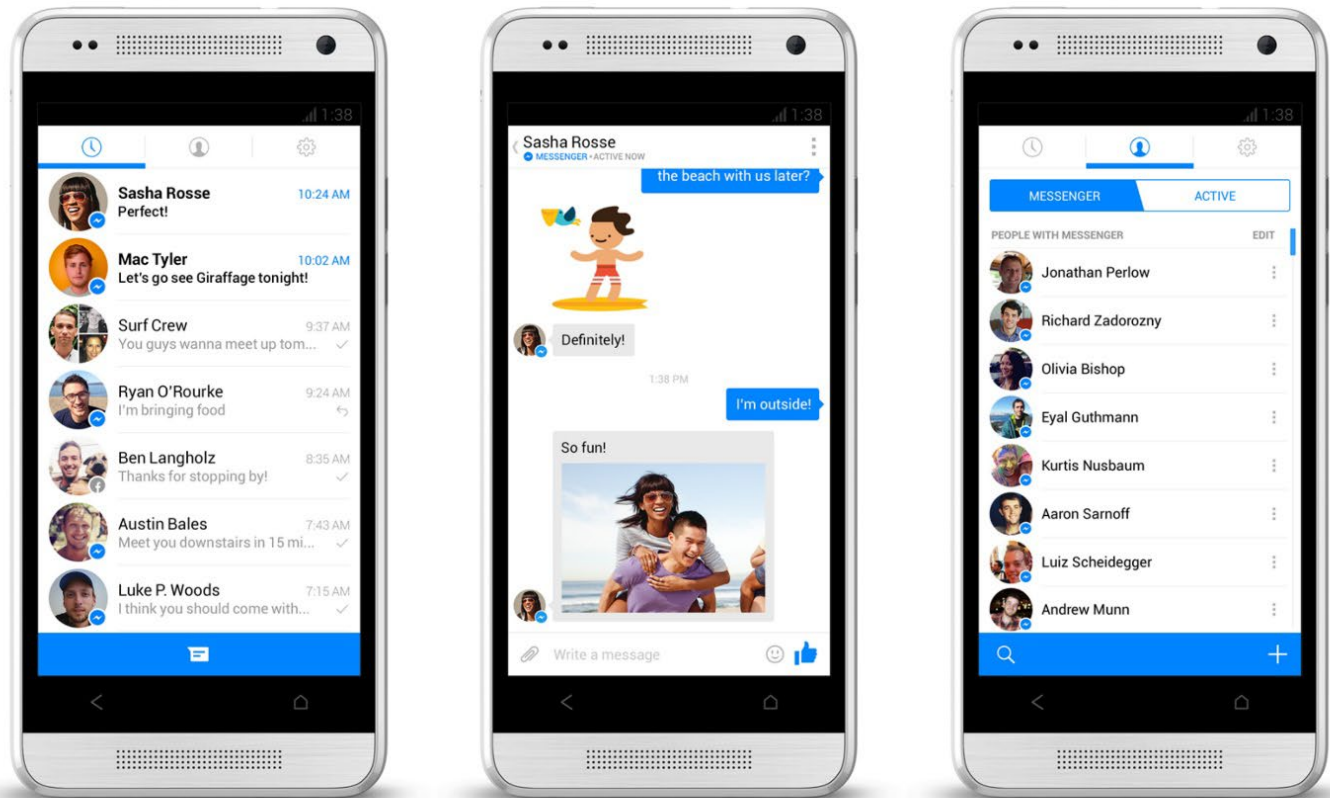
Facebook is a social media platform that allows users to stay connected with friends and family online. Since its creation in 2004, Facebook stands at over 5 billion downloads⁴⁵ and is now operated under the umbrella company Meta, which also owns Instagram.



Messenger is a separate app that is exclusively an instant and direct messaging service which automatically connects with a user's Facebook friend list. Because Messenger is integrated into the desktop version of Facebook but not the mobile version, the separate Messenger app is continuously bringing in over 2 million downloads through the iOS App Store alone⁴⁶ and is used on mobile more frequently than the standalone Facebook app.

⁴⁵ [Facebook Revenue and Usage Statistics \(2023\) - Business of Apps](#)

⁴⁶ [Facebook Messenger - Statistics & Facts | Statista](#)



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

- Recent contacts and chat history; allows parents to see whom 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; 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 into 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 data.

YouTube

PewDiePie, MrBeast, Markiplier, DanTDM, and Logan Paul: 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” creators before.

The over-the-top humor, outrageous pranks, and clickbait⁴⁷ 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 world⁴⁸ (second to Google) with over 2 billion monthly active users⁴⁹ and approximately 5 billion videos watched every day⁵⁰.

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.



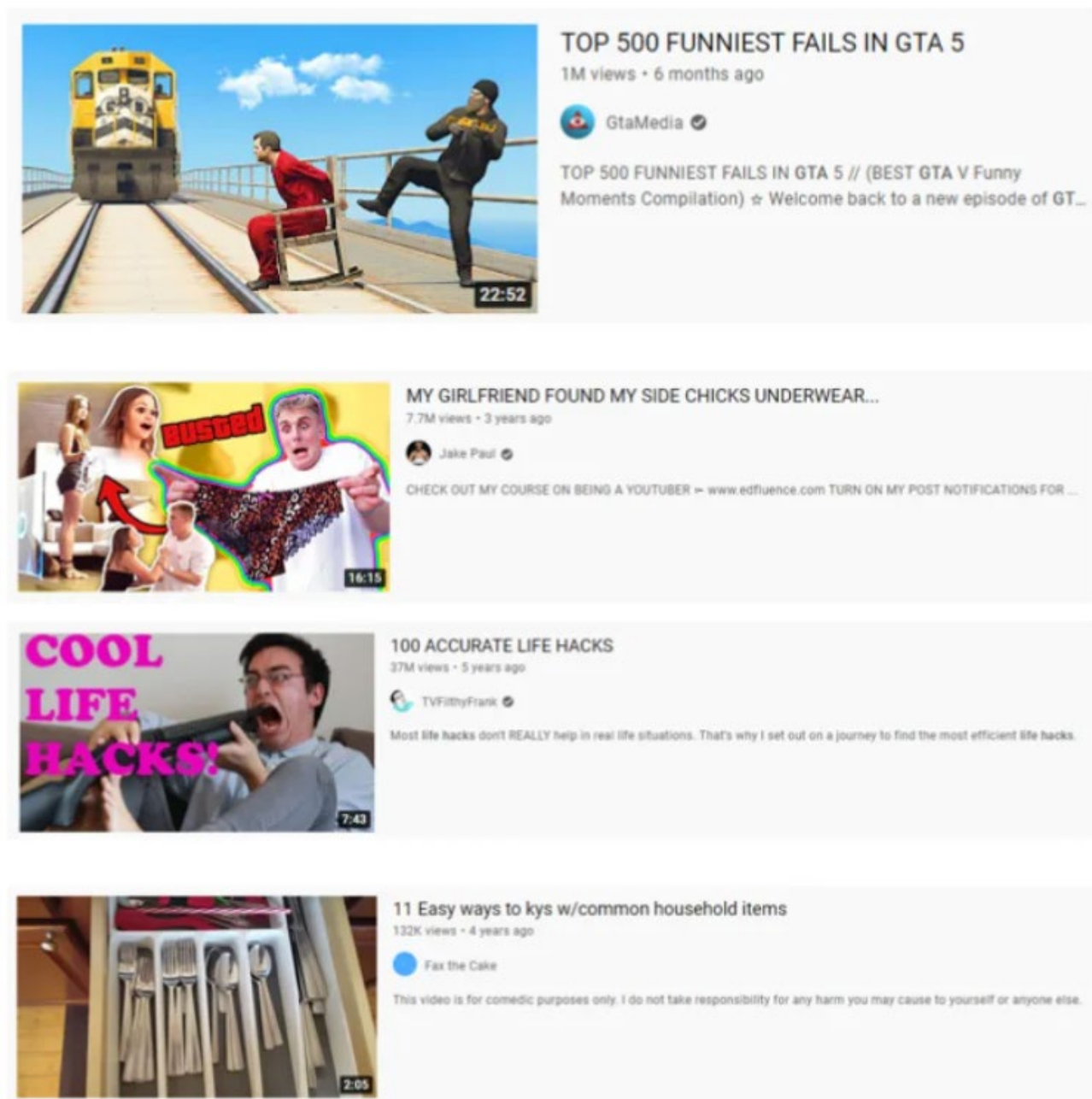
Video courtesy of YouTube user Creator Brain.

⁴⁷ [What is Clickbait? - Definition from Techopedia](#)

⁴⁸ [List of most visited websites - Wikipedia](#)

⁴⁹ [How Many People Use YouTube in 2023? \[New Data\] \(backlinko.com\)](#)

⁵⁰ [How Many YouTube Videos Are Watched A Day in 2023? - EarthWeb](#)

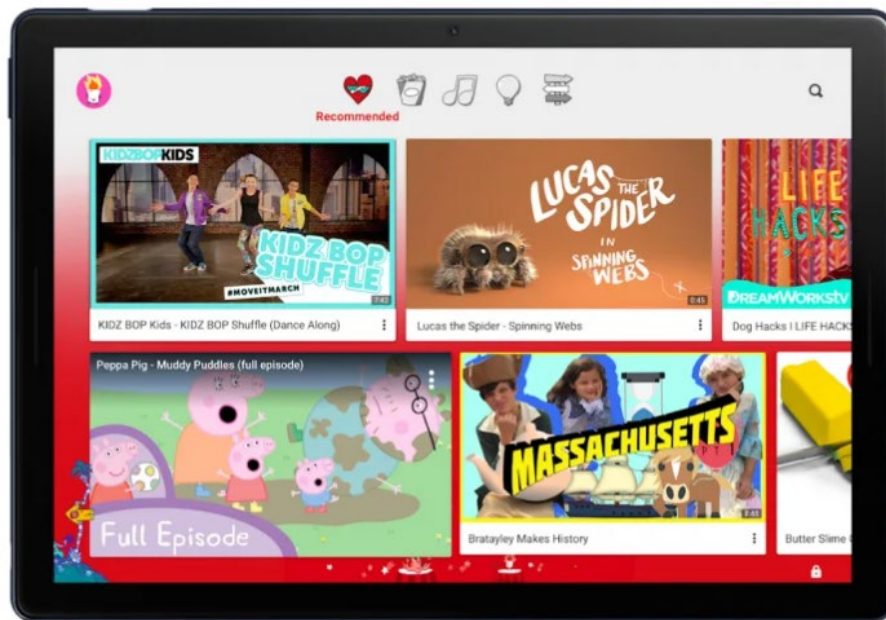


These are just a few examples that could potentially appear as 'Suggested Videos' on the front page upon visiting YouTube. Users can watch YouTube passively without being logged into an account or can sign in to track the type of videos they watch and like, subscribe to channels, and upload their own videos.

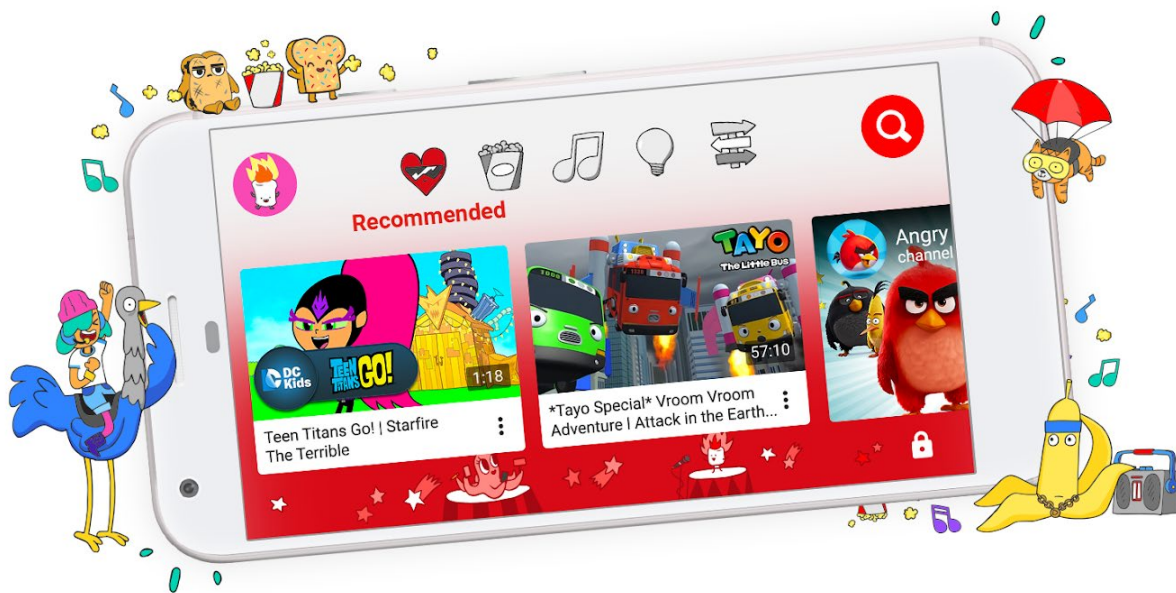
Although YouTube does offer features such as Restricted Mode⁵¹, it is best practice to download YouTube Kids for children under 13 years of age. This version of YouTube (explained in further detail on the following page) only displays content that is tagged as 'Kid-Friendly' by YouTube and their trusted 'Kid-Friendly' creators and advertisers.

⁵¹ [Turn Restricted Mode on or off on YouTube - Computer - YouTube Help \(google.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/help/restricted-mode)

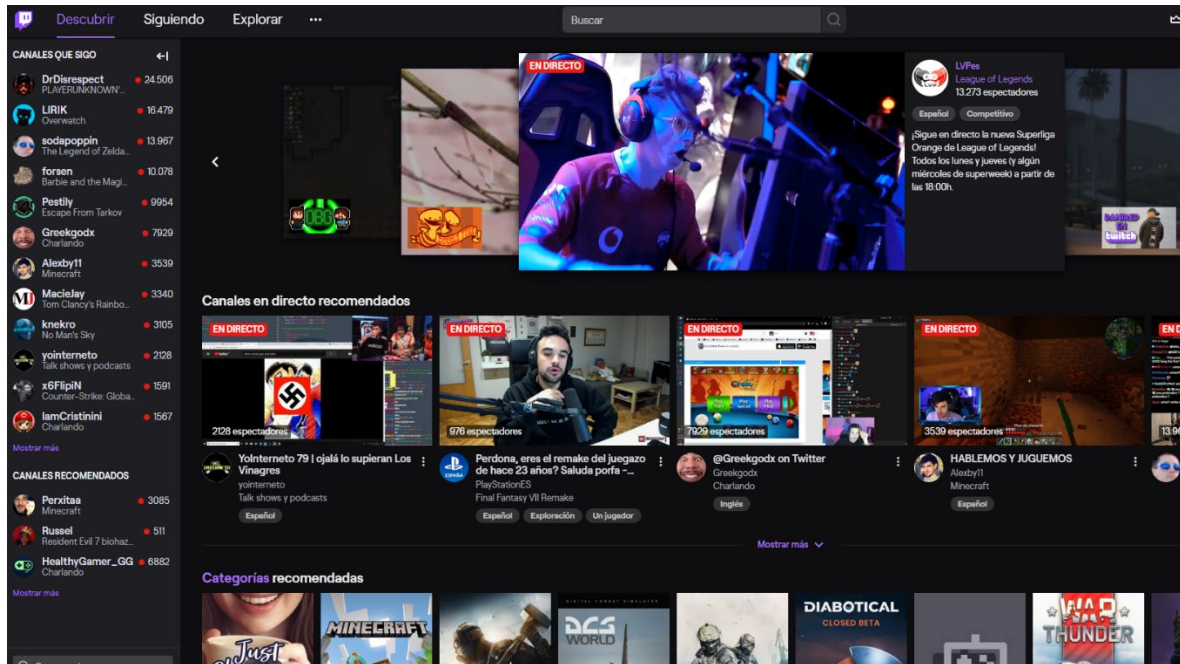
YouTube Kids



For younger audiences, YouTube has created an app that is specifically aimed at children between the ages of 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 user can set up profiles for their children and can even control in-app searching. Parents/caregivers can also set viewing timers to help monitor and control app usage. YouTube Kids can be a good alternative to YouTube as it introduces our youngest to digital media on our terms and with specific, child-friendly boundaries.



Twit



Twit is a live video 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 is typically playing a video game while engaging with their live audience in the live chat.

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. Twitch users have sent more than 14.2 billion chat messages since the streaming service's inception in 2011⁵². The average Twitch user can be found using Twitch for 95 minutes per day⁵³, which can include watching and/or streaming.

Twit is generally free to watch, and following streamers is also a free feature. However, there are certain paid subscriptions that users can use to give streamers a set amount of money per month to support their stream called Subscriptions, as well as single-time payments called Donations/Tips and Bits. These can be purchased for real-world currency through the Twitch platform and spent within the website/app 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 USD) 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', 'Art', and 'Pools, Hot Tubs, & Beaches'. It's important to note that although some channels may restrict viewers to ages 18+ (monitored only 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.

⁵² [Twitch by the Numbers: Stats, Users, Demographics & Fun Facts \(muchneeded.com\)](https://muchneeded.com/twitch-by-the-numbers-stats-users-demographics-fun-facts/)

⁵³ [Twitch by the Numbers: Stats, Users, Demographics & Fun Facts \(muchneeded.com\)](https://muchneeded.com/twitch-by-the-numbers-stats-users-demographics-fun-facts/)

Discord

Discord is a free voice and text messaging application that is available as a desktop, browser, and mobile application (iOS and Android) with over 150 million monthly active users⁵⁴. 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. It is estimated that 850 million Discord messages are sent every day (6 billion each week and 25 billion each month)⁵⁵.

Within Discord, users can create or join 'Servers' where they can invite as many people as they would like to engage in a chat together. Voice chat can be used as either an 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 with Discord.

Discord also offers a paid subscription service called Discord Nitro⁵⁶ that allows users to have Discord upgrades such as increased upload limits, customized emojis within servers, HD video streaming, access to games and activities to play within the platform with friends, Server Boosts, custom profiles, and more.

Video courtesy of YouTube user Discord.

⁵⁴ [Discord Statistics 2023: Valuation, Revenue & Market Share \(earthweb.com\)](https://earthweb.com/discord-statistics-2023-valuation-revenue-market-share/)

⁵⁵ [Discord Revenue and Usage Statistics \(2023\) - Business of Apps](https://businessofapps.com/discord-revenue-usage-statistics-2023/)

⁵⁶ [Nitro Benefits and Features | Discord](https://discord.com/nitro)

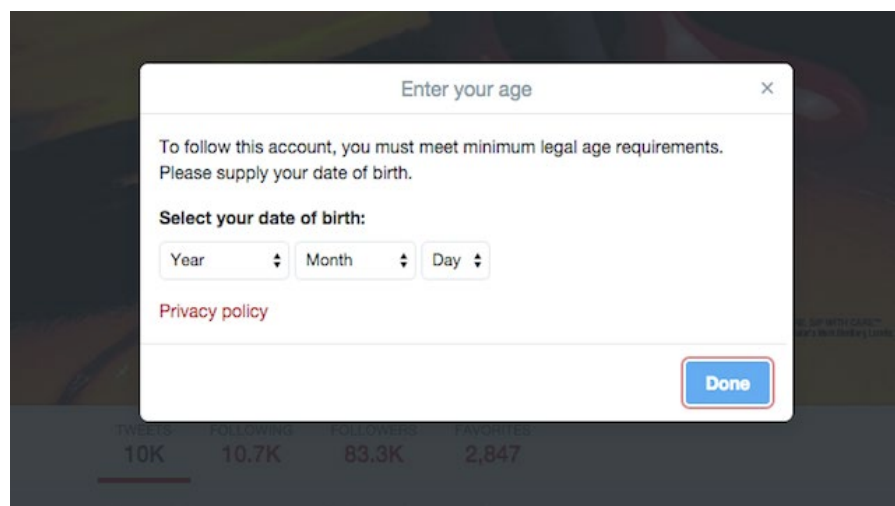
Vault Apps

Vault apps are mobile applications designed to hide private photos, videos, files, 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 browsing, cloud backup, and more. However, teens should be reminded that using technology is a privilege and they are not entitled to full privacy on their devices for their own safety.



The “Rules” (That No One Follows)

Although many social media platforms and apps have a User Minimum Age Agreement⁵⁷ 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.



⁵⁷ [Age Limitation in Terms and Conditions Agreements - TermsFeed](#)

Internet, Texting, and Social Media Lingo/Slang

Lingo	Translation	Lingo	Translation
TFW	That feeling when	Rona/VID	Referencing Corona Virus or Covid
Sheesh	Oh my goodness	Link	Connecting with friends to chill
Sneaky Link	Phrase used to describe a secret sexual relationship	Deaded	Blown off or rejected; deliberately singled out
Real One	A real friend	SKSKSKSK	A way to express excitement about something
CD9	Parents are present	Cap	Another word for lying
Mutuals	To follow and be followed by someone on a social media platform	Periodt/ Periot	Word meant to add emphasis to a point that has been made. Often regarded as a more extreme or intense version of "period."
Snake	A snake is someone who you think is sincere and really nice, but then turns out to be a backstabber	Bands	One thousand dollars
Swole	Muscular	Ham	Someone who enjoys the <u>attention</u> of others and <u>will do</u> crazy things to <u>get it</u>
Snack	An attractive person	Stay in your lane	Stick to your own business
Savage	A <u>bad a**</u> who did something <u>nobody</u> else would do.	OG	OG used to mean <u>Original Gangster</u> although some <u>people</u> these days use OG as a <u>quicker</u> way of saying Original
Derp	When someone does <u>something stupid</u> , weird or <u>odd</u>	Basic	Only <u>interested</u> in things <u>mainstream</u> , popular, and <u>trending</u>
Sus	A shorter version of the word " <u>suspect</u> "	POG /POGCHAMP	A word used to <u>indicate excitement</u> or an epic moment.
Plug	A person who has everything you need	Zooted / Turnt	When someone is very high / Drunk
Day 1	Person that you have a known for a long time or feel close with	Finna	Finally, about to
Ship	A pairing or couple that you want to get a relationship	Bars / Zannies	Xanax, a prescription drug used to help symptoms of anxiety and panic disorders
Wins	Explicit photos or Nudes	GOAT	Greatest of All Time
Lean *also knowns as purple drank, sizurp, dirty sprite, Tris	A mixture of <u>Jolly Ranchers</u> , Sprite, and <u>codeine</u> that will get you high	Simp	Someone who does way too much for a person they like
Lit	Cool/Awesome	DTF	Down To F***
Extra	Over-the-top	Tho	Though
Fire	Cool/Awesome	Emo	Emotional
Shade	Disrespectful manner	VSCO Girl	Girls that use VSCO
Go-Off	To hype someone up	Mukbang	Popular eating videos
Low-Key	Quiet/Modest	WYA	Where are you at?
Salty	Being upset over nothing	Faded	Drunk/Intoxicated
Stan	A crazed fan	Fav/Fave	Favorite

Lingo	Translation	Lingo	Translation
Thirsty	A synonym for someone who is sexually eager	Oof	Onomatopoeia when something bad happens
Tea	Gossip	Cancelled	Bad publicity / boycott
Shook	Shocked/Surprised	FML	F*** my life
Wig	Cool/Awesome	KMS/KYS	Kill myself/Kill yourself
Big Yikes	Uh oh	Dead	Funny/Unbelievable
AMA	Ask me anything	FWB	Friends with benefits
ASL	Age/Sex/Location	GTG/G2G	Got to go
ATM	At the moment	GG	Good game
Fit	Outfit	Bet	I agree
No Cap	No Lie	Flex	Showing off
BF/GF	Boyfriend/Girlfriend	BFF	Best friend forever
F4F	Follow for follow	Slay	Succeed
HundoP	100% sure about something	Roasted	To be dissed
Fierce	Awesome/Positive Spirit	BTW	By the way
	A sexualized term for a desirable body	qq	A texting term for crying
Squad	Group of friends	Weak	Amused
Finsta/Spams	A secondary social media account	Yeet	To discard an item at a high velocity
Cray	Crazy	Mood	Relatable
Cuffed	To be locked down in a relationship	Deets	Details
TBH	To be honest	DGAF	Don't give a f***
DM	Direct message	RN	Right now
GTFO	Get the f*** out	Nic	nicotine, usually in the context of vaping "hit the nic"
Thicc	Description of a person's physical description. Normally used as a compliment	HML (hit my line)	Contact me
LMK	Let me know	HBD	Happy Birthday

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 Guide⁵⁸, 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 has become non-existent. It is not uncommon to hear of some parents deciding to purchase Grand Theft Auto for their 12-year-old! If you are unfamiliar, Grand Theft Auto V has in-game exposure to graphic violence, sexually explicit content and reenactment, alcohol and drug use/abuse, and strong language.

Top 10 Most Violent Video Games of All Time

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Bulletstorm (2011) | 2. Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 (2010) |
| 3. Postal (1997) | 4. Mortal Kombat (2011) |
| 5. Grand Theft Auto III (2001) | 6. Hotline Miami (2012) |
| 7. MadWorld (2009) | 8. Manhunt (2003) |
| 9. Splatterhouse (2010) | 10. Soldier of Fortune (2000) |

⁵⁸ [ESRB Ratings Guides, Categories, Content Descriptors](#)

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. Experts also suggest that due to the global pandemic, online gaming and gambling addictions are on the rise⁵⁹.

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

SST encourages parents to do their research on any video game before allowing children to play them. A detailed description of most games can be found online through Google search. Two of the most popular games played by our youngest children (aged 4-13) are Roblox and Minecraft which have online multiplayer modes that include chat and messaging features which parents should be aware of and monitor at their discretion.

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



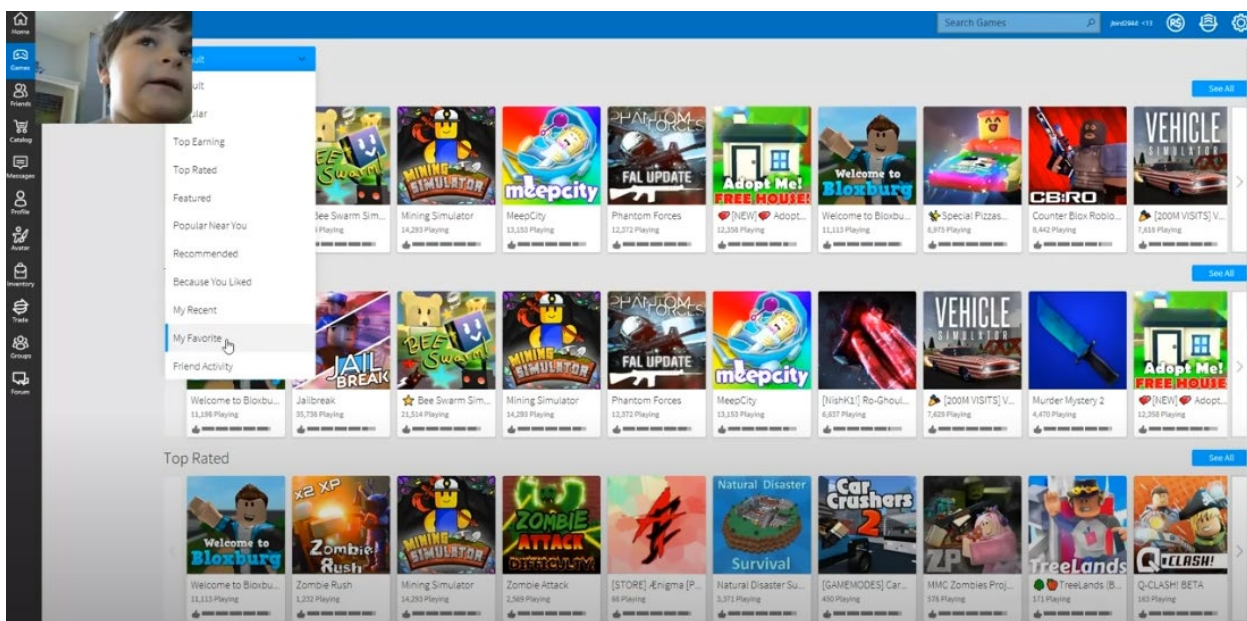
ESRB ratings are categorized into three parts:

- 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.

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 for playing and creating games.

⁵⁹ [Online Gambling, Gaming Addiction Has Increased During COVID-19 \(healthline.com\)](https://www.healthline.com/health/online-gambling)



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.



Roblox privacy settings also permit parents/caregivers to control who is allowed to interact with their children. 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/caregivers can limit interactions with other users.

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 devices⁶⁰. It is very easy to learn and can be played anywhere. Minecraft can be played either in the online world or offline as a single-player.

Game Modes

- Survival; the player can level up, search for resources, and craft different weapons, tools, and structures. Players must fight hunger and monsters during the night.
- Hardcore; same as Survival Mode but the player only gets one life. If they die, the game is over, and they must start fresh.
- Creative; the user cannot die and has access to all the blocks and items available. With this game mode, users can create whatever they want with no restrictions. The player also can fly to get from place to place faster.

Online Play and Chat

Multplayer allows players to play alongside friends. They can build, mine, create, and even fight each other in some servers. All game modes that exist in single-player also exist in multiplayer, as well as the game difficulties.

Minecraft does have child-friendly servers available, which you must request to join. 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.

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 globally⁶¹. 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. Fortnite should not

⁶⁰ [Minecraft Revenue and Usage Statistics \(2023\) - Business of Apps](#)

⁶¹ [Fortnite is now one of the biggest games ever with 350 million players - The Verge](#)

be played by children who are not equipped to handle unmoderated text or voice chat, simulated gun violence, or high-stress situations.

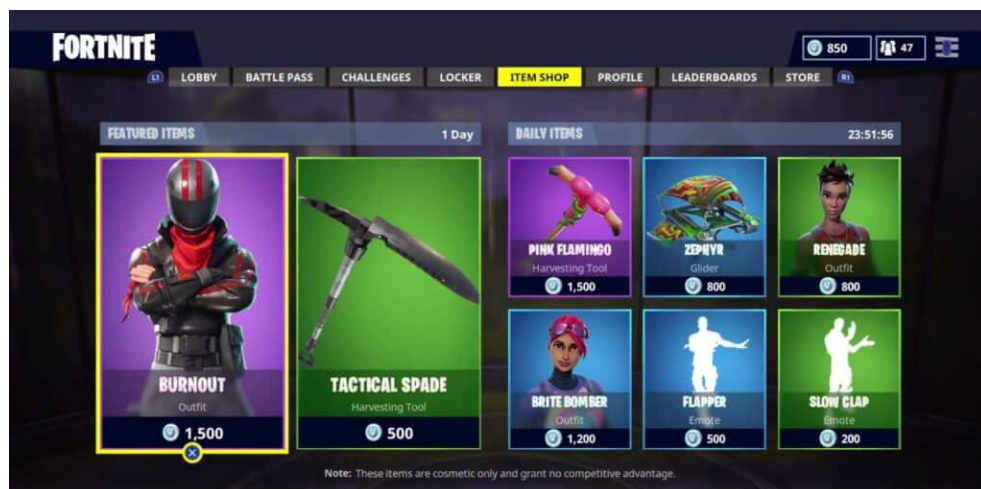


Game Modes

- Fortnite: Battle Royale; a Battle Royale (BR) Game Mode allows up to 100 players to compete in a player-versus-player (PVP) 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", saving survivors, and defending equipment.

Microtransactions

Although Fortnite is technically 'free-to-play', it is important to note that Fortnite is a game that includes microtransactions. 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 gun skins). The currency in this game is called 'V-Bucks' and can be purchased with real-world currency.



Online Play and Chat

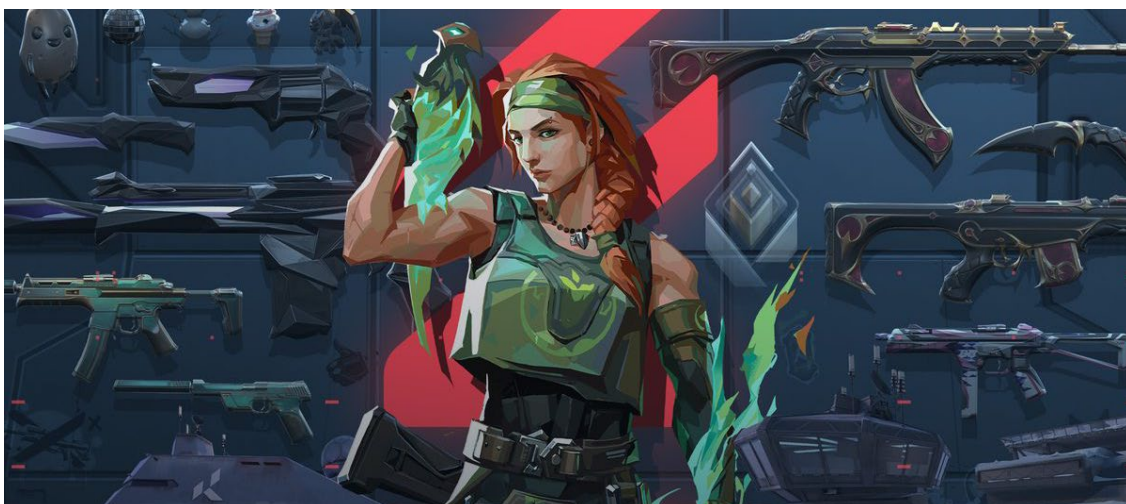
Players can communicate in-game through both text chat functions as well as a voice-chat function. Players can mute other players if they do not wish to hear from them or can mute themselves if they do not wish to be heard. There is no moderation in either the text chat or the voice chat functions, however, users can report these interactions to the Fortnite moderation team to review at a later date.



Valorant

Since its release by Riot Games in June 2020, Valorant has accumulated approximately 21 million players⁶². 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', much like its competitor Fortnite, the game includes micro-transactions where players are enticed to purchase a battle pass that gives them special items, allows them to earn certain achievements, and buy gun skins and effects with real-world currency.



⁶² [Valorant Player Count, Rank Distribution, Revenue \(2023\) \(headphonesaddict.com\)](https://headphonesaddict.com/valorant-player-count-rank-distribution-revenue-2023/)

Doxing

Doxing (or ‘Doxxing’) is most commonly known 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 individual’s 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 factors that may cause doxing to cross the line into illegality are harassing or intimidating the victim, invading their privacy, or having the victim assaulted.

In order to avoid having your information or your child’s information doxed, it’s important to follow a few best practices for 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/videos of the interior/exterior of your home that may include identifiers such as your address, where your doors/windows/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, or classmate’s faces that have not given permission for their photo/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 the day, month, or year of a birthday publicly.
- Don’t post photos/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/videos.
- Be cautious of identifying factors to the clothing you wear in photos/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 whom you are allowing to view your photos/videos, views, and other information you choose to share online.

If you feel you or your child have been doxed, be sure to document the evidence and report the doxing to the platforms they happened on, as well as the appropriate authorities for cybercrimes in your area. If you need assistance with this, please reach out to info@saferschoolstogether.com.

PARENT/CAREGIVER RESOURCES

As parents/caregivers, it can be hard to keep up with all the new social media websites and applications, video games, movies, music, and everything else 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 in the online world.



Safer Schools Together

Safer Schools Together's Parent Resources include a library of many constantly updated resources such as Raising Digitally Responsible Youth, Sexting Safety Agreement, Protect your Privacy, Social Media Checklist for Parents/Caregivers, 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 alongside the ESRB.



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