

TELUS Wise®



A guide to popular social media and messaging apps

In our constantly evolving digital world it can be hard to keep up with the various apps that are popular amongst youth, and as a result, many parents feel unequipped to help guide their children appropriately. Further, while most social media apps require users to be at least 13 years old before using them, it is common for younger youth to circumvent these rules and dive in to the world of social media earlier than they may be ready to. While parents do not need to be experts in order to offer good advice, this guide offers some quick tips for adults (and youth) regarding some of the most popular social media and messaging apps, with a specific focus on online safety and privacy.



Instagram

Instagram is a free photo and video sharing app where users upload content including pictures and short videos to share with their friends/followers. Users can interact with others by following them, being followed by them, commenting, liking or tagging their content and private messaging. Instagram is a draw for youth because they are able to follow celebrities and/or professional athletes' accounts and view their content as well.

Tips for adults:

- Youth sometimes maintain more than one Instagram account. A “Rinsta” account refers to a real Instagram account that is used to connect with a broader, public circle and contains more carefully curated content. Conversely, a “Finsta” account refers to an Instagram account that is used to connect with close friends. Finsta accounts are also sometimes used to hide social media content from parents.
- Instagram Stories can be seen for only 24 hours and as such youth will often use Stories to share content that they don't want permanently associated with their account.

Tips to share with youth:

- Make your account private to control who sees your posts. This allows you to approve anyone who wants to follow you. Be aware of comments and people that seem suspicious or strangers that comment on your specific location. You can block them and even report inappropriate behaviour directly within the app.
- Never post personal information. Sure, it may be tempting to upload a photo of your first driver's license or university acceptance letter, but some documents can contain your name, address, and sometimes even your phone number. Think twice before posting.
- Keep in mind that the content people share online is often carefully curated; filters, camera tricks, and editing apps make it easy to make things appear different than they really are. Although easier said than done, avoid making comparisons to what you see on social media.
- Hundreds of people are injured and/or die trying to take the perfect selfie. The perfect Instagram worthy picture is not worth putting yourself in danger's way.

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Snapchat

Snapchat is a free photo and video sharing app where a user's content only stays live for a certain timeframe (like 24 hours or three seconds) before it "disappears." Users enjoy Snapchat for its fun filters that allow you to add special effects to your face (e.g. bunny ears), which you can then send to one user, a group, or broadcast the image/video to your story for all of your followers to see. Users can also message with friends and make video calls, and add filters, sounds, and stickers to their content.

Tips for adults:

- Snapchat can become all consuming, especially if teens are trying to maintain a 'streak'. "Snapstreaks" occur when two people have sent each other 'snaps' or messages for three or more days in a row. Sometimes youth will share their passwords and account information with others so they can help maintain a Snapstreak. Talk to your teen about acceptable use, screen time, and remind them to never share their account credentials with anyone.
- Youth are sometimes drawn to the platform as messages, photos, videos and 'Snaps' disappear after a period of time. Given this, youth are more inclined to share inappropriate messages and content on the platform, without realizing that users can easily take screenshots of messages and photos that are shared.

Tips to share with youth:

- Manage your privacy settings so you can only send and receive content from users on your friends list ("My Friends" only setting).
- Never add anyone you don't know personally on Snapchat. Unless turned off, this social platform's Snap Maps feature provides live updates of where users are and who they are with. This feature should be turned off to help protect privacy.
- Don't use geofilters that reveal your location, particularly those that indicate your specific neighborhood.

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YouTube

YouTube is a video-sharing platform that provides an endless array of content. You don't have to register or log-in to use the app, but you do need to create an account and set up a personal YouTube channel to upload your own videos. Like other social media apps, users can comment on and "like" the content they consume. Youth primarily consume music videos, how-to videos (for instance, how to do your make-up or how to make slime) and videos of others completing viral challenges or sharing life hacks. Youth can also follow their favourite influencers, vloggers (video blogger) and/or celebrities who share videos about their day to day lives and activities.

Tips for adults:

- Turn on Restricted mode so that the content is filtered – but it may not be perfect, so it's always best to view YouTube videos along with your child.
- Consider creating an account that is shared by the whole family for full visibility into which YouTube videos are being viewed and posted.
- Create YouTube playlists and/or subscribe to channels that you've pre-approved. You can also use YouTube Kids as an alternative.

Tips to share with youth:

- Upload videos you do not wish to share broadly as Private (so only people you allow can view the video) or Unlisted (so only people you send a specific link to can view the video).
- Disable comments or moderate them so you have control over what appears on your YouTube channel.

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Twitch

Twitch is a live streaming video platform that lets users watch videos either live or on demand. It's especially popular among video gamers and e-sports fans, enabling them to share their gaming experiences in real-time. There is no delay between what is happening in real time and what your child is seeing on the screen.

Tips for adults:

- There is a lot of mature content and language on Twitch, so it is recommended that youth seek permission before subscribing to any channels so you can ensure they are age appropriate.
- Co-view and/or ask your child to view Twitch on your smart TV (vs. their smartphone) so that you are more aware of what they are watching.

Tips to share with youth:

- Block users who try to contact you through private messages or “whispers” in chats.
- There is a difference between following a channel on Twitch, which is free and subscribing, which comes at a cost. Subscriptions, which renew automatically each month, are essentially donations that help fund the platform and the streamers that use it. Subscriptions are not required to use Twitch and consume content.

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TikTok

TikTok is an app for creating and sharing short mobile music videos between three and 15 seconds, or short looping videos between three and 60 seconds. Users can create short videos of themselves, usually with music in the background, then speed them up, slow them down or add filters.

Tips for adults:

- TikTok can be a potential magnet for cyberbullying, so encourage youth to limit who can interact with them through privacy settings.
- Viral challenge videos are popular on TikTok. Remind youth that while some challenges can be innocent fun, others can be dangerous and even life threatening.
- Turn Restricted Mode on to help limit inappropriate content. As is the case with YouTube and other video-based apps, this isn't always perfect.

Tips to share with youth:

- Avoid creating videos that offer up personal information.
- Consider saving TikTok videos to your device, and then sharing them via email or text, instead of posting them on the app for a wider network of people to see.
- Update your privacy settings so only “friends” can comment on your videos or send you messages.

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kik• Kik

Kik is a mobile messaging app that allows users to send a range of content (text, images, gifs, videos etc.) to either one person or a group of contacts. Contacts can be added from within a user's phone contact list or by searching for specific usernames. Users are also able to communicate with "bots" that provide automatic conversations from different brands or developers, as well as enter both public and private chat groups of up to 50 users. Group members can see each other's names.

Tips for adults:

- If you are going to allow your teen to use this app, consider making permission conditional on your teen giving you access to their account. This gives you the ability to manage the messages your teen sees.
- Since Kik allows users to access internal apps through its browser interface (such as dating apps), ensure you talk to your teen about which apps they can access, if any.

Tips to share with youth:

- Choose a username that is hard to guess and does not contain your own name, or elements that would allow someone to guess your identity.
- Know how to report or block other users – including how to mute and/or leave a chat if someone is sharing inappropriate messages and content.

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WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a free messaging app that allows text messages, voice calls and video calls, plus image and video sharing, between contacts.

Tips for adults:

- While you can only exchange messages with contacts who are already in your phone contacts, users may be added to group chats (with up to 256 people) where they can send/receive messages with people they don't know.
- Users cannot report other users or abuse in WhatsApp, however they can be blocked.

Tips to share with youth:

- In your privacy settings, set your profile to be visible to your contacts only.
- Block any unwanted users, which stops them from being able to message you.

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Anonymous messaging, feedback and confession apps

Apps that allow users to post and share anonymous messages are becoming increasingly common. Examples include Whisper and Tellonym. Youth often use these apps for asking and responding to questions anonymously, sharing or receiving anonymous feedback, or posting confessions. Messages are generally made available to anyone who uses the app and can be responded to both publicly or privately.

Tips for adults:

- Be aware that these types of apps have been used by predators to contact and lure young users, due to perceived anonymity combined with location-tracking permissions often required of users.
- Such apps are often ripe with cyberbullying and other inappropriate content, as users feel more comfortable posting content and messages of this nature, due to the perceived anonymity.
- Remind your kids to make sure they never share personal details on the Internet, including on these “anonymous” apps; the apps are tied to their mobile device, so anonymity is not guaranteed.

Tips to share with youth:

- Don't post any information or photos that make you easily identifiable.
- Take breaks. It's easy to spend a lot of time interacting on these apps but be sure to make time to connect with friends and family in person, too.
- Avoid negativity. Don't participate in conversations that are hurtful or dangerous.



Social dictionary

It can be tough to keep on top of the slang commonly used by young people online. Most viral and universal slang is harmless and fun, but there are some instances where code words and innuendos may be a cause for concern. Below is a list of popular acronyms, terms and phrases that are commonly used in text messages, group chats and social posts.

AF	as f**k, meaning to exaggerate or emphasize something, like "I'm bored af"
Boujee	rich or acting snobbish
Curve	to reject someone romantically
Extra	over-the-top or dramatic behaviour
Dead	something is really funny, "I'm dead"
Fire/Lit	used to describe something that is really good or cool
FOMO	fear of missing out
Ghost	to ignore or avoid someone on purpose
GOAT	abbreviation for "greatest of all time"
Gucci	something this is really cool or valued
Left me on read	when someone opens your snapchat or direct/text messages and doesn't reply back
Low-key	a warning that what's being said should not be shared with others
Meme	rapidly shared photos or videos that depict a relevant cultural moment

OG	abbreviation for "original" or "original gangster"
RL	something happening in "real life"
Savage	something that is really cool or really funny
Salty	to be bitter about something or someone
Ship	short for "relationship"
Squad	group of close friends
Thirsty	being desperate for something
Throw shade	to give someone a nasty look or say something unpleasant about them
Troll	somebody who instigates negative activity or rude comments on social media
V	short for "very"
Viral	used to describe online content that is circulated rapidly on the Internet
Woke	being highly aware of social issues
420	marijuana
9	short for "a parent is watching"





To help you keep up to date with what your kids are doing and saying online, engage in ongoing conversations about the apps they use and why they enjoy them, and if you come across language or content that you're unfamiliar with – ask! And keep the lines of communication open. You may also consider downloading and using the apps yourself to become more familiar with them.

For more tips check out the **Helping our Kids Navigate our Digital World guide** or visit [telus.com/wise](https://www.telus.com/wise).

