

PARENT'S GUIDE TO

# Snapchat



- Advice for Parents, by Parents
- Getting Started with Snapchat
- How to Talk to Your Teens about Online Safety
- Bullying
- What You Should Know About Snapchat's Features

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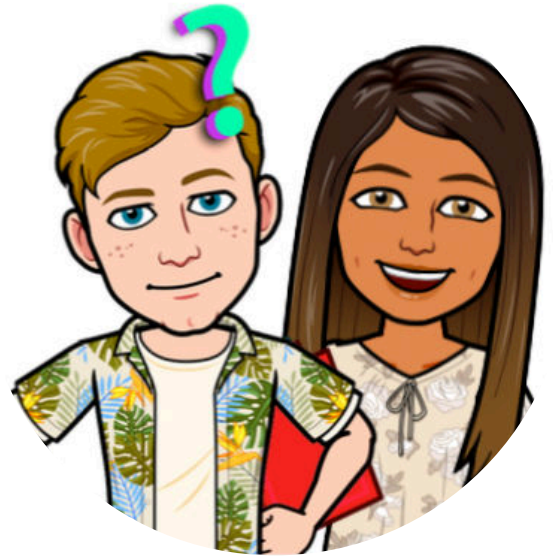


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# Top 5 Questions from Parents



## **Why do kids love Snapchat?**

Kids love Snapchat because they love talking to their friends. Snapchat is a spontaneous and creative way to communicate with images and videos users customize in ways that are just plain fun. It's playful and "in the moment," a refreshing change from the world of social media where you often become the sum of everything you've shared.

## **Does Snapchat have a minimum age?**

Yes, the minimum age is 13, in compliance with the U.S. Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). Snapchat asks for a date of birth upon sign up, and if the birth date indicates that the user is under 13, they're not allowed to create an account.

## **What are the risks of using Snapchat?**

As with all digital media, there are risks in broadcasting personal information like location to strangers and posting content that violates Snapchat's Community Guidelines. And users should know that there are ways for others to capture virtually any digital content, including "disappearing" images and videos on Snapchat.

## **Should my kids share their location on Snapchat?**

Snapchat uses location for features like Filters, Search, Snap Map and ads. Ghost Mode means you're not sharing your location with anyone on the app. Teach your kids to be thoughtful about sharing their location. We recommend teens stay in Ghost Mode with everyone but close family members and a few trusted friends.

## **What are other ways to help my kids stay safe on Snapchat?**

A positive experience on Snapchat ultimately depends on how it is used. It is important to talk to kids about being thoughtful while using social media. Remind your kids that they should speak to a trusted adult when they see something that concerns them and avoid meeting up with strangers, even if they have an online friendship with them. Parents should also make sure their kids' privacy settings are set to "My Friends" only. You'll find a lot more advice about all forms of connected technology at [ConnectSafely.org](https://connectsafely.org).



**Snapchat is all about fun and spontaneity. By default, the text, photos and videos you share delete automatically after being viewed by the recipient. Users love that they can share a moment that's digital footprint-free — they don't have to think about how their photos, videos or comments make them look to some unknown audience in the future.**

Snapchat is “in the moment” — not so much about taking pictures to look at later in life (though you can do that) but letting people experience them right now and then move on. However, as we'll show you below, there are ways to save what you share. So no one should develop a false sense of security.

## **Snapchat's features**

**Snaps.** Photos and images are called “Snaps,” which you customize with filters (text, emojis, stickers, doodles) or lenses (special effects, like voice changer or face swap). To access filters, take a photo or video, then swipe right. For Lenses, use your phone's selfie (front) camera to activate the feature. Once you've created a Snap, share it with one or more friends or Everyone.

**Snaps delete by default.** Snaps disappear after being viewed by the recipient like “words in a conversation” but remember that it is possible for someone to take a screenshot or record the screen with their phone or another device. You are notified if someone takes a screenshot, but all bets are off if they photograph the screen with another camera or device.

**Chat and calls.** You can chat by video, photo, audio or text on Snapchat. A user can't receive one-on-one chat from someone they haven't already approved as a friend.

**Snap Map.** Snap Map allows you to share your location with all friends, a few friends or Everyone (your location is off by default) and see Snaps and Stories of events, places, breaking



news and more from around the world. Once you opt-in, whatever audience you're sharing with can see your location updated every time you open the Snapchat app. Scroll around the Map to see the location of friends who have opted to share their location with you. If you submit a Snap to Our Story, Snapchat's public community space, it may appear publicly on the Map in the exact location it was taken.

**Ghost Mode** means you're not sharing your location with anyone.

**My Story.** Snaps you add here will be viewable by your friends for 24 hours in chronological order, letting you string Snaps together into one long narrative, the way you actually experienced it.

**Our Story.** This is Snapchat's public space where anyone can share with the broader community, though unlike other social apps, Snapchat doesn't allow public comments. Content published to Our Story can appear publicly on the Snap Map and even outside the app. Access Our Story via the Discover tab, which also features curated content from news publishers, creators ("Snap Stars"), entertainment companies and Snapchat.

**Memories.** Your collection of saved Snaps and Stories. You can also choose to store certain Memories in the password-protected "My Eyes Only" section, which is an important feature for parents to be aware of.

## Tips for you and your kids

**Manage your settings.** Snapchat's privacy settings are important to understand. The default "My Friends" setting only allows users to send and receive media from users they have added to their friends list. We recommend that any minor using Snapchat continues to use this setting. For more help with this, visit <https://support.snapchat.com/a/privacy-settings>.



For more info, visit  
[ConnectSafely.org/  
Snapchatguide](https://ConnectSafely.org/Snapchatguide)

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**Personal information.** Remind your kids to be careful about sharing any personally identifiable information. Financial and medical information should never be shared. Phone numbers and home addresses should only be shared, as necessary, with friends or family who you trust with that information.

**Saving Snaps.** Even though Snaps aren't saved by default, it's always possible for the creator to save a Snap before sending it or for a viewer to take a screenshot. One can even take a picture of the screen with another camera or use other tools to save a copy. So it's important to remind kids to never send Snaps that are illegal, could get them in trouble now or in the future, or would be embarrassing if seen by people like grandparents or college admissions officers or future employers.

**Protect passwords** and set up two-factor authentication. Like all services, make sure your kids have a strong and unique password that they don't share with anyone. If someone has their password, it's possible for them to impersonate them or compromise their account. For more on this, visit [ConnectSafely.org/Passwords](https://connectsafely.org/Passwords).

**Device-level controls.** Android and iOS operating systems offer parental controls for mobile devices. Use these to manage your child's phone usage actively. For general advice on parental controls visit [ConnectSafely.org/Controls](https://connectsafely.org/Controls).

**Keeping it real.** Snapchat is a service designed for "real life" friends, but there are still ways for your kids to find people they don't know (such as finding their Snapchat username on other services). Remind your kids that it's best to only friend people they know in real life and it's not safe to meet-up with a person they meet online.

**Location considerations.** Teach your kids to be thoughtful about sharing their location. We recommend teens stay in Ghost Mode with everyone but close family members and a few trusted friends.



For more on passwords,  
visit [ConnectSafely.org/  
passwords](https://connectsafely.org/passwords)

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**Bullying.** Bullying violates Snapchat's Community Guidelines and is not tolerated on the platform. Make sure to talk with your kids about why bullying is wrong. Also, remind them to speak to you or any other trusted adult if they are ever on the receiving end of bullying or unwanted content. For more advice on talking to your kids about cyberbullying, visit [connectsafely.org/cyberbullying](https://connectsafely.org/cyberbullying).

**Nudity.** Aside from violating Snapchat's community standards, teens need to know that exchanging nude or sexually explicit images of anyone under 18, including themselves, can be a serious crime. For more on this, see [connectsafely.org/tips-for-dealing-with-teen-sexting](https://connectsafely.org/tips-for-dealing-with-teen-sexting).

## What to do about harassment or unwanted Snaps

If your teen's settings are set to "My Friends" but they are still receiving abusive Snaps from another user, they should block the user and report them to Snapchat's Safety team.

**Block.** Snapchat allows users to block Friends from sending them Snaps or Chats or viewing their Story. Press and hold on to the person's name and tap More and then Block.

**Report abuse.** Press and hold on the Snap and tap the flag icon. If anyone receives inappropriate photos or someone's harassing him or her, contact Snapchat's Safety team by going to [support.snapchat.com/en-US/ca/policies-and-safety](https://support.snapchat.com/en-US/ca/policies-and-safety) and navigating to the "Report a Safety Concern" tab in the menu. If you encounter anything that appears to be illegal or dangerous, or if you have reason to believe someone is at risk of harm or self-harm, immediately contact local law enforcement.



**Snapchat allows users to block Friends from sending them Snaps or Chats or viewing their Story.**



**For more info about kids & privacy, visit [ConnectSafely.org/privacy](https://ConnectSafely.org/privacy)**



## Some closing thoughts for parents

Snapchat is one of the most popular apps that kids use, but new apps are popping up all the time. That's why it's important to talk to your kids and to help them develop critical thinking skills about staying safe in their digital lives — safety is typically more about how you use an app than what particular app you use.

As parents, it's essential to keep the lines of communication open and to work together to figure out what's appropriate for your family in terms of safety, privacy, reputation and time management. It generally just works better to talk with your kids about their favorite tools — with genuine interest, not fear — because they're more likely to come to you when they need help, and you're more likely to be kept in the loop about the technology they use.



**Keep the lines of communication open and work together to figure out what's appropriate for your family.**



**For more info about cyberbullying, visit [ConnectSafely.org/cyberbullying](https://connectsafely.org/cyberbullying)**

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## About ConnectSafely

*ConnectSafely is a Silicon Valley, California-based nonprofit organization dedicated to educating users of connected technology about safety, privacy and security. We publish research-based safety tips, parents' guidebooks, advice, news and commentary on all aspects of tech use and policy.*