

Social Media 101

Here is a list of social media sites you might find on your child's smartphone.

Tinder

Tinder's developers describe the app as "the fun way to connect with new and interesting people around you." But it's mainly used as a dating tool. The app is rated ages 17+ but Tinder's privacy policy allows teens as young as 13 to register (the app connects with Facebook — which is also technically for ages 13+ — to pull in photos for users' Tinder profiles). Tinder helps people find others in their geographic location and allows users to view each others' photos and start instant messaging once both people have "liked" one another. The geo-location features and anonymous nature of the app put kids at risk for catfishing, sexual harassment, stalking, and worse.

Yik Yak

The producers of this app call it "the anonymous social wall for anything and everything." All users are anonymous (registration requires no personal information, other than a user's location), and their posts are called "Yaks" and show up in a live feed for other users — or "Yakkers" — in their area. The app's content-generation and moderation is entirely in the hands of its users (who can "vote" posts up or down in the news feed; after two "down" votes, a Yak disappears). The app is rated ages 17+ and targets college students, who can use it to spread the word about parties and events or share their thoughts. But younger users are easily getting their hands on the app and using it to post hurtful comments and rumors about their peers.

Ask.fm

This app allows users to interact in a question-and-answer format — with friends, peers, and anonymous users alike. The app is rated ages 13+. Some kids have used the app for hurtful cyberbullying that has been linked to suicides, including the death of 12-year-old Rebecca Sedwick of Florida. British schools have sent home letters calling for students to stop using ask.fm because of its use in several cyberbullying incidents there, and its loose regulation and lack of monitoring.

Kik

Kik is a mobile app that people can use to text with friends at high speed and with more of a "face-to-face feel" than regular texting (users' profile pictures appear in a little bubble next to their text, and they can quickly text photos, sketches, or even pre-designed greeting cards to individuals or groups). The app is rated ages 17+, but there is no age verification so anyone can download it. Like some other instant messenger apps, Kik allows your teen to connect with others using just a username (rather than texting from her phone number). It's no surprise Kik has landed on some parents' "worst apps" lists.

Voxer

This walkie-talkie PTT (push-to-talk) app allows users to quickly exchange short voice messages. They can have chats going on with multiple people at a time and just have to tap the play button to hear any messages they receive. Although it largely has an adult following, including some people who use it for their job, it's becoming popular among teens who enjoy its hybrid style of texting and talking. Hurtful messages from cyberbullies can be even more biting when they're spoken and can be

played repeatedly. Surprisingly, the app is rated ages 4+ in the App Store.

Snapchat

Snapchat is an app that allows users to send photos and videos that disappear from view within 10 seconds after they're received. It's rated ages 12+. Some kids are using the app to send racy pics because they believe the images can't be saved and circulated. But it turns out that Snapchat pics don't completely disappear from a device, and users can take a screenshot before an image vanishes in the app. Snapchat might embolden kids to send more explicit photos and texts than they would have before through traditional texting.

Poke

Poke is Facebook's app that, similar to Snapchat, promises that photos sent will "self-destruct" within seconds after they're received. While Poke isn't nearly as popular as Snapchat, it is still gaining young users who can use it for sexting. Also like Snapchat, the images sent via Poke can be saved or viewed with certain workarounds. The App store rates it ages 4+ (but it is connected to Facebook, which is a 13+ site).

Vine

Vine is Twitter's mobile app that allows users to shoot and share short loops of video (6 seconds or less). It's rated 17+, but children and teens are still downloading it. As with any multimedia app, the content on Vine runs the gamut from naughty to nice. "While there are plenty of cute, fun videos, even adults might be shocked at some of the things they find."

Whisper

This 17+ app's motto is: "Share Secrets, Express Yourself, Meet New People." Whisper lets users set up anonymous accounts to make their messages or confessions overlap an image or graphic (similar to e-postcards), which other users can then "like," share, or comment on. While it allows for creative expression, it can also take overly personal content viral. The app also shows a user's location. Although the app is geared toward older teens and adults, younger children are finding their way to it.

Tumblr

Many children and young teens are also active on this 17+ photo-sharing app. It can also be used for sharing videos and chatting. Common Sense Media says Tumblr is "too raunchy for tykes" because users can easily access pornographic, violent, and inappropriate content. Common Sense also notes that users need to jump through hoops to set up privacy settings — and until then, all of a user's photo and content is public for all to see.

Instagram

This hugely popular photo-sharing site is owned by Facebook, so you may be more familiar with it than with other photo-sharing apps. Users can add cool filters or create collages of their photos and share them across Facebook and other social media platforms. The app is rated 13+ and may be slightly tamer than Tumblr, but users can still find mature or inappropriate content and comments throughout the app (there is a way to flag inappropriate content for review). "Trolls" — or people making vicious, usually anonymous comments — are common. A user can change the settings to

block their location or certain followers, but many users are casual about their settings, connecting with people they don't know well or at all. "A Parents' Guide to Instagram."