

2018

BeAppSavvy

A GUIDE TO THE APPS, SITES & SOCIAL NETWORKS THAT YOUR CHILDREN MAY BE USING

DIGITAL FUTURES INITIATIVE

Social networks, mobile applications and websites are here to stay. While they can be a positive force and provide access to the world, many do not have the safety and privacy controls needed for underage use. Most kids and parents are very naïve when starting in social media. Below is a compilation of networks, apps, and digital media with guidance about how to use the apps for good and what you need to watch out for while choosing a platform to engage on. Most of these platforms do not consider the implications of underage usage. Know what apps and sites your child uses and learn how to be safe and aware of possible consequences.

4chan.org

Anonymous Platform

Adults Only



What it does: A simple image-based bulletin board where anyone can post comments and share images. There are boards dedicated to a variety of topics. Users are usually anonymous & do not need to register an account before participating in the community.

What Parents Need to Know: Anonymous sites and apps are dangerous for kids. Bullying, phishing, abusive and inappropriate content are abound. Block these sites and apps in general.

9gag.com

Social Network

Adults Only



What it does: Originated in Hong Kong, 9 means stupid in Cantonese. It is not a polite way of saying stupid. 9GAG is an online platform and social media website. Users upload and share user-generated content or other content from external social media websites.

What Parents Need to Know: Content is usually in the form of images and not necessarily appropriate.

AfterSchool

Anonymous Platform

Adults Only



What it does: It's an app that let's students post anonymous things about anything. It's similar to Yik Yak & Whisper. Sexual and graphic images can be posted on the site. While they have a lot of content on their site about combating inappropriate content, creators admit that they don't have a way to combat cyber bullying on site.

What Parents Need to Know: Anonymous sites and apps are dangerous for kids. Bullying, phishing, abusive and inappropriate content are abound. Block these sites and apps in general.

Airtime

Video Social Network

17+



What it does: The app lets you create a room, invite others to join it, and then drop in any kind of media you like to experience it collectively with the group. Through integrations with YouTube, Spotify, and a slew of other services, you can drop in text, video, music, and photos and get the attention of group members by sending out what's called a signal to the group. Up to six people can video chat and post at once, but as many as 250 people can monitor what's happening in any given room.

What Parents Need to Know: Airtime provides for teens to browse the unrestricted web...together. The site's policy is that it owns and can re-distribute any content shared on its site.

Ask.fm*Anonymous Q&A Platform**Adults Only*

What it does: An anonymous question and answer platform website used regularly by lots of young people. It allows anyone to post anonymous comments and questions to a person's profile and is increasingly being used to communicate abusive, bullying and sexualized content.

What Parents Need to Know: Anonymous sites and apps are dangerous for kids. Bullying, phishing, abusive and inappropriate content are abound. Block these sites and apps in general.

Badoo*Hook-up App**Adults Only*

What it does: Europe based, Badoo is the largest dating network in the world. An "Adults Only App", Badoo is used for meeting New People in the world and the market leader for meeting, chatting, flirting & dating in Europe. Whether you're on the bus, in a coffee shop, on a night out, see who is passing you by and reach out!

What Parents Need to Know: Not designed for privacy, other users will know where you are! It shows you the people nearby, and the people you've bumped into in real life

BIGO Live*Messaging & Communications App**Adults Only*

What it does: BIGO lets users make video blogs or live stream their activities with the object of monetizing their videos and possibly becoming the next YouTube sensation. User-generated content can include bad language, violence and nudity.

What Parents Need to Know: As with live TV, users simply aim the camera on themselves and broadcast to whomever is following them. Since there's no delay—and kids are often streaming from their bedrooms—there's a real risk of giving away personal or even intimate information.

Blendr*Hook-up App**Adults Only*

What it does: A free, socially flirtatious chat-to-meet app. Blendr uses your mobile device's location services to connect you with the fun singles closest to you. Premise is anonymity to communicate with anyone having app. You can sign in with Facebook, MSN, or sign up using your name, birth date, zip code, gender and who you are there to meet. You are required to add your mobile phone number for verification before using

the app. It is the fastest growing hook-up app on the market. Big for sexting and potential on line predators.

What Parents Need to Know: These sites store personal information, share location, lack significant privacy controls and are prone to predators. These sites are not recommended in any circumstance.

Chatous

Chat / Video Chat

Adults Only



What it does: Compared as an alternative to Omegle, Chatous allows you to chat with people from all over the world about the topics you care about – all in an App on your phone. Let's you easily share disappearing photos, videos, and audio messages. In 2016 moved to more of a premium membership model.

What Parents Need to Know: Lots of nudity on site and sexual predators have been known to use the site. The site is dangerous for kids of any age.

ChatRoulette.com

Chat / Video Chat

Adults Only



What it does: A place where you can interact with new people all over the world with text-chat, webcam and mic. Site does require username, password and email and does have moderators and algorithms that look for inappropriate content. That said, upwards of 25% of the random chats include suggestive material, pornography, bullying and other inappropriate content.

What Parents Need to Know: Because it's on the edge of society, this is a popular place for teens to explore. As a result, Predators flock looking for unsuspecting users and generally there are not a lot of positive things for a developing mind...at any age. In addition to the main site, many "side" sites have emerged around interests. These are typically worse than the main site. Block this site and keep children out.

Cloaq

Anonymous Platform

Adults Only



What it does: Cloaq is a place to share and discuss your thoughts without your personal identity or reputation attached to them. It's an anonymous platform for you to be yourself and talk about the things you really believe in, without worrying about how people will judge you - An invisibility cloak for your online social expression. Has become an area for users to post inappropriate comments about others.

What Parents Need to Know: Anonymous sites and apps are dangerous for kids. Bullying, phishing, abusive & inappropriate content are abound. Block these sites and apps in general.

Creepypasta

Social Network

18+



What it does: Horror stories, legends and images passed around the Internet meant to disturb and frighten readers. The entries are short, user generated ghost or alien stories and images. Some fictional characters on the site have been developed to carry storylines over time. Slender Man, Jeff the Killer, Ted the Caver and Psychosis are a few

of these characters. The site is very explicit and states clearly that it is meant for 18+ year olds and should be considered Rated R content.

What Parents Need to Know: This site is not meant for children or teens as the content can blur the lines of reality for some younger teens as happened in a 2014 case where two girls stabbed another to “prove” one of the characters wrong.

CrushZone

Hook-up App

Adults Only



What it does: Crush Zone is a free teen dating site for young people from all over the world. Designed for ages 13-21, which is the first red flag. Share photos, discuss on forums, chat with other users for free and without limitations.

What Parents Need to Know: These sites store personal information, share location, lack significant privacy controls and are prone to predators. These sites are not recommended in any circumstance.

Discord

Anonymous Messaging Platform

16+



What it does: Discord is an anonymous chat platform that was originally used for chatting between gamers. While that is still the apps main purpose, some groups like the alt-right have found ways to use this platform to communicate and plan events. Discord has put teams and policies in place to get rid of these groups but some may still exist.

What it does: Discord is used for communication between gamers, but there is still harassment and bullying on this site. Other harmful content like pornography and white supremacy groups have been found in chat rooms.

Down

Hook-up App

Adults Only



What it does: Original name: Bang With Friends. Allows you to set up discrete sexual encounters with Facebook friends. Down lets you anonymously express an interest in hooking up with “friends.” If they reciprocate, you’ll be notified and can plan a meet-up. Supposedly for 18+ but Facebook is 13+. Graphic images and inappropriate content for kids.

What Parents Need to Know: These sites store personal information, share location, lack significant privacy controls and are prone to predators. These sites are not recommended in any circumstance.

Dropbox

Content Management / Sharing

13+



What it does: US Based. Dropbox is a home for all your photos, docs, videos, and files. People can invite friends, family, and teammates to any folder in your Dropbox, and it'll be as if you saved that folder straight to their computer. This makes Dropbox perfect for team projects, sharing party photos with friends, or recording your band's debut album.

What Parents Need to Know: While there is no inappropriate content in the tool itself, kids can share

or receive questionable content from other peers. Just keep an eye on it periodically.

Facebook

Social Network

13+ Privacy Settings Recommended



What it does: US Based. Facebook the largest, most pervasive social network on the planet. It is defined as an online social networking website where people can create profiles, share information such as photos and quotes about themselves, and respond or link to the information posted by others. Users can “follow” celebrities, Brands, friends and anyone else.

What Parents Need to Know: Users can and do produce unwanted and/or racy content. Know your child’s “friends” list to understand what type of content they will likely have access to. Generally, Facebook has strong Safety and privacy settings (if you use them).

Facebook Messenger

Messaging & Communications App

13+ Privacy Settings Recommended



What it does: Works like texting, but you don't have to pay for every message. Also, allows photo and video exchange as well as phone calls and video calls. It also has location based capabilities which can lead to safety issues if not turned off. Many apps work with Messenger and you can do in-app purchases. In addition to 1-to-1 communications, you can video chat with up to 6 people per session. This gives it the “Houseparty” app feel.

What Parents Need to Know: This is video chatting with known contacts. Use the app in open areas if possible, know who their friends are. Facebook is one of the better platforms for addressing safety and privacy. Unless you lock-down the app to family members, Messenger is not recommended for ages under 13.

Facebook Rooms

Social Network

13+ Privacy Settings Recommended



What it does: It’s first iteration from 2013 failed as a semi-anonymous chat room created by Facebook. Now it is being brought back in late 2016 as part of its Messenger platform and will allow for on-topic conversations.

What Parents Need to Know: This version should have the same types of controls generally available in Facebook proper. Precautions: implement privacy.

FireChat

Messaging & Communications App

13+



What it does: FireChat is a proprietary mobile app, developed by Open Garden. It builds its own mesh network without the use of internet using Bluetooth and peer-to-peer Wi-Fi. As long as devices are located within 200 feet of each other, FireChat can

transmit messages and pictures to or through those smartphones or tablets. Conversations can be public or through private messages. Though it was not designed with the purpose in mind, FireChat has been used as a communication tool in some civil protests.

What Parents Need to Know: FireChat does have private messaging and is a bare bones messaging tool for children who are not connected to a network. Little is known about the encryption of the app and once a node, content can stream through the connected device. Teach kids how to message privately and implications of posting publicly.

Flickr

Photo Sharing

13+ Privacy Settings Recommended



What it does: US Based, owned by Yahoo, Flickr is a website that allows users to share photographs and videos. It supports an active and engaged community where people share and explore each other's photos. You can share and host hundreds of your own pictures on Flickr without paying a dime.

What Parents Need to Know: Relatively safe if you use privacy settings. Example: Hosting the GPS location of your photos could unexpectedly expose the location of the photographer.

Foursquare

Social Network

18+



What it does: Foursquare is a location based social network that encourages member to meet in person. The app's purpose is to help you discover and share information about businesses and attractions around you but without age limits or filters for teens, this app can be dangerous.

What Parents Need to Know: Unfortunately, location sharing is public at any time even if not using app and without parent controls or predator filters, this app is not recommended for teens.

Frontback

Photo Sharing

13+ Privacy Settings Recommended



What it does: Frontback lets you capture a photo of you and what you see. Take a photo with the front camera, another with the back camera, and share them both in a single image. It's you and your perspective. Frontback is a camera app that lets you capture and share multiple sides of the same moment or story such as front and back pictures or before and after. You can view posts without an account, so it is a public forum. To post Frontbacks you need an account. If you connect Frontback with your social network accounts you can cross post to Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. App has location based features.

What Parents Need to Know: Frontback is a public network with some privacy controls. Not a lot of users and you should keep pictures of children in a private group.

Google Docs

Online Utility

8+



What it does: Google Docs is a free, Web-based office suite and data storage service offered by Google within its Google Drive service. It allows users to create and edit documents online while collaborating in real-time with other users. Google has become a de-facto standard in many schools at all levels. While in school, Administrators can limit access and oversee accounts. However, to access away from school, kids may need an account to receive notifications, etc.

What Parents Need to Know: While Google has opened the doors to helping reinvent the learning process, there are still dangers in the platform with inappropriate content, bullying, etc. Use <https://www.google.com/safetycenter/families/start/> to set the right controls for your family situation.

Google+

Social Network

12+



What it does: Google+ is a social media network that allows you to post things to "circles" or to the public. Google has implemented privacy guidelines to help insure safe teenage use. Google is able to filter out posts that are not age appropriate for teens while also giving safety tips for kids and parents.

What Parents Need to Know: Like any other social media website, nothing is 100% safe. Google tries its best to insure responsible use of this app.

Grom Social

Social Network

6 - 12



What it does: Grom Social is a safe social network created By Kids For Kids. A social network geared toward kids age 5-16. Kids play games, make friends, chat and learn about digital citizenship in a safe social network that is monitored live 24/7. Inappropriate content or behavior (photos, language, bullying, etc.) is identified by digital filters and our cast of Grom Helpers. Grom Helpers are real people that monitor the site 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

What Parents Need to Know: Grom Social is a social network that has built safeguards, privacy and content geared for younger children. Still run by the family, much of the content is insular and some ads appear that are less desirable for youngsters. Safe for kids, but they may get bored after a while until membership takes off.

GroupMe

Messaging & Communications App

13+



What it does: Owned by Microsoft, GroupMe is a messaging app that allows users to message people in their contacts or others through Facebook and Twitter. The users are allowed to make group messages with as many people as they would like. This app can use wifi and sms to send messages in a chat.

What Parents Need to Know: GroupMe can be a great tool for communicating with school and social groups. There are some draw backs to the app though. Because it is easy to start large chats, sometimes these chats can be used for bullying and inappropriate activity.

Houseparty*Messaging & Communications App**13+*

What it does: Built by Meerkat as a “second act”, Houseparty is a video streaming app designed for live video chatting. Connecting up to 8 people at a time, its’ “spontaneous togetherness” will tie you into any friends who are on the app when you access it. Growing in popularity with teens, this app does have some safeguards like private rooms and notifications when a stranger enters a public chat.

What Parents Need to Know: As we start to enter the “post-selfie” era, Houseparty provides a more authentic way to connect with close friends and family without chasing likes and shares. There are some safeguards built in so it limits access from strangers. Choose your friends wisely as whatever your child’s friends are sharing becomes the quality of the App. Warn your children that you can take screenshots of the video chat even when in a private room.

Instagram*Photo Sharing**16+ Privacy Settings Recommended*

What it does: An online mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing, and social networking service that enables its users to take pictures and videos, and share them either publicly or privately on the app, as well as through a variety of other social networking platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Flickr.

What Parents Need to Know: For safety reason, Geolocation services & privacy settings should be adjusted to avoid risk to users. Content and Comments are sometimes inappropriate. As of 2016, users can live-stream video, and video streams and selected private photos will disappear, Snapchat style. As a result, has been found to be a popular site for posting selfies, sexting, bullying, & selling drugs on line.

Keek*Video Social Network**13+ Privacy Settings Recommended*

What it does: Keek is a new social media network that focuses on micro-video sharing. Users broadcast 36 second videos, status updates and can share them with friends or followers. Profiles are public by default and we recommend setting privacy. Like any public network, content can be dicey for sure. Older kids may be OK, not recommended for younger ages. Similar to Facebook but uses videos.

What Parents Need to Know: All profiles should be set to private, content can get iffy when children begin searching.

kik*Messaging App**Adults Only*

What it does: An instant messenger & video app for mobile devices that uses a smartphone's data plan or Wi-Fi to transmit and receive messages, photos, videos, sketches, mobile webpages, and other content after users register a username.

What Parents Need to Know: Kik is known for its features preserving users' anonymity, such as allowing users to register without providing a telephone number, and preventing users from being located on the service (including by the company itself) through any information other than their chosen username. It has drawn controversy due to its reported involvement in several incidents of

child exploitation and accessibility to pornography. The app has been criticized as unsafe for minors due to its anonymity features and allegedly weak parental control mechanisms.

Kiwi

Anonymous Q&A Platform

16+ Privacy Settings Recommended



What it does: Made by Chatous, this is an anonymous question and answer platform website used regularly by lots of young people. It allows anyone to post anonymous comments and questions to a person's profile and is increasingly being used to communicate abusive, bullying and sexualized content

What Parents Need to Know: The combination of anonymity and proximity make this app unsafe for children. In addition to being unsafe, the core components mentioned above create a fertile ground for anonymous bullying across a school.

Kudos (aka Kuddle)

Photo Sharing

8+



What it does: Kudos is billed as a safer way for kids to get introduced to social media, while still under a parent's watchful eye. The photo-sharing app, which is like a more restricted version of Instagram, allows children to post and share photos with friends in a protected environment, safe from cyberbullying or unwanted connections from strangers.

What Parents Need to Know: With parental controls and a copy of everything sent and received, this app is one of the safest for young children and a good way to get into photo sharing for both kids and parents.

Lego Life

Social Network

6 - 12



What it Does: Lego Life is a new social network created and managed by Lego. Looking to create the safest possible experience, Lego is doing some very interesting things. Using a mix of Lego and Marvel characters, they keep children busy on new challenges, cool builds, safe environments to share. Moderators take on Lego characters so you can get a thumb's up from Lego Batman!

What Parents Need to Know: Fully moderated, it's like a Pinterest for kids. No facial images allowed, no typing (only Lego Emoji's), a new challenge to build Lego's every week, lots of encouragement from moderators and names/handles of the children are randomly chosen.

Live.ly

Video Social Network

17+



What it does: a "live video streaming platform created by musical.ly. You can start a live.ly to broadcast to your fans and friends, and have real-time interactions..." Basically, you can take advantage of something that used to only be available to network TV and broadcast yourself real-time, anytime to anyone who is on the app. Take a snapshot, comment, send digital gifts, follow broadcasters, etc.

What Parents Need to Know: The connection to Musical.ly can be disarming. The reality is live

streaming where anyone can comment, ask you to do or say anything is dangerous for adults let alone children.

Live.me*Video Social Network**Adults Only*

What it does: A video streaming app from Hong Kong. Live.me is a place to live broadcasting video chat with over 25,000,000 people(downloads) from 85 countries. You can stream, video chat, make vlog and get paid for doing stuff you love and join communities of people who love that same stuff super easily and fast.

What Parents Need to Know: Live.me is part of a new wave of apps that let young people send live broadcasts to anyone interested, often from their bedrooms. However, a covert method of pinpointing the locations of some users has been widely shared on the internet since August, allowing internet predators to pinpoint the homes of children or anyone else livestreaming.

Marimba Chat*Messaging & Communications App**8+*

What it does: Marimba is a protected messaging app for younger children. Built with children's privacy as a priority, this app is COPPA compliant and certified by the kidSAFE Seal Program. Parents can easily set up and manage any and all communications including approving connections, setting limits and actual live chat supervision.

What Parents Need to Know: This app is one of the safest for young children and a good way to get into mobile messaging for both kids and parents.

MeetMe*Messaging & Communications App**Adults Only*

What it does: MeetMe is a chat app that is used for dating and finding connections. This app allows you to find others and communicate with each other. The age restriction on the app says that you must be 13+ years old and be in high school. On this site you can buy credits that allow you to be found easier to increase your number of matches.

What Parents Need to Know: This is a place where pedophiles and sex offenders can easily come into contact with your child. The ages of people using this app range from 13 to 50+ years old. There may also be pornographic images on this site.

Medium*Media / Blogging**14+*



What it does: Medium was created by a Co-founder of Twitter so that people could share stories and information with more than 140 characters. This is a subscription based app that allows users to post blogs and stories as well as follow different news sources and bloggers.

What Parents Need to Know: This site is growing in popularity, it is always a good idea to use caution while browsing.

Monkey

Chat / Video Chat

Adults Only



What it does: It is intended as a way to create a community of teens where they could meet people or find others with shared interests. One of the most downloaded apps among the 25 & under crowd with an average age of 23. Meant to be "Chatroulette without the pervs", the video chat app connects users around the world for 10 second videos using their Snapchat names.

What Parents Need to Know: There is still a bunch of monkey business on here. CNBC did a small study but it is indicative of many of the accounts - "But a brief time on the app revealed the same issues that brought down Chatroulette after a brief period of massive popularity in 2010. Among the 25 users CNBC chatted with, one was engaging in a sexually explicit act while another was showing off his genitals."

Musical.ly

Video Social Network

13+ Privacy Settings Recommended



What it does: MUSICAL.LY is a lively social network built around creating, sharing, and searching for user-created music videos called "musicals." Users can use the app to create instant music videos that combine a variety of effects dancing and lip sync voice overs. It also lets users take part in contests, follow power users, musicians and celebrities as a way to get started. Musical.ly does a decent job at screening most of the really bad content, however much like there are inappropriate songs on SiriusXM, there are racy songs, racy lyrics and racy dancing. How racy is too racy - is really up to you as parents.

What Parents Need to Know: All accounts are public by default, change settings to private. This app encourages likes and followers for accounts and content which can lead to obsessive behavior and taking content further to the edge. This is not a great app for younger users, however there is not much that an older middle schooler will not come across in a day at school.

MyEx.com

Anonymous Platform

Adults Only



What it does: Post pictures and comments about ex boyfriends or girlfriends as revenge. Most pictures and content are pornographic in nature. Not a site that you want to have to deal with should someone post your pictures there.

What Parents Need to Know: Anonymous sites and apps are dangerous for kids. Bullying, phishing, abusive and inappropriate content are abound. Block these sites and apps in general.

MyLOL*Hook-up App**Adults Only*

What it does: MyLOL is a TEEN social network that allows you to make NEW FRIENDS near you and around the world! MyLOL is the #1 teen dating app in the US, UK, and Canada and is designed for students 13-19 years old. Built-in features of MyLOL encourage users to send private messages to random strangers. Create a fun profile, chat and discuss about your favorite interests!

What Parents Need to Know: The app encourages teens to send messages to strangers, users regularly post inappropriate pictures and there is nothing to stop a predator from using the app to browse for potential targets.

My Space*Social Network**13+*

What it does: Yes, this is still a “thing”. Social networking site that is mostly focused on music and artists, it allows its users to create webpages to interact with other users. Users of the service can create blogs, upload videos and photos, and design profiles to showcase their interests and talents. Lost popularity to Facebook but gaining some popularity again among young people.

What Parents Need to Know: A much better version than in the past. Being mostly music, there are no filters for the songs or lyrics.

OkCupid*Hook-up App**Adults Only*

What it does: OkCupid is a free dating app that finds you matches based on what you really care about. Supposed to anonymously match you with another dater in your area for, well, a blind date. Known to be a “casual hook up” site. Recently had a data breach that made user’s email addresses accessible.

What Parents Need to Know: These sites store personal information, share location, lack significant privacy controls and are prone to predators. These sites are not recommended in any circumstance.

Omegle*Chat / Video Chat**Adults Only*

What it does: Omegle is a website. They pick someone at random and let you talk one-on-one. Chats are anonymous unless you tell someone who you are, and you can stop a chat at any time. Also, allows for webcam chats & photo capabilities. Utilizes Facebook to connect with others. Site is supposed to be for 18+.

What Parents Need to Know: Lots of nudity on site and sexual predators have been known to use the site. The site is dangerous for kids of any age.

OnlyFans*Messaging & Communications App**Adults Only*



What it does: Released in 2016, OnlyFans is a social media website for you and your fans! Set a monthly subscription price and then get paid for your content. Whether your content attracts Chefs, Mechanics, Do-it-yourselfers' or porn addicts – you can set the price of your content and people who are interested will subscribe and pay for it.

What Parents Need to Know: OnlyFans has already attracted a large crowd of adult performers who are advertising moving to OnlyFans on their personal pages. Since this application allows for users to get paid for the uploaded content, it may become attractive to human traffickers as a means to exploit the services for financial gain.

Oovoo

Messaging & Communications App

16+



What it does: Provides free, high-quality video chat, messaging, and voice calls. Video chat is similar to Skype. Able to connect with others around the world (i.e. strangers) anytime, on any device. Users can record and upload videos to YouTube as well as IM features. There are some privacy settings but you have to be vigilant

What Parents Need to Know: A quick search on Twitter or Instagram for "oovoo" and you will see there are plenty of adult users and adult content. Profiles are automatically public. There are Private settings but it feels like an island surrounded by shark infested waters. Not recommended for children or young teens.

Path

Social Network

13+ Privacy Settings Recommended



What it does: Path is a social networking-enabled photo sharing and messaging service for mobile devices that was launched in November 2010. While it's early days limited connections to 50, then 150, those restrictions are now gone. Heavily used in Indonesia, the platform was purchased in 2015 by Kakao (a South Korean social network).

What Parents Need to Know: Path has always been known to be a relatively safe launch point as a network itself and as a launch point into other social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc). Privacy settings need to be turned on and Geolocation turned off. Will keep an eye on Path if their owners change the service from its current "Path".

Peepie

Anonymous Platform

Adults Only



What it does: Application that allows people to leave recommendations for other people based on professional, personal and romantic relationships. Allow you to rate people. Many call it the YELP of social media.

What Parents Need to Know: Anonymous sites and apps are dangerous for kids. Bullying, phishing, abusive and inappropriate content are abound. Generally, block these sites & apps.

Photoswap

Anonymous Platform

Adults Only

What it does: Anonymous social networking app that lets you

Parent Academy Handout



meet new people from all over the world and keep in touch with them in the most creative ways using nothing but pictures.

What Parents Need to Know: Anonymous sites and apps are dangerous for kids. Bullying, phishing, abusive and inappropriate content are abound. Block these sites and apps in general.

Plenty of Fish (POF)*Hook-up App**Adults Only*

What it does: An online dating platform popular across the world. Based in Vancouver, a basic membership is free and there are premium memberships as well. As of 2015, POF is owned by the parent company of Match.com, Tinder and OKCupid) and they have removed a lot of the predatory features. That said, this is still a dating / hookup network.

What Parents Need to Know: These sites store personal information, share location, lack significant privacy controls and are prone to predators. These sites are not recommended in any circumstance.

Pokémon GO*Virtual Reality Game**16+*

What it does: Pokémon GO is the first popular Augmented Reality game to appeal to the masses. Players of all ages are encouraged to find different items at actual real-world places. Because not all places are vetted, some report Poke stops on private land, in insecure places and businesses who are not in support. The game uses geolocation, name, email and age and states that it will use this information.

What Parents Need to Know: Security Privacy Issues: Details who you are, where you live, where you frequent, time spent there, etc. Access to Google account information (now a downloadable fix but need to apply fix). Data, location and personal security is suspect so make sure you keep the latest version of the game updated.

Quora*Q&A Site**16+*

What it does: Quora has become a widely renowned site for its "Question and Answer" based format. People are allowed to make accounts using their real names and post both questions and answers. With Quora's software, it allows them to display the answers with the most likes.

What Parents Need to Know: This site can be a very helpful and informative site however without strong parental controls there is a lot of mature and sexual content throughout.

Reddit*Social Network**15+*



What it does: Reddit is a social news aggregation, web content rating, and discussion website. Reddit's registered community members can submit content, such as text posts or direct links. Registered users can then vote submissions up or down to organize the posts and determine their position on the site's pages. The submissions with the most positive votes appear on the front page or the top of a category. Content entries are organized by areas of interest called "subreddits". The subreddit topics include news, science, gaming, movies, music, books, fitness, food, and image-sharing, among many others. The site's terms of use prohibit behaviors such as harassment - moderating and limiting harassment has taken substantial resources.

What Parents Need to Know: Reddit can be a trove of insightful, challenging and inspirational content. With the moderation features implemented in the last year and being registered, there are not as many trolls, hate speech, etc. – however, just like the rest of the Internet, people post all sorts of things that users will have access to.

Roo Kids

Messaging & Communications App

8+



What it does: Roo Kids is a safe & fun instant messaging app for kids with minimum yet critical parental controls. Thoughtful features like: SSL encryption for all messages, no advertising, no camera access in the app, strong abuse reporting capabilities – all make this an ideal app for younger children. Parental controls allow you to set a “curfew” on the app, manage the contact list and control in-app purchases.

What Parents Need to Know: This is a good app for children of all ages. We would like to see the filters a bit tighter as they are relatively easy to get through blocked words by simply adding a character to it. Overall though, very safe especially when paired with the ReThink app for tighter language controls.

Sarahah

Messaging & Communications App

18+



What it does: Sarahah is a free social media app that lets you receive comments from friends and strangers anonymously. You can also comment on friends' and strangers' profiles without them knowing it's you. The app's name means “honesty,” roughly, in Arabic, and was supposedly designed to allow employees to share feedback with each other anonymously. With a way to connect the app to Snapchat, teens have taken to the platform, and it now has millions of users and has risen to the top of the App Store in several countries.

What Parents Need to Know: Some teens may use it to send anonymous messages with their schoolyard crushes, but more often it's used to transmit all the mean things teens would never say to a friend's face. The app connects to your contact list on your phone and provides a link that users share across their social platforms to receive anonymous feedback.

Skout

Hook-up App

18+



What it does: It is a location-based social networking and dating application and website. The app is for 13+ but with no real age verification, anyone could sign up. There is a “teen” version however that is easily passed using a fake birthday. Some safety precautions have been implemented, however this remains a dating app with very suggestive content.

What Parents Need to Know: Skout is not the worst dating app we have seen, but it is still a hook-up app designed to connect strangers. In the teen version, geolocation is turned off, but not in the adult section. Hard for parents to monitor this one.

Slingshot (Only available in Australia, but has been briefly in the US market)

Social Network - Comparison App

13+



What it does: Same makers as Wishbone, Slingshot is targeted at boys. Users are shown two images and vote on which they like more. Polls include Sports, Cars, Games, Girls, Cartoons, Politics, etc. Polls are sponsor supported and can be added by users. Profiles can be anonymous or created with a Facebook or Twitter account. The community self-reports inappropriate content and individuals can delete bullying comments themselves...but they have to see / look at the content/comments first in order to report.

What Parents Need to Know: Most of the content is fine. However, Kids can compare classmates, make fun of each other and ask more adult questions. It is ad supported and a lot of data is collected by marketers from all the comparisons. Remove any identifiable info from your profiles, recommend not using Facebook or Twitter to sign up with. Not recommended for younger users.

Smack High

Anonymous Platform

Adults Only



What it does: Outlet that lets high school students voice their daily happenings, news, opinions, pictures, sports updates, inspirational stories, “smack” about others and other issues occurring within their school and its rivals. Though directed at high-schoolers, younger ages have access.

What Parents Need to Know: Anonymous sites and apps are dangerous for kids. Bullying, phishing, abusive and inappropriate content are abound. Block these sites and apps in general.

Snapchat

Messaging & Communications App

14+



What it does: Snapchat is a popular messaging app that allows you to exchange user-generated photos, texts, videos, and calls -- both audio and video. Snaps are often thought of as "self-destructing" photos and videos (disappear after 1 – 10 seconds or the user taps out of the snap). The truth is that there are many apps that will intercept and store Snaps indefinitely and users can screenshot Snaps at any time. With new updates, users can now share their location and track and see where other users are.

What Parents Need to Know: "Disappearing" content leads some users to send images/videos/comments that they might not normally send if they were posted somewhere. Parents need to let kids know that nothing "disappears" and any Snap can be saved and re-distributed. Reinforce safe messaging practices always. Location settings can be changed to only allow certain friends to see your location or ghost mode can be enabled so that no one can see your location.

Spring.me (now part of Twoo)

Anonymous Platform/ Dating App

Adults Only



What it does: Spring.me was an anonymous site to ask & answer, smile, chat & laugh with millions of members & make amazing new friends from all over the world.

Thousands of interesting and fun Questions & Answers. Sister website to Ask.fm.

Purchased by Twoo in July 2015 they are becoming more of a true dating app. Will keep here until the brand goes away officially.

What Parents Need to Know: Anonymous sites and apps are dangerous for kids. Bullying, phishing, abusive and inappropriate content are abound. Block these sites and apps in general.

Streetchat (unavailable in US but has been available in the past)

Messaging App

Adults Only



What it does: As an anonymous, unmoderated image board, the app lets students at high schools and colleges anonymously post photos and captions about anyone they want — from anywhere they want. Content is not monitored and can be shared with anyone in the world.

What Parents Need to Know: Not an app for kids. Unmoderated and anonymous, the content is lude, sexist and racist. Along with geolocation, this app is not good for kids or most adults.

Tagged (an if(we) company)

Hook-up App & Social Network

Adults Only



What it does: Once a fast-growing site (2011 era) Tagged is now a place to meet new people, flirt and date. With over 300M users, it is still popular however not a place for kids. It was originally aimed at junior high and high school students but is now open to people of all ages. One can customize their profile, write on walls, & users can "tag" each other with pictures.

What Parents Need to Know: Not an app for kids. Questionable behavior leads to inbox spam, advertisements not exactly kid-friendly, & lacks protection against spam bots, inappropriate content and abuse.

Tango

Social Network

16+ Privacy Settings Recommended



What it does: A free app that, in addition to video calls, is also optimized for voice calls, texting, photo sharing, and playing games. There are an overwhelming number of things to do and ways to communicate on this app. Profiles are set to public but can be changed.

What Parents Need to Know: As an “always on” app, Teens need to monitor their screen time with this. A lack of controls opens users up to a vast amount of inappropriate content. Some issues with predators and hacking issues have been reported.

tbh (to be honest)

Anonymous Platform

14+



What it does: TBH is a polling app that gives or lets users create positive questions and gives a choice of four friends for the user to choose from as to who might fit that description. The submissions are monitored and the app claims only a small percentage of the questions submitted actually make it through.

What Parents Need to Know: There are 2 issues with the app. 1. It requires anonymity and proximity. We should understand children’s information is being shared. 2. It trains children to crave feedback, likes and votes. The conversation: No app should define or shape a child’s self-worth

Telegram

Messaging App

Adults Only



What it does: The messaging app “Telegram” is highly used around the world. It is known for being heavily secure to the point where anyone outside the message or app has no way of seeing what is being said. Messages can be sent with a timer to self-destruct and delete themselves. This app is known for housing ISIS communications & has been used by other known terrorist groups.

What Parents Need to Know: This app should not be used. There are many other ways to message people and the amount of security that this app has creates a problem for the safety of everyone.

Tinder

Hook-up App

Adults Only



What it does: A location-based sharing dating and social discovery service application (using Facebook) that facilitates communication between mutually interested users, allowing matched users to chat. Typically used for casual sex encounters. It allows a “desirability” voting/rating of people which can boost confidence or result in cyberbullying and self-esteem issues.

What Parents Need to Know: These sites store personal information, share location, lack significant privacy controls and are prone to predators. These sites are not recommended.

Trivia Crack

Trivia App

13+



What it does: Originated in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Trivia Crack is a Trivia App that allows users to compete against friends and people around the world. It combines much of the gaming aspects of Jeopardy, Trivial Pursuit and Who Wants to Be a Millionaire. It's very popular & can be a fun way for kids to learn.

What Parents Need to Know: Trivia Crack is a good, fun app for the most part.

Random opponents and chat feature with strangers can lead to potential problems. Make sure that users invoke privacy settings as they continue to get better on the site and make sure they are old enough to use the app responsibly.

Truth*Anonymous Platform**Adults Only*

What it does: Truth is an anonymous messaging app that allows you to freely say what's on your mind. When you send a message, you're disguised so your friends will never know it's you! When you send a "truth," you are assigned an anonymous username and avatar (one of an assortment of playful owls). If the recipient already has the app, the message will show up in the app's inbox. If they don't, a text message will display part of the "truth" and prompt the recipient to download the app.

What Parents Need to Know: Anonymous sites and apps are dangerous for kids. Bullying, phishing, abusive and inappropriate content are abundant. Block these sites / apps in general.

Tumblr*Social Network**16+ Privacy Settings Recommended*

What it does: A popular microblogging platform designed for creative self-expression. It is considered a mindful alternative to Facebook and other social media websites where users blog on a myriad of topics. It promotes short to-the-point blogs. It also allows users to share posts, photos, quotes, links, music and videos as well as customize all aspects of their blogs.

What Parents Need to Know: Content is not monitored therefore inappropriate content is easy to stumble on. May be OK for older teens, not recommended for most though

Twitter*Social Network**16+ Privacy Settings Recommended*

What it does: An online news and social networking service where users post and read short 140-character messages called "tweets". Registered users can post and read tweets, but those who are unregistered can only read them. Users access Twitter through the website interface, SMS or mobile device app.

What Parents Need to Know: Twitter is a public network. All posts are public and searchable immediately. While there are privacy settings, much of the content is not moderated therefore a quick search can uncover mountains of inappropriate content. A good place for expression and finding related interest groups, but there is just as much on the ugly side.

Twoo

*Anonymous Platform/ Dating App**Adults Only*

What it does: known mostly for its abuse and unethical use of its users email and contacts, it's a dating app that connects people randomly

What Parents Need to Know: Anonymous sites and apps are dangerous for kids. Bullying, phishing, abusive and inappropriate content are abound. Block these sites and apps in general.

Viber*Messaging & Communications App**10+*

What it does: Viber is a free messenger that keeps you connected to anyone in the world through your Internet connection. All you need is 3G or Wi-Fi and you can connect with other Viber users anywhere! It lets you send free text, sticker and photo messages and make free calls to anyone else who also has Viber. Calls to non-Viber users can happen by purchasing tokens.

What Parents Need to Know: Viber is a great messaging app with a clean interface. Some of the stickers, etc. can be inappropriate but those are all paid access. Use the free tools. Good privacy settings put no parental controls. If this had parental controls, it could be used with young users as an alternative to a full mobile device.

Vine*Video Social Network**16+ Privacy Settings Recommended*

What it does: Vine is a short-form video sharing service owned by Twitter where users can share six-second-long looping video clips. Announced in October 2016, the app would no longer allow new videos to be uploaded. We have left this in here for now, as Twitter may re-launch the app or a part of it back into the platform.

What Parents Need to Know: Live streaming and video posting contains a lot of suggestive content.

Voxer*Messaging & Communications App**8+*

What it does: Around since 2007, Voxer is a messaging app for your smartphone with live voice (like a walkie talkie), text, photo and location sharing. The push-to-talk (walkie talkie) feature is the big draw of this app. Many businesses use this to securely communicate as well as families. Also, allows you to leave voice message. Location services are available but not required.

What Parents Need to Know: Voxer is a great messaging app and a cool walkie-talkie feature. Stay in communication with your family with ease.

Wattpad*Story Sharing App**16+*



What it does: Wattpad was created to allow writers to share stories with the many readers on the app. Anyone with an account can post a story just as anyone with an account can read these stories. Some of the content can be explicit even though Wattpad claims to filter inappropriate content.

What Parents Need to Know: This app can be great for young aspiring writers because there is often positive feedback on the stories. But be careful for inappropriate content and harsh comments.

WeChat

Social Network

16+ Privacy Settings Recommended



What it does: WeChat started as a messaging app, but now it has become much larger. WeChat still has its original messaging features, and now it has ways to subscribe to people's feeds and business accounts. Also with the new features, it is easier to find new people and come into contact with strangers.

What Parents Need to Know: Like any other social media network, you can never be too safe. This app is capable of sharing images and messages.

WhatsApp

Messaging & Communications App

14+



What it does: Owned by Facebook and boasts over 1B users, WhatsApp is a strong competitor to Snapchat. WhatsApp is an Instant messaging application that allows iPhone, BlackBerry, Android, Windows Phone and Nokia smartphone users to exchange text, image, video, photos, and audio messages for free. It allows group chat, video calling and location sharing services.

What Parents Need to Know: WhatsApp is an alternative to texting and keeping data use on mobile phones in check if on Wi-Fi. It's new video service trumps Facetime for video calling since it works on all devices (not just iOS). Like Snapchat, kids think their content is gone when it disappears or they delete it. Recent forensic studies show that even deleted messages in WhatsApp remain on the device. As a messaging platform, users are "always on" so be sure to limit screen time especially at night.

Whisper

Anonymous Platform

Adults Only



What it does: Anonymous social confessional app allowing users to post whatever is on their mind. Users share a confession, add a background and post to a community all without sharing their identity. Teens are sharing sensitive information with strangers. A lot of the content focus in on sex and drug abuse. Many share tragic events and depressive thoughts. Users share an understanding there is no confidentiality.

What Parents Need to Know: Anonymous sites and apps are dangerous for kids. Bullying, phishing, abusive and inappropriate content are abound. Block these sites and apps in general.

Wishbone

Social Network - Comparison App

13+



What it does: Same makers as Slingshot, Wishbone is targeted at girls. Users are shown two images and vote on which they like more. Polls include Fashion, Boys, Movies, Food, Celebrities, etc. Polls are sponsor supported and can be added by users. Profiles can be anonymous or created with a Facebook or Twitter account. The community self-reports inappropriate content and individuals can delete bullying comments themselves...but they have to see / look at the content/comments first in order to report.

What Parents Need to Know: Most of the content is fine. However, Kids can compare classmates, make fun of each other and ask more adult questions. It is ad supported and a lot of data is collected by marketers from all the comparisons. Remove any identifiable info from your profiles, recommend not using Facebook or Twitter to sign up with. Not recommended for younger users.

Xanga

Social Network

13+



What it does: Xanga is a paid community where you can start your own free weblog, share photos, social networking profiles, videos and meet new friends. The platform has a long history starting back in 1999, however is considered on "life support" at this point. Why is it in here? Because it is still an option.

What Parents Need to Know: as a paid platform, not many users are in support. All their old messages and much of their content is no longer available.

Yellow (Yubo)

Hook-up App

Adults Only



What it does: Described as 'Tinder for Teens', the Yellow app allows users to make new friends using their Snapchat and Instagram accounts. Like Tinder users can swipe right if they see someone they want to connect with or left if they are not interested. If both users swipe right, their Snapchat handles are automatically added to their Yellow contacts list. Once matched users can also message each other within the Yellow App.

What Parents Need to Know: What is concerning about the yellow app is that it makes it easy for young people to connect with people they don't know on Snapchat. Yellow is being tied to sexting and sextortion incidents all over the world and it exposes your real-life location.

Yo

Messaging & Communications App

8+



What it does: Yo started as a simplistic communications app. You have a list of contacts and when you click a contact, one message is sent, "Yo". Mostly used to let people know you are thinking about them or let you know they made it to a destination OK. In 2015, Yo added an app store that lets you sign up for notifications from over 150 news and information outlets. The user interface was updated to allow users to send photos or their location within 1 swipe and a tap from the home screen. The new version also enabled users to collect their friends in to groups so that they could "Yo" several people with 1 tap.

What Parents Need to Know: This app continues to grow in function. With the limited capabilities (mostly notifications still) – there is not a lot of abuse in the app yet. The one warning is in sending geolocation with a swipe from the app. It has to be initiated, but it is still available.

YouNow*Video Social Network**16+*

What it does: A popular broadcasting platform where kids spend hours watching and streaming real-time videos. YouNow is a live broadcasting platform (an app and website at YouNow.com). On YouNow you can make a live video or watch channels produced by others. Anyone can post comments, statements, questions as well as “likes” to the webcam-ing individuals. Because of its “open mic-night” approach, most broadcasts go downhill quickly.

What Parents Need to Know: Children can be viewed and followed by adults, you don’t have to be a member to view live streaming video, and there are many cases of children releasing too much personal information on line and in the chat feature. The allure of chasing likes and views have teens doing things more on the edge.

Not all-inclusive, but other dating sites not mentioned: Fundate City, Ourteen Network, Bebo, ChatPit, TeenChat, TeenSay, Teens.Town, Hinge, Knuddles.com

We attempt to cover most of the most popular sites and apps that we see children and teens using. Do you have another site or app that you feel should be here?

info@DFINow.org