Snapchat
Parent / Carer Advice

What is Snapchat?

Snapchat is one of the image-based social media platforms which is incredibly popular with children. One of the key features of Snapchat is that, by default, messages sent through Snapchat disappear seconds after they are viewed by the recipient. The minimum age to use Snapchat is 13 but it is a popular and widely used platform among children younger than this.
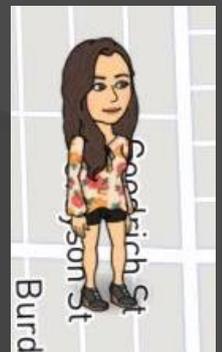
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Safety Tips

⚠ As with all Internet activity, talk to your child about how they use Snapchat, the importance of not 'oversharing, and any issues they have faced.

⚠ The default privacy setting of 'My Friends' prevents children from sharing 'snaps' with users unknown to them. However, children may change this setting and make their posts public. Ensure your child is aware of the importance of maintaining strong privacy settings and check the settings your child has selected.

⚠ In the settings options, ensure your child has Snapmap set to 'ghost mode'. This will ensure that nobody can see their current location.

⚠ Ask your child if they know how to report or block a user who sends them anything that upsets them. This can be done by going to the friends list, selecting the person creating the issue and then selecting the gear icon.

⚠ Remind your child that although Snapchat automatically deletes images once seen, somebody can copy the image and share it with others.

Reasons for concern

❗ Abuse and bullying
As messages disappear shortly after being read, Snapchat has become a popular tool for abuse such as online bullying as abusers feel they will not be held to account for messages posted once they are deleted. This is supported by the fact that if somebody takes a screenshot of a message posted on Snapchat then the person who posted it is informed that this has happened, making it more uncomfortable for people to take evidence of abuse they have suffered or witnessed.

❗ The Snap Map
The Snap Map allows users to see the live location of their friends on a map. Cartoon-style avatars are used to represent people in a move that was clearly designed to be popular with younger users. This feature can result in children sharing their location (including effectively their home address) with individuals.

❗ Addiction-inducing features
Children are naturally more prone to addictive behaviour than adults. As such, the inclusion of features such as 'Snap Streaks' (where two users share pictures with each other on consecutive days) encourages addictive behaviour. Snapchat rewards longer streaks with special emojis. This can result in children increasing their daily usage of the app.

❗ Risk of secondary apps
Snapchat allows users to link to secondary apps that can be used inside Snapchat. A recent concerning example is YOLO which allows users to offer people the opportunity to anonymously ask them questions. Such apps have led to online bullying and hate crime.

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