

Our Ever-Changing & Evolving Digital World: What Social Media & Apps Kids Are Using

Kids still faithfully use YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram apps and parents have become familiar and comfortable with these apps but these are not the only trending apps kids use. There are literally dozens of social media platforms and apps that kids use on a regular basis.

Below are just a few of the newer trending apps kids are also using and/or flocking to online.



Zoomerang: Zoomerang is one of the most popular apps right now among teens and tweens. It is a simple step by step tutorial video maker that allows you to take and develop short videos, apply filters and even add special effects as well as background music to your video. You can then share the videos on social media sites. Zoomerang has shown to be very helpful in creating videos for Instagram and Tik Tok where many teens can be found. And because of Zoomerang's easy to use tutorials that help make video creating and editing simple, even elementary age kids with access to a smart phone or other mobile device can create videos.

What Parents Should Be Aware Of: One of the features of the app that is cause for concern is location tracking. This particular feature makes it easy for online predators to locate and find kids from the videos they have posted.

Furthermore, it is simple for anyone to take a screenshot of parts of a video and then photoshop and/or manipulate the screenshot and use it out of its original context. Cyberbullying and harassment have occurred often using this this approach.



Among Us: Among Us is one of the more popular online multiple player social deduction/elimination games. It has a space-themed setting and there are two kinds of roles. The goal is to try and figure out who are the imposters in the game. Four to ten players are needed to start a game. You are able to play with friends or strangers online. Among Us is just one of literally dozens of online themed deduction games.

What Parents Should Be Aware Of: Parents should understand that their kids could be playing this multiplayer game unknowingly with unsafe strangers. A game hacker in 2020 used the messaging feature in the game to promote his YouTube channel and server which were filled with racist language, gore, pornography, and extremist political views. The hacker also sent disturbing messages to players during the game.



Bigo: Bigo is a live streaming app. The app is rated for persons that are age 17 and up. This app is used to vlog (vlog is a personal website or social media account where a person regularly posts short videos about their life, live streams video game play, and hosts their own shows).

What Parents Should Be Aware Of: There is no true age verification so anyone can access and use the live streaming app. Furthermore, parents should be aware that users have to provide personal information such as their age and location. This app has frequently been reported to contain bullying behavior, inappropriate sexual comments, nudity, violence, and lewd and offensive language



Tellonym: Tellonym is an anonymous messaging app. It refers to itself as “the most honest place on the internet.” This particular app is popular among middle schoolers.

What Parents Should Be Aware Of: Like some other popular apps, cyberbullying tends to occur, as well as rumors, threats of violence, and sexual content.



Houseparty: Houseparty is a video chatting app. It allows family and friends to communicate with each other through live video and texts in chat groups. It became very popular over the last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic as it allowed kids to stay in touch with friends and family and hang out while still practicing social distancing.

What Parents Should Be Aware Of: The video app is live, so there's nothing to keep kids from viewing/hearing inappropriate content. Users can record and send chats and even take screenshots.

It should be noted that social media platforms and apps that are geared towards social interaction can be quite useful in keeping kids and families connected. However, we also need to recognize that most any app can be utilized for inappropriate and/or harmful intentions. As a result, we must continue to talk with our kids about appropriate and proper use of social media and online apps to help lessen the risks associated with using these social media sites and apps.

With that in mind, here are some tips for parents in navigating the world of apps:

Tips for Parents:

- Know what your apps your kids are using and what's the purpose of each app.
- Know how each app works. If you do not know how an app works, download it and learn how to use it.
- Have conversations about trending apps. New and old apps are always updating and changing so one of the best ways to stay current is to ask your kids what are the newest apps kids in school are using.
- Discuss appropriate and inappropriate behavior and posts online. Help them understand the consequences of their actions online.
- Help youth think about the consequences of their actions by talking about online challenges and risky behaviors. Ask them whether they think the challenge is safe or dangerous.
- Ask questions about if they have had any concerning issues while on any of the sites or apps they use, such as inappropriate sexual posts, cyberbullying, contact from strangers etc.

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