PARENT FACTSHEET

Child safety on Snapchat

Snapchat is an app for sending photos and videos (known as 'Snaps'), and text messages. The 'Stories' feature lets users share photos or videos with all their contacts at once.

Snaps disappear after being opened, usually within seconds. Stories disappear after 24 hours. Images and messages aren't automatically saved on phones.

The **minimum age** to use Snapchat is **13,** but it's easy to sign up if you're younger.

What's the problem?

- There's a 'high' risk of seeing sexual content, and of bullying
- Your child's location could be shared automatically with their contacts, which could put them in danger if they have strangers as 'friends' on the app
- There's a risk of children being 'groomed' by strangers into sharing pictures and information about themselves. Gangs also use apps to groom and recruit children

4 steps to help your child use Snapchat safely

1. Tell your child to only use it with real friends

Anyone could pretend to be a child or teenager online, so encourage your child not to talk to people they don't know in real life.

2. Use privacy settings

By default, only 'friends' your child has added on Snapchat can contact them directly and see their story or location, so encourage your child to keep those default settings.

To check and change the settings:

- Tap the person icon in the top-left of Snapchat, then the cog in the top-right. Scroll down to 'Who Can …' and tap the relevant options
- Under 'Who Can See My Location', choose 'Ghost Map' to turn location sharing off
- Under 'Who Can See Me In Quick Add' you can stop your child's profile from being suggested to strangers as a potential 'friend'

3. Talk to your child about 'sexting' and being careful about what they share

Even though images disappear in Snapchat, they can be screenshotted and then shared – outside of the original sender's control.

So, remind your child to think carefully about the images they share, and with who. Before they share anything, tell them to ask: "would I be happy for other people to see this?"

In particular, make sure your child knows **not to take, share or view naked or sexually explicit pictures of themselves or another child, either voluntarily or if asked to by someone else**.

This is known as 'sexting' and is illegal, even when the person doing it is a child. It can also be distressing for a child to be a victim of sexting, or to see an inappropriate image that someone else has shared.

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4. Make sure your child knows how to use reporting and blocking functions

- To **report** a Snap or Story, press and hold on it, tap the flag, then explain the problem
- To **remove** or **block** a friend, swipe to the right to go to the 'Friends' screen, then tap and hold on the person's name. Tap 'More', then choose 'Remove friend' or 'Block'

What can I do about online bullying?

- Encourage your child to talk to you if someone says something upsetting or hurtful to them
- Look for signs they may be being bullied, like being afraid or reluctant to go to school, feeling nervous, losing confidence or becoming distressed and withdrawn, or losing sleep
- Tell our school about **any** bullying your child experiences

There are also few ways you can save images and messages as evidence:

- Use another device to, quickly, take a photo of the image or message (this is the only way you can save the image without other people knowing)
- Tap on the message, quickly, to save it (other people will know, from the grey background)
- Take a screenshot, quickly (the person who shared it will get a notification)
- Change your 'delete' settings to save messages for 24 hours – tap the 3 grey lines in the chat you want to keep, then 'Delete chats…'. Select '24 hours after viewing'

What can I do if I think my child is being targeted by a gang?

Share your concerns with our school immediately. You can also contact the NSPCC for advice – call 0808 800 5000 or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

Be alert to changes in your child – such as having new unexplained possessions, changing friendship groups, behaviour and mood changes, unexplained injuries.

Sources used for this factsheet

- Snapchat, NetAware
  https://www.net-aware.org.uk/networks/snapchat/
- Sexting, NSPCC
  https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/sexting/
- Snapchat Support, Snapchat and Safety Centre, Snap Inc
  https://support.snapchat.com/en-US and https://www.snap.com/en-GB/safety/safety-center/
- Joint inspections of child exploitation, Ofsted, GOV.UK – Ofsted
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-inspections-of-child-sexual-exploitation-and-missing-children
- Instagram biggest for child grooming online – NSPCC finds, BBC News
  https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-47410520

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