

THE “GROWN FOLKS” GUIDE TO POPULAR APPS IN SOCIAL MEDIA



Youth and Social Media

Technology moves fast and so does social media. Like most tools, technology itself is neutral. All the sites listed can be used for many constructive purposes, linking youth to their friends and interacting in positive ways. Many youth use social media to create vibrant communities and engage in social action and ally behavior. Schools and educators are increasingly using social media to communicate with students about assignments and create learning communities. However, we know that sometimes youth (and adults) choose to use the same technology in negative ways. And people sometimes use others' identity and [differences](#) as a basis to disrespect others online.

It is important to understand the technology and teach young people how to engage safely and respectfully on social media. Do not assume that just because they know more than you about specific apps that they know more than you about how to engage online in thoughtful and respectful ways. Encourage young people to think about their personal values and actions as they relate to online spaces overall—not just specific apps.

Social Media Apps and Sites Kids are Using

Social media plays a big role in kids' lives and they love to try out new apps. It can be a challenge for adults to keep up with the latest apps and know what's “hot” and what's not. Below, we have listed popular social media sites and applications (apps) young people are using. The information is not

exhaustive but focuses on the trends and is updated periodically as new apps and sites emerge and others disappear.

Listed age ratings are what [Common Sense Media](#) assesses as age appropriate. Common Sense Media is a leading independent nonprofit organization dedicated to helping kids thrive in a world of media and technology.



4chan. An image board (see definitions below) website where users generally post anonymously, 4chan is split into various, topic-specific boards and many popular memes (see definitions) have been originated on the site. Given its anonymous nature, there are very few rules for posting. *Age rated 17+*



After School. An anonymous, private message board for specific schools. As with other anonymous sites, there are concerns about youth posting mean and hurtful material, as well as sexually explicit content. *App rated 17+*



Amino. A social network of communities. Users create or join communities based on interests. Users can also chat with other members of a community by text, voice or video chat. *App rated 15+*



ASKfm. A social networking site where users set up a profile, ask questions and answer those posted by others using a text message or video. Users are allowed to be anonymous, which has led to some youth using it to engage in hurtful and cyberbullying behavior. *App rated 13+*



badoo.* A free “meet up” app that connects users based on their hobbies and interests to make new friends, chat or date. Allows users to search for people in close geographic proximity, called geosocial networking (see definitions below). *App rated 18+*



Blendr.* A location-based dating app that connects like-minded people to one another. Users share messages, videos or communicate in real time. *App rated 18+*



Boomerang from Instagram. This app creates animated GIFs by recording ten quick images. Users share these GIFs to Facebook, Instagram or other social media platforms connected on the device. All videos made with Boomerang are automatically saved to the device's camera roll. *App rated 14+*



Bumble.* A location-based dating or hookup app. In heterosexual matches, only women are allowed to message males, but in same-sex matches either party can initiate a chat. Users must access the app via Facebook, and photos and profile information are pulled from there. There is a “BFF feature” (best friends forever) for users seeking platonic relationships. *App rated 18+*



Discord. An all-in-one voice, text messaging and group chat for gamers that's free, secure and works on desktop and mobile phone. Users can also create chat servers that are invitation only, the safest option, particularly for youth. Because Discord servers operate by invitation, it can draw in both hate-filled groups as well as provide safe spaces for marginalized groups of people who share their identity. Unlike group and text features, voice chat is unmoderated. This app has an Explicit Content Filter. *App rated 13+*



Facebook. A social networking site with 1.59 billion users. Users share status updates, pictures, articles and other media with friends or the public, depending on their privacy settings. Facebook friends can "like," respond and comment on posts. Facebook users can also send messages to one another through a separate Facebook Messenger app. Facebook also has numerous game applications that many adults and youth play. *App rated 13+*



Foursquare. A location-based app that lets users search for restaurants, stores and other places of interest nearby. The app detects a user's current location without them needing to "check in," or users can tell friends where they are by tapping in a location. Friends can then message them or meet up for in-person connection. Users also can check tweets nearby to see who's in their area. *App rated 17+*



Flickr. A video and image hosting site where images can be accessed by non-registered users, but an account is required to upload content onto the website. Registering an account allows users to create a profile page with photos, memes and videos that the user has uploaded and also grants the ability to add other Flickr users as contacts. *App rated 15+*



GroupMe. A messaging app that lets users exchange limitless direct messages and group chats. Two features that are appealing for young people include its custom emojis and GIF search tool. Some emojis and GIFs contain adult-themed and inappropriate content. *App rated 15+*



Houseparty. A live video group chat app that allows users to talk with up to eight people at a time. There is a "stranger danger" feature that alerts users when a person who is not your direct friend enters the chat, which gives users the chance to exit the conversation. *App rated 14+*



Instagram. A social media app where users can capture, edit and share photos, videos and messages. Sharing can be set to either "friends" or public. Users can follow certain hashtags (see definitions below) related to their interests, like and comment on posts or explore public pictures using hashtags. Some users create two types of accounts: "insta," a real Instagram account viewable to the public and "finsta," a fake Instagram account with a different username that is private. *App rated 15+*



kik. An easy and free chat app that allows users to message people one-on-one or in groups. Users can exchange texts, pictures, web content, etc. "Stranger danger" is an issue with this app as well as covert marketing. *App rated 17+*



Line. This social media app is wide-ranging, allowing users to use text, video, voice-messaging, games, group chats and timelines. The app is free, but in-app purchases are required for several features so the cost can add up. A "hidden chat" erases messages after a short time, much like Snapchat (see below). *App rated 16+*



Messenger. This app can be used as part of Facebook or as a stand-alone app. Users can exchange messages, photos, videos, GIFs, stickers and voice calls. Encryption options are available so users can communicate secretly. *App rated 16+*



Monkey. A social app catered to teens who are randomly matched and introduced via a brief video call. Although this app is monitored for bullying and user safety, users may be exposed to explicit sexual content and strong language. *App rated 12+ but it doesn't verify age.*



omegle. Online site and app for anonymous text or video chatting. Registration is not required. The site randomly picks users to talk one-on-one and keeps users anonymous unless they choose to identify themselves. Users can also filter potential chat partners by shared interests. *App rated 18+ or 13+ with parental consent; however, it doesn't verify age.*



ooVoo. A cross-platform text and video calling app. ooVoo allows users to video call with up to 8 people simultaneously. *App rated 16+*



Peeks Social. Formerly known as Keek, this app combines live streaming and social commerce into a single business model. Users can follow one another and share comments on video postings. Hashtags are used for trending topics and to aggregate content, some of which is inappropriate for young people. *App rated 17+*



Periscope. A live video streaming app, owned by Twitter, where users share through their Twitter feed and can choose to make their videos private to their followers. *App rated 17+*



Pinterest. Allows users to upload their images and videos (called "pins") and collect other people's images and categorize them on different boards. Users can follow other people's boards. *App rated 13+*



Quora. This free community-based app allows registered users to post questions and answers and vote up or down answers that other members have posted. Users can add a profile picture, locate friends, follow and message other users and follow up to five content areas that interest them. *App rated 13+*



Reddit. This fifth most visited website in the U.S. is a social networking and news website where registered users post, vote and comment in communities organized around their interests. Registered users vote submissions "up" or "down" which determines their position on the page. Reddit is divided into communities or "subreddits," which cover a full range of interests and topics, including those that are considered offensive and derogatory. *App rated 15+*



Snapchat. A multimedia app where users exchange photos and videos (called snaps) that disappear within 10 seconds after being viewed. Users should understand that the media they post can still be retrieved, as well as saved through the recipient's screen shot functions. *App rated 16+*



Telegram. A cloud-based messaging app that allows users to send texts, videos, stickers, memes and other files to individuals or groups of up to 5,000. There are no subscription fees or ads. Messages are encrypted and users can set a self-destruct timer for messages, similar to snapchat. *App rated 17+*



Tik Tok. Formerly called Musical.ly, this popular social app among teens allows users to create and share 60-second videos that they can edit and add music and special effects. Users can browse content created by other users, remix others' work and make duet videos with anonymous user. A music library with multiple language support is included. Users may be exposed to explicit sexual content. *App rated 16+*



Tinder. A location-based dating or "hook-up" app where users can view pictures of other users in the same geographic area. Users swipe left to reject and right to make a match and an instant messaging feature is enabled allowing users to communicate directly if they both agree to the "match." *App rated 18+ (The app connects with Facebook—which is technically for ages 13+—to pull in photos for users/Tinder profile pictures.)*



tumblr.* A streamlined microblog site that favors creative expressions. Users can post text, links, and multimedia, where GIFs and pictures are the most re-blogged types of content. Users can use hashtags to search site content or have their content associated with popular hashtags. There is a lot of content that is sexually explicit and inappropriate for young people. *App rated 15+*



Twitter. A microblogging and social networking site where users post up to 280-character messages called "tweets." Users can share website links, pictures and videos. Hashtags are used to search for tweets that have a common topic and to begin a conversation; however, they can also be used to insult. *App rated 15+*



Viber. A multi-lingual social platform with a variety of free and secure calling and messaging capabilities. Features include instant voice and video messages, audio and video calls and group chats. Users can include stickers (some free, some not) and draw messages or doodle on photos. Users can also create communities with unlimited members and manage conversations. Viber can be used internationally with WiFi or cellular data access. *App rated 16+*



voxer. A walkie-talkie app that includes both a live push to talk (PTT) and a voice messaging system. Messages on voxer are delivered live as they are being recorded and then also delivered as a voice message. In 2017, voxer added an opt-in private chat feature that encrypts users' content. *App users must be 13+*



WeChat. An all-in-one communications app for messaging and calling with over 1 billion users worldwide. Features include voice and video calls, M-Commerce, texts, stickers, custom emojis, etc. The “People Nearby” feature allows users to chat with people near them. It has a “Shake” button that locates other users in the world who are shaking their phones too; from there users can immediately start chatting with them. The platform also has WeChat Games and a “Moments” section for sharing photos and videos with song snippets from WeChat’s music collection. *App rated 16+*



WhatsApp. With more than 1 billion users, WhatsApp is popular worldwide. Users can exchange texts, audio messages, photos, videos and face-to-face calls for free. Accounts are connected to a mobile phone number. Acquired by Facebook, the app still exists as an independent entity. *App rated 16+*



whisper.* An app which allows users to anonymously post whatever is on their minds. The postings, called “whispers,” consist of text superimposed over an image. Users can share or comment on the posts. There is also a “Meet Up” section. Users should understand that posts can include Geo-location and contain sexually explicit pictures and strong language. *App rated 17+*



YouNow. A live video-streaming and chat app where users interact and comment on others content. Trending and tag-based systems allow users to browse content and follow popular webcasters. Because live-streaming is unpredictable and difficult to monitor, teen users can be exposed to inappropriate content and share personal information by accident. *App rated 17+*



YouTube. A video-sharing site and app that allows users to upload, view, rate, share and comment on a wide range of videos, including user-generated videos, TV show clips, documentary films, video blogs and educational material. Unregistered users can only watch videos and registered users can upload an unlimited number of videos and add comments to videos. Since videos are user-generated, content that is inappropriate for teens is easily accessible. *App rated 13+*



Yubo.* Formerly called Yellow, users create an account and swipe left if they want to be friends with someone or right if they would like to pass that profile. Two people who swipe right on each other can chat and hook up via Snapchat or Instagram. This app makes it easy for users to connect with strangers. Though it is not identified as a dating app, its design is similar in nature to adult dating apps like Tinder and Bumble, exposing teens to inappropriate and sexually explicit content. *App rated 17+*

*Dating Apps

Although dating or “meet up” apps are intended for adult users only, young people can gain access to these sites and apps by falsifying their birth date or creating a fake profile and account. It is important to make young people aware of the potential dangers and inappropriate content that these apps can

contain. Be sure to include ground rules specific to dating apps when talking with young people about safe internet use, such as they should never make plans to meet up with someone that they do not know.

What Parents Can Do to Support Young People

It's important to be aware of the social media sites and apps your children use. It's also important to be aware of the perks and potential risks. Here are some ways you can help your children use social media wisely and enjoy apps safely.

- Communicate clearly and directly to young people that the values and standards for how we treat one another are the same regardless of whether you are communicating in person or online, and that they will be held to your expectations of treating others with respect and dignity.
- Keep open lines of communication. Ask open-ended questions to gain more information about the sites and apps young people are using and why. Try to better understand the importance of social media in their world and engage in open dialogue that builds mutual trust and critical thinking about what is appropriate and why. Check out ADL's resource for having discussions about technology use: [Table Talk: Teenagers and Technology](#).
- Discuss with young people the advantages and disadvantages of social media. Teach them the importance of being cautious about the information they share online and the risks of apps that can share their current locations along with their photos.
- Talk with your children about [cyberbullying](#), not just about what to do if they are a target, but also about how to respond or [act as an ally](#) if they witness or experience cyberbullying. Explain that apps such as kik and ASKfm that allow anonymity and the ability to erase messages can lend themselves to cyberbullying so they should be used with care and caution.
- Share with your children ADL's [Navigating a Digital World: Tips for Youth](#) so they can have a positive online experience and know how to effectively respond to negative online behavior and cyberbullying.
- When necessary and appropriate, help youth [report cyberbullying](#) or online hate to appropriate authorities.
- [Contact ADL](#) if you have more information on social networking apps and sites creating a buzz in your community.

Definitions

Algorithm: A detailed set of instructions to reach a result based on given inputs, data or information. An algorithm can be digital or non-digital. In social media, people often use 'algorithm' as a shorthand for 'feed algorithm', which is the set of rules a social network uses to automatically decide which posts come first in your feed.

Blog and Microblog: A website on which someone writes about personal opinions, activities and experiences. A microblog is a one that has very short posts relative to traditional blogs and/or may only be imagery such as a photo or meme.

Challenge: Internet users record themselves performing a “challenge” and then distribute the resulting video through social media sites, often inspiring or daring other users to repeat the act. A hugely popular challenge was the ice bucket challenge.

Dark social: Social sharing of content that analytics tools have difficulty tracking. This is often due to users sharing links privately on social in chats or direct messages.

Direct message (DM): A private form of communication between social media users that is only visible to the sender and recipient(s).

Doxxing: Refers to the search for and subsequent online publication of private personal information of people without their consent, often with malicious intent and to “punish” them for something they did.

Flaming: A hostile and insulting interaction between persons over the internet, often involving the use of profanity. It can also be the swapping of insults back and forth or with many people teaming up on a single target.

Geosocial networking: Allows social network users to connect with local people, sites, venues or events that match their interests in their general geographic vicinity. Location data is collected from users directly or other methods, such as Twitter posts.

Geotargeting: In social media marketing, it is the technique of adjusting users’ ad content based on the location of a user. Users can be included or excluded from a target audience based on their region, country, state, city, postal code or address. Advertisers can create and target ad sets to appeal to users in a certain geographic location.

GIF (Pronounced with a soft g like “jif”): Commonly known as a short video that plays on a loop, GIF stands for Graphics Interchange Format, an image format that supports animation and graphics well.

Hashtag: A word or phrase preceded by a hash or pound sign (#) and used to search for social media posts on various platforms that have a common topic and to begin or continue a conversation. For example, if you search on #THISISUS (or #ThisIsUs or #thisisus, because it’s not case-sensitive), you will get a list of tweets related to the TV show.

Image board: An image board is a type of internet forum which operates mostly via posting images, like an online bulletin board.

Instant messaging (IM): A type of chat where an electronic message is sent in real time via the internet or cellular data and is therefore immediately available to the recipient.

Meme: A humorous image, video or text that is copied (often with slight variations) and spread rapidly online.

Push to talk (PTT): an option offered by some mobile carriers, that allows subscribers to use their phones as walkie-talkies with unlimited range. This functionality allows one user to connect with a group with a single button press instead of making multiple calls to different users. When one user transmits, the other(s) receive. Some services also work on laptops, desktops and tablets.

Social networking site: A website that allows subscribers to interact by forming or joining groups based around shared interests, backgrounds or school sites. One can publish content so that specified groups of subscribers can access it.

Traffic: The number of users who visit a given website or page.

Trending topic: A subject or event that has a sudden surge in popularity on social media. Several social networks track the top hashtags or subjects people are posting about and include a “trending topics section.”

WiFi (Wifi or wifi): A wireless local area network (WLAN) that allows an electronic device (i.e., computers, smartphones, etc.) to connect to the internet or communicate with one another wirelessly within a particular area and often times at no cost to the user. Some are more secure than others so a discussion about WiFi settings and privacy should be included in any conversation with young people on the topic.

Viral: A digital video, image, social media post, blog or challenge “goes viral” when it gains in popularity and reaches a large number of users in a short period of time.