



What Mobile Apps Are Popular with Students?



In this ever changing digital world, it's crucial for parents to "Parent Online" and know what apps their children are using. Parents are the 1st line of defense when it comes to Online Safety. According to a 2014 Pew Internet study, teens are sharing more information than ever. This study reported that while teenagers are still active in the social media their parents know, they are increasingly seeking privacy and perceived anonymity on other sites. Teens are using a variety of apps, gravitating toward the highly visual apps that provide instant sharing (and instant gratification). Now that established social networks like Facebook and Twitter are staples of GenX and Baby Boomers, teens are migrating away from them. Teens simply don't want to hang out where Mom and Dad do. Remember, that if your teen doesn't want you to see their posts, they can simply start a new account and not tell you about it.



Instagram: An online photo-sharing, video-sharing and social networking service that allows users to take pictures and videos, change the way a photo looks using digital filters and share them on social networking sites. It's known as Selfie central! Parents need to make sure the privacy settings are set to allow friends they know to see the images. Also, the Geo-location feature needs to be turned off to mitigate online predator risk. Required age of use is 13 years old. This is an app commonly used by younger kids today.



Twitter: Because of how big of a resource Twitter has become for getting real-time news and connecting with high profile individuals and celebs like musicians, bands, actors, politicians and more -- teens have quickly taken a liking to the 140-character micro blogging social network. And because it's so easy to use from a mobile device, it's all the more convenient to access. Remember, that if your teen doesn't want you to see their posts, they can simply start a new account and not tell you about it.



Snapchat: This app allows kids to send photos and videos. The images theoretically disappear within 10 seconds so some kids are using Snapchat to sext. **It's known as the sexting app.** Kids may think the photos disappear for all time but a screenshot capture can be taken easily and the image can go viral quickly. In addition, Snapchat has known security vulnerabilities such that their database of customer names and phone numbers was recently hacked. Snapchat restricts usage to those 13 years and older.



Kik Messenger: A quick instant messaging service that allows teens to text their friends (who are also using Kik) and add photos and videos to the text message. It's rated 17+ but many young teens are using it without their parents' knowledge. Kik is very popular and has 90 million users. Kids may be exposed to highly sexualized, inappropriate content that includes graphic images.



Vine: Owned by Twitter, Vine lets older teens create and post short looping videos. Yes, the app is restricted to teens that are at least 17 years old because of the mature content which includes offensive language, nudity, drug use and sex.



Yik Yak: The website promotion raises obvious red flags. Yik Yak says the app "acts like a local bulletin board for your area by showing the most recent posts from other users around you. It allows anyone to connect and share information with other users without having to know them." Yik Yak has made the news recently because of its anonymous cyber bullying capabilities and use. Users are able to chat anonymously with people in their geographic vicinity by enabling the GPS feature of this app.



Omegle: The home page of Omegle invites people to Talk to Strangers. This says it all about the app and kids. Not talking to strangers is one of the first things we teach our kids. Parents need to be vigilant about who their kids are chatting with online too. **Omegle is a haven for sexual predators.** This App is not for kids' period. Kids are able to connect Omegle to their Facebook account to find chat partners with similar interests. When a tween or teen selects this feature, an Omegle Facebook App will receive their Facebook "likes" and match them with a stranger with similar likes.

What Mobile Apps Are Popular with Students Continued...



Ask.fm: A question and answering service that gives tweens and teens the opportunity to ask and answer controversial questions anonymously. This site is highly integrated with popular social networking sites like Facebook, Tumblr and Twitter. Users can invite their friends and followers to ask them questions by posting links on their timelines or Twitter feeds. Unfortunately, and sadly this site is ripe with abuse and has been linked to several cyber bullying incidents that have resulted in suicides. Age requirement is 13 years old.



uMentioned: Get the juiciest stories, darkest secrets, and funniest moments shared by students on your campus.” The homepage promotion has an image with the caption, “I slept with my TA and got an A for the semester. I wonder what he was grading...” iTunes has deemed this app as appropriate for 12 year olds and above. Even though they also indicate the app has: Frequent/Intense Profanity or Crude Humor; Infrequent Mild, Mature Suggestive Themes and Infrequent, mild alcohol, tobacco, or drug use or references.



Whisper.sh: Whisper, an iPhone app, lets users share and post their “deepest, darkest secrets” anonymously through pictures and texts. Unlike the app Snapchat, Whisper doesn’t claim that user posts “disappear forever.” In fact their privacy policy reads, “You understand that Whisper Text does not guarantee confidentiality with respect to any User Content you submit.” This is a clear privacy alert for kids and parents!



In this day and age teenagers are more tech savvy than most adults. They chat on their smartphones with their peers, download all the popular apps and are greatly familiar with their device settings. Another recent thing that a lot of teens do on their smartphones is hide pictures, messages and apps. Find out how teens are doing this and discover what you should be looking for on teens' phones. One such app is **KeepSafe** It allows you to upload pictures and videos into the app from the phone gallery and keeps them secured under a password. **Vault** is also a popular hiding app that allows users to hide photos, videos, text messages, contacts and apps. Just like KeepSafe, it is only accessible via password. **Secret Calculator** appear as calculators on the icon and when you open them. The user usually has to perform a combination of tasks in order to access the content, for example, pressing and holding a specific button and entering the password.

So Now What?

Remember, your child’s safety is more important than their privacy. As a parent, you aren’t being nosy by checking their cell phone on a regular basis; you are being responsible. Perhaps your family could establish family media rules, such as having to check with a parent before downloading a new app or game. Having a common charging area so you can easily check phones could also be a good system for your family.

Also, take the time to explain to them (at an age-appropriate level) why you are asking them questions and checking their phone and privacy settings. Many children do not realize just how much information they are putting out there and how dangerous it can be.

If you have an older teen, and find some questionable apps on their phone, it may be a good opportunity for a discussion. Here are a few conversation starter ideas:

Conversation starter for YikYak– What kind of things would a person want to post anonymously? How would you personally use this app? What would you post anonymously? Why?

Conversation starter for SnapChat – Why do you want to send pictures that disappear? Would you be okay with anyone seeing that pic?

Conversation starter for Whisper – Why would you tell your secrets to strangers? If you are struggling with something, will a stranger care or be able to help you? Do you think it would be safe to accept their help/friendship?

Conversation starter for any app – Are you being safe with that app? Are you encouraging others or tearing them down? Are you being bullied? Are you putting out too much information about yourself?