

Age Restrictions on Social Media

Which social media services are age restricted?

WhatsApp announced last year a change to their terms and conditions for users based in Europe. Users will now need to be **16** to use **WhatsApp**.

Nearly all other social media services require users to be at least **13** years of age to access and use their services. This includes **Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram, Musical.ly and Skype**.

Whilst there is no age restriction for watching videos on **YouTube**, users need to be **13 or older** to have their own YouTube account (enabling them to subscribe to other channels, like videos, post comments, share their own content and flag inappropriate content).

Why do these restrictions exist?

The reason most social media services use an age limit of 13 or over is in part because of a law in the USA. The COPPA law or **Children's Online Privacy Protection Act** states that any organisations or people operating online services (including social media services) are not allowed to collect the personal information of anyone under the age of 13 without parental permission.

To avoid the necessity of obtaining parental permission for any user under the age of 13, most services have instead chosen to place an age restriction of 13 to their services. They write this rule into their Terms and Conditions – which users must agree to when they initially sign up and some services may ask users to declare their age during sign up.

WhatsApp's new age limit has been chosen in response to the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that came into effect from the 25th May 2018 and applies in the European region.

Users, and the parents of users, should have been experiencing more communications from companies as they work to ensure that they are complying with the new General Data Protection Regulation.

What do we advise?

Whilst COPPA and GDPR exist to protect the personal information of children, there are also other elements of social media use which may not be appropriate for young users.

Our advice with regards to age restrictions is that it's always better to wait until the required age to join any social media service. These rules around age relate to privacy, but also are relevant to **safety**. Some services offer additional protection for users who are registered as under 18, and by supplying a fake age young people can potentially lose some of this protection. Young people also risk being exposed to content which is intended for older users when they use sites that are not designed for people their age.

Additionally, **we will need to report underage accounts of user's that violate terms and conditions of social media platforms**, which could result in deletion of user's accounts and any content which has been shared on that platform.

We know that social media services are popular with young people of all ages. **Parents have an important role in helping prepare their children to go online before they start to use social media platforms**. Together you can look at the key things they need to know about staying safe online, critical thinking, and the safety settings that are available to them.

When looking at creating a profile online with your child, have a discussion as a family and make this decision together – talk about why they want the account and ensure that any family members using social media know what tools are available to help them stay safe.

Please see below some useful links:

<https://www.childnet.com/blog/family-agreement>

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/social-media-guides>

<https://www.net-aware.org.uk/networks/>

FIFTEEN APPS

PARENTS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

MEETME



MEETME IS A DATING SOCIAL MEDIA APP THAT ALLOWS USERS TO CONNECT WITH PEOPLE BASED ON GEOGRAPHIC PROXIMITY. AS THE APP'S NAME SUGGESTS, USERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO MEET EACH OTHER IN PERSON.

GRINDR



GRINDR IS A DATING APP GEARED TOWARDS GAY, BI AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE. THE APP GIVES USERS OPTIONS TO CHAT, SHARE PHOTOS AND MEET UP BASED ON A SMART PHONE'S GPS LOCATION.

SKOUT



SKOUT IS A LOCATION-BASED DATING APP AND WEBSITE. WHILE USERS UNDER 17-YEARS-OLD ARE UNABLE TO SHARE PRIVATE PHOTOS, KIDS CAN EASILY CREATE AN ACCOUNT USING A DIFFERENT AGE.

WHATSAPP



WHATSAPP IS A POPULAR MESSAGING APP THAT ALLOWS USERS TO SEND TEXTS, PHOTOS, MAKE CALLS AND VIDEO CHATS WORLDWIDE. WHATSAPP USES AN INTERNET CONNECTION ON SMART PHONES AND COMPUTERS.

TIKTOK



TIKTOK IS A NEW MOBILE DEVICE APP POPULAR WITH KIDS USED FOR CREATING AND SHARING SHORT VIDEOS. WITH VERY LIMITED PRIVACY CONTROLS, USERS ARE VULNERABLE TO BULLYING AND EXPLICIT CONTENT.

BADOO



BADOO IS A DATING AND SOCIAL NETWORKING APP WHERE USERS CAN CHAT, SHARE PHOTOS AND VIDEOS AND CONNECT BASED ON LOCATION. WHILE THE APP IS INTENDED FOR ADULTS ONLY, TEENS ARE KNOWN TO CREATE PROFILES.

BUMBLE



BUMBLE IS SIMILAR TO THE POPULAR DATING APP 'TINDER' HOWEVER, IT REQUIRES WOMEN TO MAKE THE FIRST CONTACT. KIDS HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO USE BUMBLE TO CREATE FAKE ACCOUNTS AND FALSIFY THEIR AGE.

SNAPCHAT



SNAPCHAT IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR APPS IN RECENT YEARS. WHILE THE APP PROMISES USERS CAN TAKE A PHOTO/VIDEO AND IT WILL DISAPPEAR, NEW FEATURES INCLUDING 'STORIES' ALLOW USERS TO VIEW CONTENT FOR UP TO 24

KIK



KIK ALLOWS ANYONE TO CONTACT AND DIRECT MESSAGE YOUR CHILD. KIDS CAN BYPASS TRADITIONAL TEXT MESSAGING FEATURES. KIK GIVES USERS UNLIMITED ACCESS TO ANYONE, ANYWHERE, ANYTIME.

LIVE.ME



LIVE.ME IS A LIVE-STREAMING VIDEO APP THAT USES GEOLOCATION TO SHARE VIDEOS SO USERS CAN FIND OUT A BROADCASTER'S EXACT LOCATION. USERS CAN EARN 'COINS' AS A WAY TO 'PAY' MINORS FOR PHOTOS.

HOLLA



HOLLA IS A SELF-PROCLAIMED 'ADDICTING' VIDEO CHAT APP THAT ALLOWS USERS TO MEET PEOPLE ALL OVER THE WORLD IN JUST SECONDS. REVIEWERS SAY THEY HAVE BEEN CONFRONTED WITH RACIAL SLURS, EXPLICIT CONTENT AND MORE.

WHISPER



WHISPER IS AN ANONYMOUS SOCIAL NETWORK THAT PROMOTES SHARING SECRETS WITH STRANGERS. IT ALSO REVEALS A USER'S LOCATION SO PEOPLE CAN MEET UP.

ASK.FM



ASK.FM IS KNOWN FOR CYBER BULLYING. THE APP ENCOURAGES USERS TO ALLOW ANONYMOUS PEOPLE TO ASK THEM QUESTIONS.

CALCULATOR%



CALCULATOR% IS ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL SECRET APPS USED TO HIDE PHOTOS, VIDEOS, FILES AND BROWSER HISTORY.

HOT OR NOT



HOT OR NOT ENCOURAGES USERS TO RATE YOUR PROFILE, CHECK OUT PEOPLE IN THEIR AREA, AND CHAT WITH STRANGERS. THE GOAL OF THIS APP IS TO HOOK UP.