

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO PHONE APPS

POTENTIAL PREDATOR APPS

Tinder

Purpose: Dating app that creates matches by having users rate each other's profile pictures; GPS tracking ensures that matches are in the same geographical area.

Dangers: Allows users as young as 13 to join; GPS tracking makes it easy for adults to find and communicate with minors in their area. Rating system creates potential for bullying.



Grindr

Purpose: Dating app designed for gay and bisexual men that uses GPS tracking to match users.

Dangers: Requires users to be 18 or older, but users may lie about their age, potentially connecting teen boys to older men; closeted teen boys who turn to Grindr to be open about their identity may be especially at risk.



Down

Purpose: Dating app that allows users to anonymously rate Facebook friends based on whether they want a serious or casual relationship.

Dangers: Facebook connection makes it less likely for users to connect with strangers, but users may still lie about their age or identity. Rating system creates potential for bullying; additionally, users can use Facebook to see which of their friends use the app, opening the door for bullying.



Kik

Purpose: Free messaging app available to any mobile device with internet connection; Kik does not require a phone number to use.

Dangers: Anyone with a user's username may message that person, potentially allowing predators to find and chat with minors.



ANTI-SEXTING APPS

Apps such as **Send This Instead** and **Zipit** have been designed to help give children the tools to handle difficult and uncomfortable situations, offering suggestions for humorous messages to send in response to sexting.



POTENTIAL BULLYING APPS

Snapchat

Purpose: Allows users to share photos or short videos with friends; content will self-destruct after 1-10 seconds.

Dangers: Photos sent through Snapchat may be saved through screenshots, making it possible to turn sexually explicit images into revenge porn. The app may also be used as a platform for bullying, as mean messages can be sent and quickly deleted.



Ask.fm

Purpose: Allows users to anonymously ask and answer questions. Children may use the app to communicate free of parents.

Dangers: Anonymity creates a consequence-free platform for cyber bullying and sexual harassment. The app has been linked to a number of suicides in the US and UK.



Yik Yak

Purpose: Users post anonymous messages 200 characters or less that can only be viewed by users within a certain distance of the poster.

Dangers: GPS tracking makes it easy to spread rumors targeting individual people within a small community. Users can use the app to get to know nearby strangers, creating potentially unsafe situations.



Whisper

Purpose: Allows users to anonymously share secrets for others to see.

Dangers: There is potential for strangers to bully children using the app to share personal information. There is also a function for users to contact strangers, opening up potential risks.



DECOY APPS

Decoys appear as normal apps at first glance but are designed to conceal apps, photos, videos, and private information. Children may use these apps to hide things on their phone they don't want their parents to see.



Please note that this is only a handful of the thousands of apps available for children to use. For a larger list of apps and their potential risks, as well as resources to help keep your child safe online, visit <http://www.internetmatters.org/advice/apps-guide/>.

Parent's Guide to Phone Apps: Sources and Resources

Internet Matters - A Parent's Guide to Apps:

Summary: Provides an overview of some of the most popular apps used by children, including those that present potential risks. Many of the app descriptions include links to articles or other resources that describe the app in greater detail. Internetmatters.org includes many other resources for parents to keep children safe online.

Link: <http://www.internetmatters.org/advice/apps-guide/>

Teensafe.com - Everything A Parent Needs to Know About Tinder:

Summary: A guide designed for parents describing how Tinder works, who used it, and the potential dangers of teenagers using the app.

Link: <http://www.teensafe.com/blog/everything-a-parent-needs-to-know-about-tinder/>

Tinder Safety Page:

Summary: Provides advice for using Tinder safely, including protecting personal information, tips for meeting dates in person, ensuring proper sexual health.

Link: <https://www.gotinder.com/safety>

Patch.com - Grindr and Blendr: The Danger of 'Hook-Up' Apps:

Summary: Article explains the dangers of teens using Grindr (and it's straight counterpart, Blendr), including advice for closeted teen boys who may turn to Grindr in order to be open about their identity.

<http://patch.com/illinois/skokie/grindr-and-blendr-the-dangers-of-hook-up-apps>

Grindr Privacy Policy:

Summary: Includes a note about minors

Link: <http://www.grindr.com/privacy-policy/>

Down FAQ:

Summary: Overview of the purpose of DOWN and how it works. Includes a note about a change in Facebook policy that allows users to see which of their friends use the app.

Link: <https://www.downapp.com/faq>

Be Web Smart – What is Kik? And is Kik okay for Kids?

Summary: Review of Kik written for parents overviewing the dangers of the app, with an emphasis on sexual harassment.

Link: <http://www.bewebmart.com/internet-safety/is-kik-okay-for-kids/>

Snapchat Safety Center:

Summary: A page that includes resources for Snapchat users, parents, and teachers about using Snapchat safely, as well as links to news and research articles and resources about general internet safety and bullying.

Link: <https://www.snapchat.com/safety>

Pocket-lint.com – What's the Point of Snapchat and how does it work?

Summary: A detailed description of Snapchat and it's features.

Link: <http://www.pocket-lint.com/news/131313-what-s-the-point-of-snapchat-and-how-does-it-work>

Ask.fm Safety Center:

Summary: Includes resources, for teens, parents, and teachers about keeping children safe on the app and about bullying and suicide prevention.

Link: <http://safety.ask.fm/>

Nobullying.com – Stories of 7 Teen Suicides Because of Ask.fm Bullying

Summary: Lists the stories of a series of teen suicides that have been linked to cyber bullying through Ask.fm, an overview of what Ask.fm is, and advice for parents to protect their children from cyber bullying. TRIGGER WARNING: There is a self-harm image on this page that may be distressing for some people to see.

Link: <http://nobullying.com/stories-of-7-teen-suicides-because-of-ask-fm-bullying/>

Yik Yak Safety Page:

Summary: Link to information and resources for using Yik Yak safely, including information for educators and parents of minors using the app against Yik Yak's 18+ age limit.

Link: <https://safety.yikyak.com/>

Webwise.ie – Explainer: What is Whisper?

Summary: An explanation of what whisper is, it's features, a link to Whisper's privacy policy and information about reporting harassment or bullying.

Link: <http://www.webwise.ie/parents/explainer-whisper/>

Send This Instead Website

Summary: Includes information about the anti-sexting app and some resources.

Link: <http://sendthisinstead.com/>

Childline.org.uk – Zippit App

Summary: Includes information and download links for this anti-sexting app.

<https://www.childline.org.uk/Play/GetInvolved/Pages/sexting-zipit-app.aspx>

Are Your Kids Using Decoy Apps to Hide Photos, Videos?

Summary: Article explains what decoy apps are and some of the different kinds of decoy apps available.

<https://blogs.mcafee.com/consumer/kids-using-decoy-apps-hide-photos-videos/>