



Frequently Asked Questions: Parents



Snapchat

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What is Snapchat?

Snapchat is an application which is free to download on iOS and Android devices that allows users to send images ('snaps') to each other. Operating the app requires use of the device's data plan or wireless internet connection. Images can be drawn on using a whiteboard-style tool and can be given a caption. Images can be sent to other users for up to 10 seconds before they 'dissolve'.

What is the age restriction for Snapchat?

Snapchat is restricted to users over the age of 13. If children under the age of 13 sign up for an account they are given access to 'SnapKidz' which is a limited version of Snapchat that doesn't allow images to be sent to other devices.

How are kids using Snapchat?

Snapchat is used by many young people to keep up with their friends and to send photos to each other. Snapchat can however be used for inappropriate purposes and it is important to sit down with your child and explain to them that it is not okay to share images that are rude, offensive or sexualised.

Should I be worried if my child is using Snapchat?

Any application when used incorrectly has the potential to cause harm. It is important that you openly communicate with your child about how they may be using an application and the legal and ethical ramifications of inappropriate use. They also need to be aware the dangers of communicating with people they don't know via any mobile application.

Does an image really delete on Snapchat?

There are many ways an image can be saved, even on Snapchat. iOS and Android devices have a feature which allow the device to take a photo of what is on the screen ('screenshot'). Snapchat notifies the sender if an image they have sent has been captured, however you are not always notified. There are also many other ways images can be saved without the sender being notified so it is important to encourage children to think before they post.

What are the privacy settings on Snapchat?

Snapchat has very limited privacy settings and it is important to monitor your child's usage of the application. One privacy setting that is available is the ability to restrict who can send your child's snaps. This can be enabled by going into the **Settings** menu, select **Who can send me snaps...**, then select **My Friends**. This will ensure that only users on your child's contact list can send images.

Is Snapchat a 'safe sexting' application?

It is important to know that there is no such thing as 'safe sexting' and Snapchat is no exception. Young people need to be aware that as soon as they send an image they have lost control over where it ends up. Sending sexually explicit images of someone under the age of 18, with or without their permission, could be an offence under State and Commonwealth legislation.

What are the potential problems with Snapchat?

Sharing images that are rude, offensive or sexualised can see young people in breach of State and Commonwealth legislation that carry serious legal consequences. Ethically, young people need to be aware of the impact that their online behaviour has on others as well as their own reputation.

Sexting is commonly defined as the sharing of sexualised or naked images via the internet or mobile phone, this includes mobile applications like Snapchat. Children need to realise that as soon as that image is sent they have lost control of it. Quite often we see images uploaded to the internet, including on various social networking sites, that have been shared between two people privately. Taking, sending and saving these sorts of images can also constitute child pornography offences and can have long term legal ramifications on a child's future.

If these images become public, the child in the image can, and often is, subject to bullying and cyberbullying. This may happen face-to-face at school or even online with people posting and sharing the image. It is extremely important that parents and carers are aware of the issues associated with various apps and websites so that they can openly communicate with their child about safe and responsible usage.

How do I delete my child's Snapchat account?

If after talking with your child about the ethical use of Snapchat and your family's rules around technology, you may think it's appropriate to delete the Snapchat account.

To delete a Snapchat account you can go to www.snapchat.com/a/delete_account and enter your child's account username and password. If you do not have your child's password you can put a deletion request into Snapchat.

Open and supportive discussions around technology usage are vital in ensuring your child understands their responsibilities when using technology. Simply removing the technology is not the best response as it could potentially drive your child's usage underground where there are few opportunities for you to support them.