

KEPIER Safeguarding Update

Issued: 25th June 2017

Parental Information – Snapchat

What is Snapchat?

Snapchat is a photo-sharing app with a twist: the images you send disappear seconds after they're viewed – you get to decide how long a photo will 'live,' from one to 10 seconds after it's been seen. It feels like a way to socialise without leaving a digital footprint. But there are ways to capture and recover images so it's unwise to have too much of a sense of security about that. In fact, users can now choose how long their snaps stay up on the app. There are also features for creating and sharing stories and making video and audio calls.

Snapchat runs on the Apple iPhone and Android phones but it also runs on iPad, Android tablets and iPod Touch, which are often used by very young children.



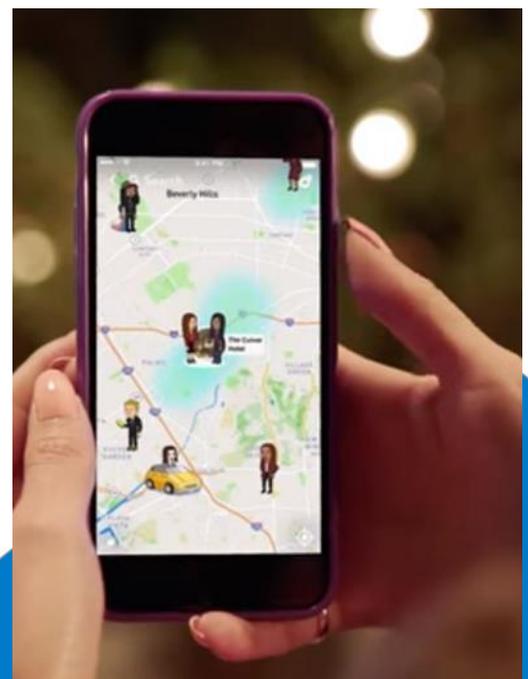
Does Snapchat have a minimum age?

Yes, it's 13, in compliance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. But Snapchat doesn't ask users to specify their ages so there are probably many younger children using the app. The service will delete underage accounts if they're notified and can verify that the user is under 13.

Are there risks in using Snapchat?

There's nothing inherently dangerous about Snapchat, but it's often referred to as 'the sexting app' - even though there's no research showing that to be true and plenty of anecdotal evidence suggesting that isn't the reason most teens use it. But like any photo-sharing service, Snapchat can be used for sexting, harassment, or worse. It can be particularly sad and hurtful if that happens, because Snapchat is typically used among friends (or at least people who have each other's user name or phone numbers).

There are some privacy concerns after a recent update. As of June 2017, Snapchat launched a location-sharing feature called Snap Map. Young people can share their whereabouts with all their friends or just a select few. They can even set it to 'ghost mode' where they can see where others are without sharing their own location. This can be unsettling as you're not always aware of who is tracking your whereabouts.



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Is it good that Snapchat photos disappear in seconds?

Yes, because photos aren't put on display, young people don't have to develop a following. They aren't on display, they don't have to feel performance anxiety. The ephemeral aspect actually adds a measure of safety, as long as people don't develop a false sense of security. Photos can also be saved as screenshots or photographed with another phone and shared with or without the originator's knowledge, which can be good or bad - bad because a screen-captured photo can be used to embarrass the people in it; good because if things do go wrong, there is evidence against someone trying to hurt others.

What's the best way to help kids stay safe in Snapchat?

As with all social media, respecting ourselves and others – in and out of technology and media – makes us safer. Whether the experience is positive or negative depends entirely on how people use the app or service. Are they really friends? How do they treat each other, offline and online? Friends may kid around with each other but for the most part treat each other well. Use this guide for talking points, but the most important thing is that they know you'll support them when difficult things happen – that they can always come to you no matter what.

With the new Snap Map feature, there is the choice to not disclose location and location sharing is switched off by default. If you don't want anyone to view your whereabouts you can go into settings and put yourself in 'ghost mode'.

If someone has been **harassing your child** you can delete and block them from the same section of the menu as the step above. You can also write to safety@snapchat.com and they will resolve the issue. If still don't feel comfortable letting your child use the app, you can delete their account and entering the username and password.