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Keep your child safe on Snapchat

Snapchat is an app for sending photos and videos (known as 'Snaps'), and text messages. The 'Stories' feature lets users share photos or videos with all their contacts at once.

Snaps disappear after being opened, usually within seconds. Stories disappear after 24 hours. Images and messages aren't automatically saved on phones.

The **minimum age** to use Snapchat is **13**, but it's easy to sign up if you're younger.

What's the problem?

> There's a risk of seeing sexual content, and of bullying

> Your child's location could be shared with their contacts, which could put them in danger if they have strangers as 'friends' on the app. The 'Snap Map' feature allows users to see each other's locations, and doesn't inform users if someone else searches for their location

> There's a risk of children being 'groomed' by strangers into sharing pictures and information about themselves. Gangs also use this and similar apps to groom and recruit children

> 'My AI' is an AI chat feature available to all users which has a risk of exposing children to harmful content. (You can disable My AI through the Family Centre, covered below)

5 steps to help your child use Snapchat safely

1. Tell your child to only add real friends

Anyone could pretend to be a child or teenager online, so encourage your child not to talk to people they don't know in real life. Encourage them not to share information such as what school they go to or where they live with anyone they don't know offline.

2. Use privacy settings

By default, only 'friends' your child has added on Snapchat can contact them directly and see their story or location. Check they have the default settings, or select extra privacy settings.

You can find out how to change Snapchat privacy settings here in the Snapchat Help Centre.

3. Add your child in Family Centre

> Follow the instructions from the Snapchat Help Centre here to add your child to the Family Centre

> On the Family Centre you can: request live location updates, limit access to My AI, see who your child is talking to, see what group chats your child is in, set limits on the content they can see and report additional concerns to Snapchat

> Talk to your child before using these features about what they are and why they may be needed. Reassure them that you won't be able to see their messages, just who they are to

4. Talk to your child about image sharing and being careful about what they share

Videos and images disappear in Snapchat, but someone can still take a screenshot or recording and then share them – outside of the original sender's control. Remind your child to think carefully about the images they share, and who they share them with. Before they share anything, tell them to ask themselves: "Would I be happy for other people to see this?"

In particular, make sure your child knows the risks of **taking, sharing, or viewing naked, semi-nude or sexually explicit pictures of themselves or another child**, either voluntarily or if asked to by someone else. This is known as 'sharing nudes and semi-nudes' or 'sexting' and is illegal, even when the person doing it is a child. It can also be distressing for a child to have their image shared more widely, or to see an inappropriate image that someone else has shared.

5. Make sure your child knows how to use reporting and blocking functions

> To **report** a Snap, story or post on the Snap Map, follow the instructions here

> To **remove** or **block** a friend, follow the instructions here

What can I do about online bullying?

> Encourage your child to talk to you if someone says something upsetting or hurtful to them

> Look for signs they may be being bullied, like being afraid or reluctant to go to school, feeling nervous, losing confidence or becoming distressed and withdrawn, or losing sleep

> Tell our school about any bullying your child experiences

There are also a few ways you can save images and messages as evidence:

> Use another device to, quickly, take a photo of the image or message (this is the only way you can save the image without other people knowing)

> Follow the instructions from the Snapchat Help Centre here on how to save a message in a chat

> Take a screenshot, quickly (the person who shared it will get a notification)

> Change your child's settings to save messages for 24 hours using the instructions from the Snapchat Help Centre here

What can I do if I think my child is being targeted by a gang?

Share your concerns with our school immediately. You can also contact the NSPCC for advice – call 0808 800 5000 or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

Be alert to changes in your child – such as having new unexplained possessions, changing friendship groups, behaviour and mood changes, or unexplained injuries.

Sources used for this factsheet

> Sharing nudes and semi-nudes, NSPCC
> *https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/sexting-sending-nudes/*

> Snapchat Support, Snapchat
> *https://help.snapchat.com/hc/en-gb*

- Change privacy settings: https://help.snapchat.com/hc/en-gb/articles/7012343074580-How-do-I-change-my-privacy-settings-on-Snapchat

- Report a snap: https://help.snapchat.com/hc/en-gb/articles/7012407938196-How-to-Report-a-Snap-from-Snap-Map

- Remove or block a friend: https://help.snapchat.com/hc/en-gb/articles/7012401093396-How-to-Block-a-Friend-on-Snapchat

- Save a message: https://help.snapchat.com/hc/en-gb/articles/7012392635156-How-to-Save-or-Delete-Snapchat-Messages-in-Chat

- Change message saving settings: https://help.snapchat.com/hc/en-gb/articles/7012334940948-When-does-Snapchat-delete-Snaps-and-Chats

> Snapchat Family Centre overview
> *https://parents.snapchat.com/parental-controls?lang=en-GB* and *h*ttps://help.snapchat.com/hc/en-gb/sections/8098206722836-Family-Centre

> Snapchat most-used app for grooming, says NSPCC, BBC News
> *https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cze3p1j710ko*

This factsheet was produced by The Key Safeguarding: **thekeysupport.com/safeguarding**