

Is my child old enough?



Get the answers to the questions you're asking about Snapchat 

Snapchat is a mobile photo/video messaging app that allows iPhone and Android mobile users to send a video or a photo with a caption to other Snapchat users. Once a user sends a 'snap' it appears on the phone it was sent to for between 1-10 seconds and then disappears. Users can edit photos and draw on photos prior to sending them. The app is free to download and use—so it is popular with kids. If users add snaps to the 'Your Story' function their Snapchat 'friends' can view their snaps for 24 hours. Users can decide whether only people they have accepted as Snapchat 'Friends' can send them Snaps, or 'Everyone'.

### *Is there an age limit for Snapchat?*

Snapchat states that it is 'intended for use by people who are 13 years of age or older, and persons under the age of 13 are prohibited from creating Snapchat accounts'. There is a version for children under age 13 called Snapkidz which allows children to take photos and draw on them etc. but does not allow sending of images. If your child is over 13 you should still talk through the risks of using Snapchat with them.

### *What are the risks?*

Many Snapchat users use the service believing that 'snaps' can only be seen for a matter of seconds, and that the snaps are temporary. Whilst 'snaps' can only be seen for a matter of seconds, users can sometimes use the screenshot function on their device to permanently save and store images. Other separate 'add-on' apps have also been created that hook in to Snapchat to permanently save 'snaps' without the sender knowing.

If your child enables 'Everyone' to send Snaps to them there is a risk of them being contacted by individuals with ill intent and of them being exposed to inappropriate content. As with all social networking, there is a risk of children receiving inappropriate messages, including bullying or sexual messages. Talk about the risks of posting sexy pictures, meeting online friends in person and what is and isn't acceptable.

### *How can I report unwanted contact on Snapchat?*

Snapchat offers a function for the reporting of inappropriate content, harassment or 'another safety issue'. Snapchat has easy to read Community Guidelines which state what not to snap.

### *How can my child protect themselves?*

Children should restrict people who can send them 'snaps' to people they know offline. They can do this in their settings. Go to Settings > Send Me Snaps > Select 'My Friends'. Then go to Settings > View My Stories > Select 'My Friends' or 'Custom' to choose selected 'Friends'.

- Caution your child that the 'snaps' they can be captured by phones simply by using a screenshot and that they are not always temporary
- Help your child learn to use screenshots (Search online if you don't know how to do this with their phone) so they can capture any inappropriate 'snaps'.
- Caution your child about sharing their Facebook, Twitter, Kik, Instagram details on Snapchat.
- Help your child understand how to report bullying and inappropriate content. Look at the Settings with them and read the Support area and Community Guidelines.
- Help them understand appropriate messages and what to do if a friend or stranger is mean online (save evidence, report them and delete them from their 'Snapchat Friends')

### *When should I be worried about my child?*

If your child's behaviour changes at home and/or school you should talk to them. Examples of changed behaviour could include disinterest in things they used to like, seeming very unhappy and/or their sleep and eating is being impacted. Seek professional advice if necessary from a school counsellor, your GP or a psychologist. If your child has particular vulnerabilities, be vigilant about their contacts offline and online. Help them join groups out of school where they can find friends and support. Talk to the school and make sure they are supported.

**Kids Helpline provides free online and phone counselling for children and young people. Visit [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au) or call 1800 55 1800.**