

THE “GROWN FOLKS” GUIDE TO POPULAR APPS IN SOCIAL MEDIA

Technology moves fast and so does social media. This resource is dedicated to helping adults stay current with what’s new in the world of popular social media sites and applications (apps) for youth. The information provided is not exhaustive, but focuses on the trends and will be updated periodically as new apps and sites become popular.

Like most tools, technology itself is neutral. All the sites listed can be used for many constructive purposes, linking youth to their friends and interacting in positive ways. Many youth use social media to create vibrant communities and to engage in social action and ally behavior. However, we know that sometimes youth (and adults) choose to use the same technology in profoundly negative ways. And people often use [difference](#) as a basis to undermine and disrespect others online.

So it’s important to understand the technology and it’s important to teach the youth in your life skills, as well as your expectations, when they are online. Don’t assume that just because they know more than you about the specific apps that they know more than you about how to engage online in thoughtful and respectful ways. So, check out the list and the suggestions below for other ways adults can engage around the topic.

THE LIST



ask.fm. A social networking site set-up where users ask questions and answer those posted by others. Users are allowed to be anonymous, which has led to some youth using it to engage in hurtful and bullying behavior. *App rated for 13+*



Facebook. A social networking site with 1 billion users. Users share status updates, pictures, articles, etc. with friends or the public, depending on their privacy settings which change frequently. Facebook friends can “like” and comment on posts. Facebook users can also send messages to one another. Facebook also has numerous game

applications that many adults and youth play, for example Farmville and Words with Friends. *App rated 13+*



Instagram. A smart phone app where users can share pictures and videos and follow certain hashtags (topics) related to their interests. Sharing can be set to either “friends” or public. Users can like and comment on posts or explore public pictures using hashtags. *App rated 13+*



kik messenger. An instant messaging app for smart phones. Allows users to message people without needing a mobile phone number or being charged text messaging fees because it uses wifi. Users can message pictures, share web content, etc. *App rated for 13+ but does not require age authentication.*



ooVoo. A video call, text and voice app designed to operate as a phone with the use of wifi. Cellphone carriers cannot track communication. *App rated for 16+.*



omegle. Online site and app for anonymous chatting. The site randomly picks users to talk one-on-one. Users do not have to register and Omegle keeps users anonymous until they choose to identify themselves (which Omegle makes a point of saying they don’t advise). Includes a video chat feature. *App rated 18+ or 13+ with parental consent; however, it doesn’t verify age.*



secret. A free “confessional” app that allows people to share messages anonymously within their circle of friends, friends of friends and publicly. This app is designed less for public confessions and more for sharing primarily with friends; the idea is your friend confesses a secret or shares a thought, but you don’t know which one. As with other apps based on anonymity, the possibility for abuse, such as posting hurtful comments about others, is increased. *App rated 15+*



snapchat. Smart phone app where users send photos and videos that disappear from view within 10 seconds from receipt. Users should understand that the pictures disappear from view but they don’t totally disappear and can be retrieved, as well as saved through the recipient’s print screen functions. *App rated 12+*



Tinder. A dating, “hook-up” app where users can view pictures of other users in the same geographic area. When users “like” each other an instant messaging feature is enabled allowing users to communicate directly. *The app is rated ages 17+ but Tinder’s privacy policy allows teens as young as 13 to register (the app connects with Facebook—which is also technically for ages 13+—to pull in photos for users/ Tinder profiles).*




Tumblr. A blog site where users upload pictures, links, text or gifs in a steady stream of information. It is a streamlined blog site that favors creative expressions. Users can post text, but gifs and pictures are the most reblogged types of content. Users can use hashtags to search site content or have their content associated with popular hashtags. *Users must be 13+*



Twitter. A micro-blogging site where users communicate in 140 characters or fewer. Users can share website links, pictures and videos. Hashtags were made popular on Twitter are a tremendous search tool for general research on any topic. However, hashtags can also be used to insult. *Twitter’s latest terms of service omit an age requirement but they discourage users under 13. Twitter does support other products that screen for age.*



vine. Twitter affiliated app where users can send 6-sec looping videos to recipients. Nudity and sexual content are allowed per the terms of service and are even highlighted in the description for the app. Vine videos are sharable on Twitter and other social media platforms. *App rated 17+*



voxer. A walkie-talkie app that include both a live PTT (push to talk) and a voice messaging system. Messages on Voxer are delivered live as they are being recorded and then also delivered as a voice message. The app is marketed towards businesses but individuals are getting the app for personal use as well. *App rated 4+*



WhatsApp. An instant messaging app for smart phones that is popular world-wide. Allows users to message friends without being charged text messaging fees because it uses wifi. Uses the same interface as Facebook messenger. Users can share pictures, videos, audio messages, etc. *App rated 16+*



whisper. An app which allows people to share “secrets” or “confessions” anonymously with an accompanying picture (like a picture meme). Users can share or comment on

the posts. App allows you to see any content posted, or specifically look at posts from users within a mile from you. Users can engage in private communications in which they can exchange images and personal information. This app is not for children. *App rated 17+*



Yik Yak. A social bulletin board. All users are anonymous and it's designed for "Yakkers" to post info about events, etc. which other users then vote up or down. Like most sites that allow anonymity, the platform can lend itself to posting negative information or comments about others. *App is rated for 17+*



Yo. A basic app for sending text messages. It is designed to turn on when the user says "Yo," and it allows the user to send very short messages. *App is rated for 12+*

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

So along with the lists of apps and sites, here are some other things adults can do:

- Youth should know that your values and standards for how we treat one another are the same in person and online, and that they will be held to your expectations.
- Ask questions first: Ask about the sites youth enjoy and why? Try to understand their world and engage in dialogue.
- Talk to your children about cyberbullying [specifically](#), not just about what to do if they are a target, but also expectations about how to respond if they see cyberbullying happening and consequences if they engage in cyberbullying.
- When necessary, help youth [report cyberbullying](#) or hateful behavior.
- Come back regularly to [the webpage](#) and see what's new. Since awareness and the willingness to continue learning are critical tools for parenting in the digital age, we hope you find this resource useful. If you have more information on apps and social media sites creating a buzz in your community, [let us know about it](#) and we can add it to the list.

COMMON TERMS USED HEREIN

Blog: a Web site on which someone writes about personal opinions, activities and experiences.

Hashtag: a word or phrase preceded by a hash or pound sign (#) and used to search for tweets that have a common topic and to begin a conversation. For example, if you search on #SCANDAL (or #Scandal or #scandal, because it's not case-sensitive), you'll get a list of tweets related to the TV show.

Instant messaging (IM): a type of online chat where an electronic message is sent in real time via the Internet and therefore immediately available for display on the recipient's screen.

Social Networking Site: a website that allows subscribers to interact by forming or joining sub-groups based around shared interests or publishing content so that a specified group of subscribers can access it.

Wi-Fi (Wifi or wifi): a wireless local area network (WLAN) that allows an electronic device (i.e., computers, smartphones, etc.) to connect to the Internet or communicate with one another wirelessly within a particular area.

PROVIDED BY: Education Division