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Teens and Online Messaging Apps

By Christian Brink

If you're the parent of a digitally connected kid, then chances are you may have heard about a few of the recently popular smartphone messaging apps.

Communicating with friends via mobile device has come a long way since text messaging (although texting is still the most popular form of mobile communication between teens), and now includes photos, videos, and more. Keeping up with all these different platforms can be daunting for parents, especially if they don't use the same apps their kids are using.

So to help, we put together the basics on what to know about some of these apps.

Online Messaging Apps Your Teen May Be Using

Instagram:

Instagram is a photo and video sharing app that allows users to take pictures and videos, apply a digital filter, and then share them online with followers. Users can also post their Instagram photos on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Flickr with the option of adding a location tag. (Instagram is rated 12+ and has a 13+ age requirement.)

Snapchat:

Snapchat is an app that allows users to share photos, videos, and messages (or "snaps") with a list of contacts. Snapchat users can set a time limit for how long recipients can view their snaps (from 1 to 10 seconds). After the specified time range expires, the snap disappears from the recipient's phone. However, it's important to note that the recipient can take a screenshot of the snap, saving it for as long as they like. If that happens, the sender is notified. (Snapchat is rated 12+ and has a 13+ age requirement.)

Kik:

Kik is a smartphone messaging app that allows users to send text, pictures, videos, sketches, and more all within the Kik app. Unlike some other messaging apps that are based on a user's mobile number, Kik identifies its users with unique usernames. (Kik is rated 17+ and has a 13+ age requirement.)

Yik Yak:

Yik Yak is an anonymous messaging app that uses GPS location data to display the most recent posts by other Yik Yak users around you. It allows for people to interact with others within a certain geographical boundary without having to know them. Yik Yak does not require an account to see what others are posting. (Yik Yak has a 17+ age requirement.)

Whisper:

Whisper is an app that lets users anonymously share messages. The app works by having its users type what they want to share (called "whispers") into the app, and then attempts to match it with a stock image based on the content of that message. Users can also use their own images. While Whisper is anonymous, users can still comment on or "like" other whispers, as well as send private messages. (Whisper is rated 17+.)

Secret:

Similar to Whisper, Secret is an app that lets users anonymously share messages (or "secrets") with others. What differentiates Secret from Whisper is that the secrets users share are done so with members from their social networks, instead of with strangers. However, Secret does not tell you which of your friends is also using the app. No user names or profiles are needed. (Secret is rated 12+ and has a 13+ age requirement.)

Are there other messaging apps your teen is using that you'd like to learn more about? Let us know in the comments section below!

Social Media #Texting #Apps #Teens #Tweens #Social Media

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Christian is the Program Assistant at the Family Online Safety Institute. His focus is program research and outreach to help grow resources and content for Good Digital Parenting. A believer in technology as a tool for positive change, he hopes to empower parents, teachers and teens with the resources they need to responsibly navigate the digital world and make a difference.