

About TikTok

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Is TikTok Safe for Kids?

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With 1.65 billion downloads to date, TikTok is currently the hottest social media site for tweens and teens. But while kids are hitting download, parents have questions: What is it? Where did it come from? And, most importantly, is it safe?

While it may seem like it came out of nowhere, the app actually began in 2014 as a lip-synching site called Musically. In 2018, it was acquired by a Beijing-based company and merged into the Chinese app TikTok. Lip-synching is still a major theme on the app, but TikTok's content runs the gamut from clips involving much more.

No matter which social media platform your child is using—even if it's a purportedly trustworthy, limited version aimed at children, like YouTube Kids—they'll likely come across potential safety issues. That's why TikTok has started implementing parental controls on the app

Here's what you need to know to keep your child safe while using TikTok.

What Parents Need to Know About TikTok

Kids can be targeted by predators.

TikTok allows users to contact anyone in the world, and this comes with its own host of hazards. Like any social media platform that has a direct message or commenting feature, there's always the possibility that your child could be chatting with anyone, including strangers. TikTok is a platform that encourages performance, and many of its users are excited to showcase their talents. This can make it easy for predators to use flattery and compliments as a way into kids' lives, making them feel special while putting them at ease.

The nature of the app might cause kids anxiety.

TikTok encourages content creation, as users can use the "Reactions" feature to respond to videos they like with their own take. While this set-up could support child's artistic impulses, it might also cause anxiety. Kids may get sucked into the pressure to create more and better content, and this can cause anxiety, especially if they're not getting popular. And many chase after that popularity by taking part in challenges, which can often be dangerous. Take, for example, the [Cinnamon Challenge](#), the [Choking Game](#), and the [Kiki Challenge](#)."

Safety Measures to Take Now (only if your child is over the age of 13 years should they have an account)

In February 2020, TikTok announced new parental control settings released in the United Kingdom (and coming to more countries soon). This "Family Safety Mode" lets parents link to their teenager's TikTok account and control "Digital Wellbeing features," according to [an article published by TikTok](#). Parents can manage screen time, restrict content, and limit direct messages or turn off the feature completely.

"As part of our commitment to safety, the wellbeing of our users is incredibly important to us. We want people to have fun on TikTok, but it's also important for our community to look after their wellbeing which means having a healthy relationship with online apps and services," according to TikTok.

Manage your child's settings in the app.

While in the TikTok app and from your child's profile, you'll see three dots in the upper right-hand corner of the screen, clicking on those dots will take you to the 'Privacy and settings' section of the app. When you scroll down to the 'Privacy and safety' option under "Account," you will see the option to set the child's account to private (recommended to toggle that on), as well as allow others to find them (recommended to toggle that off)."

Also, under the "Safety" section of that same screen, you have the ability to customise who can post comments, who can Duet with your child, who can react to their videos, who can send them messages, and who can view videos they liked, she says. You can choose from "Everyone," "Friends," and "Off."

Keep in mind that your child may open the app and change these settings at any time, which is why it's important for you to also view the 'Digital Wellbeing' section of the 'Privacy and settings' screen. This offers a passcode-enabled screen time management system, as well as a restricted mode to limit the appearance of inappropriate content.

It's also important to remember that the app is meant for kids who are 13 or older. "Check that your child's TikTok account has been set up using the correct data of birth," advises Jo O'Reilly, digital privacy advocate at [ProPrivacy](#). "Some children might set their account up with a fake age, to appear older than they are, and this makes it more likely that they will be exposed to content that is not suitable for them."