How to make social media safer for children

Setting safety and privacy settings for the most popular social media apps.

Part 1: Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, WhatsApp, Kik Messenger

Facebook

Minimum age: 13

Facebook's privacy settings let your child control who sees their posts and timeline.

Click or tap **the padlock icon** at the top of any page and this takes you to the **Privacy Shortcuts** in the drop-down menu for further instructions. On the mobile app you will find it under **More** at the bottom of the screen. (<)

Your child can also block someone (click or tap the **padlock icon** on the right side of their timeline, then select **How do I stop someone from bothering me** and type in their user name), and report abusive or offensive content (choose **Report post** after clicking the arrow to the right of the name of the person, or **Report group** by clicking on the three dots to the right of Notifications at the top). On mobiles and tablets, go to **Privacy Shortcuts** (see above) and then click on **How do I stop someone from bothering me.**

Find out more: www.facebook.com/safety/tools.

 Instagram

Minimum age: 13

To set Instagram posts to private, your child should go to their profile by tapping the **person icon**. Then, tap the **gear icon** (iOS) or the **three dots icon** (Android) and turn on the **Private Account** setting.

Your child can also block and remove followers by tapping their **user name**, then the **three dots icon** and selecting **Block User**.

Find out more: https://help.instagram.com.

 Snapchat

Minimum age: 13

Snapchat has two privacy settings, one for who can send your child Snaps and another for who can view their Stories. To change these privacy settings, tap the **gear icon** in the top right of the Profile screen to access Settings. To change Who Can Send Me Snaps within **Settings**, tap **Send Me Snaps** and choose from **Everyone** or **My Friends**. To change Who Can View My Stories within Settings, tap **View My Story** and select either **Everyone**, **My Friends** or **Custom**. Any changes will be saved when you press the back button.
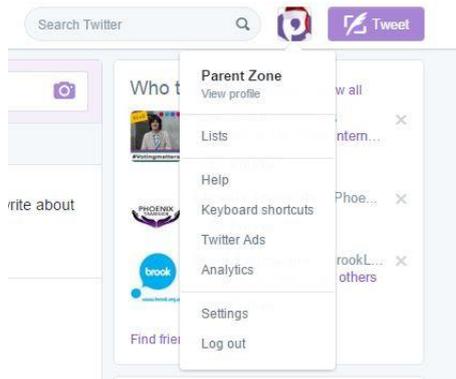
To block someone, go to **My Friends**, tap on the name of the person you want to block, then the **gear icon**, which brings up a list of options. Click **Block**.

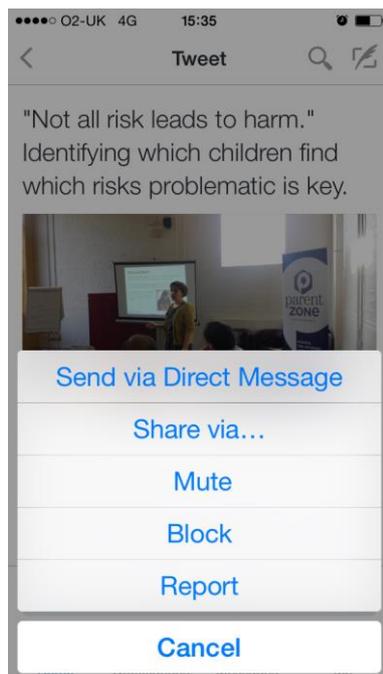*Find out more: https://support.snapchat.com/a/privacy-settings.*

Twitter

Minimum age: no specific T&C but in their privacy policy they say that their services are not directed to people under 13.

Your child can choose to protect their tweets so they are only visible to the Twitter followers they have approved. On the Web, find **Settings** under your small profile pic, top right.

Go to **Security Privacy settings**, scroll down to the **Tweet privacy** section, tick the box next to **Protect my Tweets** and click the blue **Save** button. On a smartphone, go to **Me**, tap on the **gear icon** (iOS) or **overflow icon** (Android), select **Settings** and choose the account you'd like to edit. Then, for iOS devices, go to **Protect my tweets** and tap **On** and for Android devices, go to **Other** and tick the **Tweet privacy** box.

To block someone on the website and mobile, click on their tweet, select the **three dots icon**, then click **Block**. You can also **Report** a user or comment here.
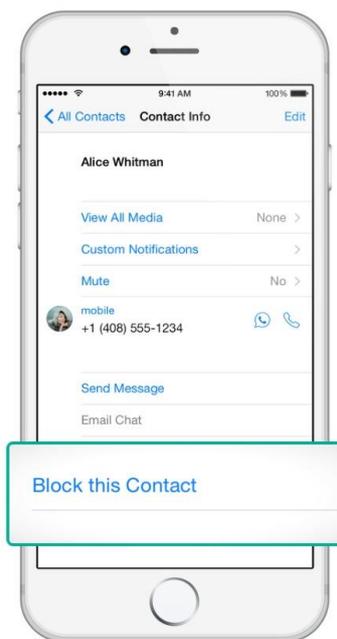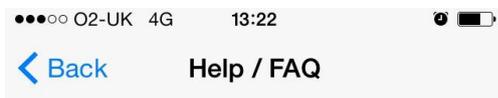

Find out more: https://support.twitter.com.

 WhatsApp

Minimum age: 16

To manage privacy, go to **Settings**, click on **Account**, select **Privacy**.

There are various methods to block a user so they can't communicate with you and you don't see their messages.

To find the right one for your device, go to **Settings** and click on **About and Help**. Choose **Help/FAQ** and scroll down to **How do I block or unblock a contact**.

To report a user, do the following:

On Windows Phone: go to **WhatsApp** > **More** > **Settings** > **About** > **Contact support**

On iPhone: go to **WhatsApp** > **Settings** > **About** > **Help**, then select **Contact us**

One Android: go to **WhatsApp**, select **Menu Button**, click on **Settings**, then **Help**, followed by **Contact Us**

Find out more: https://www.whatsapp.com/faq/en/general/21197244.

kik. **Kik Messenger**

Minimum age: 13 (with parental approval); 18 without

This instant messenger app for mobile devices received bad publicity after an investigation in the USA claimed it was being used by paedophiles to target children.

It has introduced a **New People** safety feature, available in the most recent version. Any messages from users you've not talked to before go into your **New Chats** section and you have the option to either start a chat with them or to delete, block, or report them as spam.

If you want to block someone who has contacted you, go to **Settings**, then **Chat settings** (on iPhone or Android), or **Privacy** (on Windows), then select **Block list**.

Tap **+** and then select the user you want to block. Tap **Block** to confirm.

This not only stops the blocked person being able to contact you, all previous one-to-one chats will be deleted from the app and the user's name will no longer appear in the list of contacts. If you want to report the person, make sure you take screen grabs of the offending messages before blocking them. But do not forward them to anyone as they may contain illegal content and you will be committing an offence. Keep them in case you need to show them to the police if they investigate.

Find out more: https://kikinteractive.zendesk.com/entries/23518788-I-m-being-harassed-on-Kik-What-can-I-do-.

If you have concerns that your child is being targeted online, contact the app directly, and report it to CEOP at www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre.

Note: The different apps regularly update both privacy and safety settings. Go to the app's help section to check the current procedures. The positions of the settings may also differ on mobile and desktop versions.