



## **What is Snapchat?**

Snapchat is a popular messaging app that lets users exchange pictures and videos (called snaps) that are meant to disappear after they're viewed.

## **How does Snapchat work?**

All you need to sign up is your name, an email address, and your birth date. On Snapchat, users go by a handle, and Snapchatters gravitate toward silly names. To add friends, you can upload your contacts or search for people you know. You can also automatically add someone by taking a picture of their "Snapcode," a special QR code unique to each user.

On Snapchat, photos -- not text -- usually start the communication. To begin a conversation, you tap the big camera circle and take a snap. There are all sorts of photo-editing tools (you have to experiment to figure out what they do) as well as filters to adorn your images. Once you customize your snap, you can send it to anyone on your friends list, add it to your story (which is a record of the day that your friends can view for 24 hours), and add it to Snap Map (which displays your photo on a map of your location that can be viewed by anyone on Snapchat).

Snapchat provides several options for texting and managing photos. In addition to individual texting, Snapchat also offers group texting and group stories that everyone in a group can contribute to. You can delete the text messages you send, though in a group chat the other people will see that you've deleted something. In terms of Snaps, you can delete unopened ones that use a saved picture (not taken on the spot). You can't delete snaps that include pictures you just took (and didn't save).

## **Do messages really disappear on Snapchat?**

It depends. If you set a time limit on a snap, it will disappear after it's viewed. However, recipients can take a screenshot of an image using their phones or a third-party screen-capture app. A phone screen-capture will notify the sender that the image was captured. But third-party apps don't trigger a notification. For these reasons, it's best that teens understand that nothing done online is really temporary. Before sending a sexy or embarrassing snap of themselves or someone else, it's important to remember that the picture could circulate the school by tomorrow morning.

## **What are Snapstreaks?**

With a Snapstreaks, two users have snapped back and forth within a 24-hour period for three days in a row. Once you've established a streak, special emojis and statistics display next to the streakers' names to show you how long you've maintained a streak. Why do they matter? For one thing, they add to your overall Snapchat score (basically a

number that reflects how much you use the app). For another, they can occasionally become the most important thing in a kid's life. Because of the intense bonds kids can form over social media, they can feel that a Snapstreak is a measure of their friendship, and if they don't keep it up they'll let the other person down. Teens have even been known to give friends access to their Snapchat accounts to keep a streak going if they can't do it themselves (for example, if their phone gets taken away for being online too much).

### **What's Snap Map?**

Snap Map displays your location on a map in real time. Only your Snapchat friends can see where you are. If your friends have opted into Snap Map, you can see their locations, too. (You can turn this off or use it in Ghost Mode, which allows you to see the map but not be seen by others.) Kids can submit snaps to the Snap Map, and their name and location could appear on a public map. But the bigger risk with Snap Map is a teen having their location seen by all their friends -- since some of their Snapchat contacts may not be real friends. Unless there's a specific event and it makes it easier for friends to know each other's location, it's best to leave Snap Maps off or use it in Ghost Mode.

### **What's a Snapchat story?**

A story is a collection of moments in the form of pictures and videos that, taken together, create a narrative. (After Snapchat popularized the format, other social media services, including Facebook and Instagram, offered story-creation tools, too.) On Snapchat, stories appear as circles, and when you tap them, they autoplay the pictures or videos the user collected. You can create personal stories that your friends can view for a 24-hour period. Or, if you think your Snap is particularly interesting or newsworthy, you can send it to Our Story. Our Stories are kind of like mini-documentaries of events, holidays, game championships, or other things happening in the world on a particular day. Snaps are curated and compiled by the company. While it's cool to have your story added to Our Story, it's also very public, so kids should think carefully before submitting one.

### **What's a Snapcode?**

When you sign up, Snapchat gives you your own unique QR code. When you meet a fellow Snapchat user and want to friend each other, you can just take a snap of the other person's code, and they're automatically added to your friends list. Because it's so easy to find friends on Snapchat (depending on your settings) or exchange codes, teens may end up with virtual strangers on their friends list. For a variety of reasons, that can be risky, so it's best to talk to your teen about when it's safe to add people.

## What are Snapchat's other features?

The more you use the app, the more points you get and the higher your Snapchat score goes. Snapchat awards high scorers with trophies and other perks. Here are a few other Snapchat features:

- **Cameos:** These are animated GIFs featuring your selfie that you can send in a chat. Snapchat offers more than 150 video options to add your image to, including "duets" where you and a friend appear together.
- **Face lenses and world lenses:** If you've seen photos of people with cartoon cat ears and whiskers on their faces, those are face lenses. World lenses are augmented reality elements, such as rainbows, that you can add to a snap of, say, the Eiffel Tower so it looks like it's part of the photo. Technically, lenses are "overlays" -- and they cost money on Snapchat.
- **Geo-filters:** These are location-specific elements that can only be unlocked by visiting a specific place. Businesses use geo-filters as a way for customers to check in and advertise them. A kid could create a special geo-filter for their sweet-16 party for attendees to add to their photos.
- **Snapcash:** Like PayPal or Venmo, Snapcash lets users transfer money to each other.
- **Memories:** If you don't want your snaps to disappear, you can store them to send later. My Eyes Only is a way to save Memories behind a passcode so that no one else can see them.
- **Snapstore:** This is exactly what it sounds like: a place to buy Snapchat-related items.
- **Snap Games:** Co-play games with voice/text chat and ads, launched from the chat section to play with friends.
- **Snap Originals:** These are short, serialized shows created exclusively for Snapchat in a wide range of formats from docuseries to talk shows, from the likes of BuzzFeed, the E! Network, and MTV.
- **Spotlight:** This is another TikTok-like feature that aggregates snaps submitted by users into one giant feed. Once you send in a Spotlight, it's public and can be viewed by anyone on or off the platform.

**The myth of disappearing messages.** When Snapchat first started, it was labeled "the sexting app" because people sent intimate photos, assuming they'd self-destruct. Any app can be misused, but a lot of kids mistakenly believe that Snapchat has a built-in Get Out of Jail Free card. Teens really need to understand that the content they share can be saved and shared and may never go away. It's best to have this conversation before they download Snapchat, but it's never too late. Talk about whether any of their friends have ever pressured them to send a sexy image and discuss why someone who would do that does not have your best interests at heart. Kids should also ask permission before sharing a picture of someone else.

**Privacy and safety.** Since it's so easy to add friends in Snapchat, you can end up with lots of people you don't know well on your friends list. And depending on your settings,

the app can collect a ton of data about your habits in -- and outside of -- the app. Snapchat also works with a lot of third parties that they share your data with.

### **How do I monitor Snapchat and use the settings?**

The biggest challenge for parents is that there's no way to see your kid's activity in the app in the same way as on other social media platforms; since there's no feed to scroll through like on Instagram, for example, there's not much to monitor.

If you decide to say yes to Snapchat, focus on the privacy settings. Sit down with your kid and together go into the app's settings (the little gear icon next to your profile image). Scroll down to "Who Can..." This is where you can control important safety features such as who can see your location and who can view your story. This is a perfect time to talk to your kid about using their Snapchat account safely and responsibly. Discuss when and how often you'll check in on how they're using it and how they're feeling about it. Explain that you understand that social media is important to them, and, at the same time, your role is to protect them. Don't forget to ask your teen to show you some of their snaps and some of the cool features they like in the app. That'll make it a little less scary for you -- and send the message that you're on the same team.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Safety**

*Q. I'm concerned my teen is being bullied on Snapchat.*

We don't tolerate bullying or harassment of any kind on Snapchat. Your teen can take one or more of the following actions.

1. **Reporting:** Press and hold on the Snap or Story or click the : button in the right upper corner, then tap the "Report Snap" button. Let us know what's going on — we'll do our best to help! You can also [report any other type of content](#) you receive. For more information about reporting, download our [Quick-Guide to Snapchat Reporting!](#)
2. **Blocking:** If someone is sending your teen inappropriate Snaps or Chats, you can always [block that account](#). Just go to the profile of that person, click the three horizontal dots in the upper right corner, and tap 'Block Friend'.

- Note: When you block a friend, that person won't be able to view your Story, or send you Snaps or Chats.
- 3. **Adjust Privacy Settings.** If your teen is getting Snaps from people who are not their friends, make sure their account is set to 'Private'. This way, they can only receive Snaps and Chats from people they've already added as a friend. Learn how to [update your Privacy Settings](#).
- 4. **Leave a Group Chat.** If your teen is being bullied in a Group Chat, they can always leave that Chat at any time.
  - To leave a Group Chat without opening up the Chat itself, you can just press and hold on the Group name on the Friends screen, tap the three horizontal dots in the upper right corner, and then tap 'Leave Group'.

*Q. How can I monitor what my teen is watching on Discover?*

You and your teen should have regular conversations about appropriate use of Snapchat and watch Discover together. You can also unsubscribe from, or see less of, certain Discover content like Publisher Stories, Official Stories, and Popular Stories. Just press and hold the tile on the Discover screen and tap 'Hide' or 'Unsubscribe'.

*Q. My teen is concerned about a friend whose Snaps have become focused on depression and self-harm. How can we help?*

If you or your teen feel comfortable communicating with that friend, please encourage them to seek out help.

We are committed to providing our users a safe environment where their privacy is protected. As part of that commitment, we've implemented a few in-app features specifically geared towards addressing self-harm and other safety concerns. Snapchatters can use our in-app reporting to reach out to us and report individuals going through a crisis. Reported content will capture the Snap or Story, and allow us to more fully assess the situation and take appropriate action.

If you feel someone is in *immediate* danger, contact your local law enforcement agency right away!

**Account Security**

*Q. How do I make sure my teen's Snapchat account is secure?*

You should remind your teen to never share their password with anyone for any reason — not even us. Snapchat will never, ever ask for your password. We don't need it to help you out, no matter what your situation is. If your teen has given any of their account info to an unofficial Snapchat site or friend, and they think their account might be compromised, here is some helpful information about hacked accounts and next steps you can take. Also, you may want your teen to enable two-factor authentication with Login Verification. If your teen's account has been hacked, please have your teen report the issue to us as soon as they can!

*Q. I want to know what my teen is doing on Snapchat. I think they are not being safe, so can you please give me the login information?*

Protecting Snapchatters' privacy (including your teen's) is important to us, so we can't provide you with login information for your teen's account for legal reasons.

We encourage you to discuss how to use Snapchat safely with your teen directly. If you believe your teen is in danger using the Snapchat app, you can choose to deactivate their account. However, you'll need your teen's username and password to log in and [delete their account](#).

For more information about how to delete the Snapchat app or use built-in parental control settings, please visit [Apple Support](#) for Apple iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad devices — or [Google Play Support](#) for Android devices. For additional information, please see our [Privacy Policy](#).

## **Privacy**

*Q. Is my teen's privacy at risk being on Snapchat?*

Protecting Snapchatters' privacy is very important to us. Please check out our [Privacy Center](#) to learn more. We encourage you to talk to your teen about managing their Privacy Settings, and making sure that only their friends can Snap or Chat with them, or see their location on Snap Map.