

What is TikTok?

TikTok (originally called musical.ly) is a social network for sharing user-generated videos, mostly of people lip-synching to popular songs. Users can create and upload their own videos where they lip-synch, sing, dance, or just talk. You can also browse and interact with other users' content, which covers a wide range of topics, songs, and styles. These videos can be grouped by hashtags, which often correspond to challenges, memes, or current events (i.e., #pandemiclife)

How safe is TikTok?

Using any social network can be risky, but it's possible for kids to safely use the app with adult supervision (and a private account). TikTok has different rules for different ages:

- Users under 13 can't post videos or comment, and content is curated for a younger audience.
- For kids age 13 to 15, accounts are private by default; only friends can comment on videos, and other users can't duet (explained below) with your videos.
- Only users 16 and over can livestream and use direct messaging, and only users over 18 can buy, send, or receive virtual gifts.

TikTok also offers some tools for parents to limit how much time kids spend on the app and what kids can see. Parents can also use Restricted Mode to reduce mature content or Family Safety Mode to pair their account with their kid's to control settings completely.

How does TikTok work?

Tik Tok users sign up with a phone number, an email address, or a third-party account such as Facebook and Instagram. Once logged in, you can search popular creators, categories (comedy, animals, sports), and hashtags to find videos. Or you can use your phone contacts or social media followers to find friends already on the app. Many kids on Tik Tok like to create videos, but plenty of people don't post themselves -- they just use the app to find and follow content creators.

Is TikTok appropriate for kids?

If you supervise your kids, use safety settings, and stick to songs you already know, TikTok can be a kid-friendly experience. But TikTok's emphasis on popular music means many videos include swearing and sexual lyrics, so it may not be age-appropriate for kids to use on their own. Even with limits, it's easy to find people wearing revealing clothing and dancing suggestively, although TikTok won't let you search for objectionable content such as "porn." As with social media apps like Instagram and Snapchat, TikTok has a commercial element that encourages kids to buy stuff. Users can also earn TikTok Reward points by inviting friends to download the app, and then

they can redeem those points for coupons from brands like Sephora and Uber. You'll find plenty of other marketing and purchasing opportunities.

What age is TikTok recommended for?

Common Sense recommends the app for age 15+ mainly due to the privacy issues and mature content. TikTok requires that users be at least 13 years old to use the full TikTok experience, although there is a way for younger kids to access the app. Anyone under the age of 18 must have approval of a parent or guardian.

Can kids under 13 use TikTok?

If your younger kid or tween wants to use the app, there's a section of the app for kids under 13 that includes additional safety and privacy features. Kids can only see curated, clean videos, and aren't allowed to comment, search, or post their own videos.

How can you make your TikTok account private?

To make your TikTok account private, go to your profile page and select the three-dot icon in the top-right corner. On the "Settings and privacy" page, tap Privacy. That takes you to the Discoverability page. Toggle the switch for Private Account. On this page, you can also control other safety and privacy features, such as who can send you comments and direct messages, and who can do a duet with you. Using the Friends setting or turning those features off completely limits contact with strangers.

How do I delete a TikTok video?

To delete a TikTok video that you have posted to your account, select the video you want to delete from your profile. From there, tap the "..." icon in the bottom-right corner and select Delete (it has a trash can icon). You will be asked whether you are sure you want to delete the video. Then it will be removed from your profile.

How can I delete a TikTok account?

Deleting a TikTok account takes a few steps. First, go to your profile, then select the "..." icon in the top-right corner. Select Manage Account. TikTok requires you to verify that the account you want to delete belongs to you, so you may need to log in to a third party such as Google or add the phone number you used to register. Once you've verified the account, you'll get a code to plug in that allows you to delete your account.

How can I use TikTok with my kids?

You can provide a buffer between kids and iffy content by watching with your kids and making videos together. Offer to hold the camera or turn it around to do a selfie duet. You can post it or save it as "private" so only you can see. The app also lets you share

videos by email, text, or other social media where you can better control who sees it, so kids can perform for friends and relatives instead of a wider network of people.

What are TikTok Challenges?

Challenges are any idea that goes viral. They can be songs, activities, or dances that start trending and then get copied by users on the platform. Sometimes they're spontaneous, but sometimes they're planned out by brands, musical artists, or influencers for marketing purposes. Most popular challenges, such as the intricately choreographed dance number Renegade and pranks such as the backwards hoodie fridge mix-up are harmless. But some, such as the skull-breaker, are really dangerous. Learn more about viral internet challenges and how to talk to your kid about them.

Does TikTok have parental controls?

TikTok offers a few ways for parents to manage kids' accounts. You can either enable time limits and the content filter on your kid's phone and protect the settings with a passcode, or you can download TikTok, create your own account, and use the Family Pairing feature to manage your kid's TikTok settings using your phone. (If you choose Family Pairing, you'll need your kid's phone to sync the settings.)

Here's how to enable screen limits and filter content on your kid's phone: Go to your kid's account and tap the three dots at the top right of the user profile. Then select "Digital Wellbeing" next to the icon of an umbrella. From there, select the features you want to enable:

Screen Time Management. This setting limits users to a maximum of two hours on the app per day, but you can limit it to 40 minutes. If you're only enabling this on your kid's phone, choose a passcode to lock the setting.

Restricted Mode. This blocks mature content, but even with the filter on, kids using the app on their own might come across age-inappropriate videos. Lock the setting with a passcode.

To set up Family Pairing so you can manage the above settings, plus safety and privacy, first download TikTok onto your phone and create an account. Then, make sure you have your kid's phone and their TikTok login handy.

Family Pairing. On both phones, tap the three dots next to the user profile; tap Family Pairing and sync your account to your kid's via the QR code.

Keep in mind kids can always re-download TikTok and create a new account using a different phone number or email address, so any controls you enable aren't foolproof.

How can I monitor my kid's activity on TikTok?

Other than Restricted Mode, there's no way to filter out content on TikTok, so parents are encouraged to share an account with kids over 13. This will let you keep an eye on what your kid is viewing and posting. Parents of older kids who are more resistant to monitoring can ask about their favorite video creators and get to know their videos (with or without your kid). Also, take the time to regularly look at the most popular songs, videos, memes, and challenges.

Should I be concerned about TikTok's security?

Many people and organizations—including the U.S. government and companies like Wells Fargo—are worried that TikTok's parent company ByteDance (based in China) is using the app to spy on users in other countries. Investigations of TikTok found that the app's privacy policy and data collection practices aren't actually any worse than other social media apps, and that the concerns about spying are probably overblown. (However, the company does surveil users of the app in China.)

That said, TikTok doesn't necessarily have a perfect record when it comes to privacy and security. For example, they only recently fixed a bug that allowed the app to access users' clipboards (where things you copy and paste are stored) every three seconds, even when they weren't using the app. They also illegally stored minors' data.