10 Apps All Parents Should Know

Technology evolves seemingly at the "speed of light," & sometimes even the most harmless apps can be used for harmful purposes. Open communication & taking time to regularly find out what apps your child is downloading, how they work, & what kinds of issues your child has encountered online are often the best precautions for parents to take. While new apps are released at a rapid rate, as you work to monitor the use of electronic devices, here are some current apps to watch for:



Tinder: An app used for hooking-up & dating. This app pulls information from user's Facebook profiles.
Concern: Due to the rating system, it is often used for cyber-bullying, because a group can target one child to purposefully make his/her rating go down.



Snapchat: This app allows users to send photos & videos to anyone on his/her friend list. The sender can determine how long the receiver can view an image & then the image "destructs".
Concern: It is the #1 app used for sexting, because people think it is the 'safer' way to sext. However, 'snaps' can easily be recovered & a receiver can take a screenshot to save & share with others.



Yik Yak: An app that allows users to post text-only "Yaks" of up to 200 characters. The messages can be viewed by the 500 Yakkers who are closest to the original writer, as determined by GPS tracking.
Concern: Although the posts are anonymous, kids start revealing personal information as they get more comfortable with other users.



Whisper: Whisper is an anonymous confession app that allows users to layer text over a picture in order to share thoughts & feelings anonymously. While users post anonymously, the app displays the area users are posting from.
Concern: Due to the anonymity, kids are posting pics of other kids with derogatory text superimposed on the image. Sexual predators can use the app to locate kids through GPS & establish a relationship.



Omegle: This app is primarily used for video chatting. With Omegle, users do not share identifying information through the service. Instead, chat participants are only identified as "You" & "Stranger".
Concern: Sexual predators can use this app to find kids to collect personal information from in order to track children down more easily in person.



Blendr: A flirting app used to meet new people through GPS location services. Users can send messages, photos, videos, rate the hotness of other users, etc.
Concern: There are no authentication requirements, so sexual predators can contact minors, minors can meet up with adults. & again, the high risk of sexting.



Down: This app, which used to be called *Bang with Friends*, is connected to Facebook. Users can categorize their Facebook friends as someone they'd like to hang with or someone they are "down" to hook-up with.
Concern: Although identifying someone a user is willing to hook-up with does not mean users will actually hook-up with these individuals, it sets the tone that hook-ups are normal within a peer group.



Kik Messenger: An instant messaging app with over 100 million users that allows users to exchange videos, pics, & sketches.
Concern: It is common for kids to use the app for sexting & sending nude selfies. The term "Kik buddy" is used as a substitute for "sext buddy" as a result. As well, Kik does not offer any parental controls & users are not authenticated. **Others to look for:* *Tumblr, Facebook Messenger & Link Messenger*



Ask.fm: Ask.fm is one of the most popular social networking sites , used almost exclusively by kids. This app functions as a Q&A site, allowing users to ask other users questions anonymously.
Concern: Kids use it to ask repeated, derogatory questions in order to target one person. Due to the anonymity of the badgering, it creates a virtually consequence-free method for cyber-bullying, associated with documented suicide cases in the US.



Poof: This app allows users to make other apps "disappear" on their device. Kids use it to hide any app they don't want you to see by opening the app & selecting other apps.
Concern: Luckily, this app can no longer be purchased through the app store. But, if it was downloaded before it became unavailable, your child may still have it.
**Others to look for:* *Hidden Apps, App Lock, & Hide It*