 [BIGO LIVE - Live Stream](#)

Kind of like [Twitch](#) and [YouTube](#), BIGO LIVE lets teens stream live video of themselves that other users can see and comment on in real time. You can also receive and send "Beans" -- BIGO's term for virtual gifts -- that cost real money. You can level up and improve your ranking by logging in every day and sending gifts. The platform is designed for people who supposedly want to get famous, but it seems to be filled mainly with people competing for gifts.

What parents need to know

BIGO has a lot of mature content, including sexy talk and clothing, and users' comments are often predatory and explicit. Also, its focus on status and spending money, as opposed to creativity and talent, makes it feel shallow.

 [BitLife](#)

In this simulation game, you're assigned an identity to play through the entire game, from infancy to death. As you play -- and your character gets older -- you can make text-based choices about how to make money, spend time, and develop relationships with pretend profiles (which aren't connected to real people). Those choices determine your levels of happiness, health, smarts, and appearance. When you die, you can start all over.

What parents need to know

While kids can't engage in actual risky behavior, BitLife exposes them to mature ideas. As your character gets older, you can choose to "hook up" with the pretend profiles, drink, do drugs, gamble, and commit crimes. (On the other hand, you can make healthy choices such as going to the gym and meditating.) It's also easy for players to become overly fixated on the idealized world of sim games. Because you can start over when your character dies, there's the promise of endless free play, which could be a concern if your teen is really into the game.

Discord

Discord is an app and site that allows gamers to connect via text, voice, and video. It's similar to a discussion board like Reddit, but the conversations are hosted on various servers -- which anyone can create -- and each server can have multiple channels. The main purpose of the platform is to be able to chat with your team while playing an online game, but people also use it as straight-up social media, even if they're not playing.

What parents need to know

Easily viewable adult content and the ability to chat privately with strangers make Discord risky for young teens. Mature areas are supposed to be labeled "NSFW" (not safe for work) and age-gated for under-18-year-olds. But you just need to click through to access. And while there's a privacy setting to control who can send your teen private messages, they can easily go in and change those settings.

HOLLA: Live Random Video Chat

This app is all about connecting with strangers. Once you sign up using a phone number or your Facebook account, you can get matched instantly with a stranger -- and both you and they appear on camera. Or you can swipe Tinder-style until you like someone and they like you (by tapping a heart). You can also enable location tracking to be paired with someone nearby.

What parents need to know

Video-chatting with strangers can be risky for teens. When it's paired with location, it's a no-go. Also, while HOLLA supposedly bans iffy content -- like nudity and violence -- user reviews indicate that masturbation, fake identities, and negative comments are common. The app's age-matching is a red flag, too. It was easy for our tester to pose as a 13-year-old and get paired with 16- and 17-year-olds.

 [IMVU: 3D Avatar Creator & Chat](#)

Using the [website](#) or the app, users interact through elaborate 3D avatars. You can dress them up, place them in public or private rooms, and follow other users and chat with them. You can also buy a wide variety of objects using virtual coins -- earned primarily through taking surveys or watching ads or through buying outright with real money. There's no game or goal other than acquiring outfits, rooms, furniture, and other items or chatting with other users.

What parents need to know

Virtual sex and user privacy are the main issues for teens in IMVU. The avatars sport highly [stereotypical body types](#) with big muscles or breasts,

and many of the outfits are skimpy. It also appears that users generate a following on other platforms by sharing their IMVU usernames, which invites more contact with people they don't know. Finally, the search term "IMVU sex" results in lots of advice about how to have (virtual avatar) sex and where to find it in IMVU.

[Like - Magic Music Video Editor](#)

Similar to the video lip-synching service [Tik Tok](#), Like lets you create short videos that often involve lip-synching. You can also follow other users, climb a leaderboard (based on how many likes you've gotten), send direct messages, and send virtual gems -- that cost real money -- to other users.

What parents need to know

Also like Tik Tok, Like features mature music and dancing and allows strangers to interact. The leaderboard motif encourages kids to post frequently and gather likes -- basically to keep kids on the app longer and increase their circle of friends (which only benefits the company). So while it can be creative and fun, it's best used with strict privacy settings by teens who are savvy about keeping themselves safe online.

[Lipsi](#)

Lipsi is yet another anonymous "feedback" app that lets users tell others what they think of them without revealing their own identities. The twist

here is that users can get a Lipsi link to post in their Instagram profiles so the comments appear in their Instagram feeds. It's possible to identify yourself if you wish or to stay in "ghost mode" to hide out for a while.

What parents need to know

Like the short-lived Sarahah, lots of posts are positive, but anonymous feedback services are generally a recipe for bullying and trolling. If your kid uses Lipsi with a public Instagram account, all of their Instagram followers can read the comments written by other people. While Lipsi is supposed to be for users over 17, there's no real barrier to downloading.

 Socratic Math & Homework Help

This app lets you take a picture of a homework problem or question and get an answer and explanation in return, similar to Photomath. Because it's more focused and filtered than an open internet search, the results are more targeted and helpful (in other words, it gives you the answers).

What parents need to know

The biggest concern is cheating: If your kid decides to use this app as an easy way out of homework, they'll lose a lot of learning. Secondly, since the answers come from the internet, they aren't always right. Used with good judgment (and monitoring by a parent), a teen could legitimately use Socratic Math to dig into tough concepts, but it's pretty easy to use for cheating.

 Tellonym

This is an anonymous messaging app that invites users to follow contacts to get and give anonymous feedback. You can also link your Tellonym account to other social media accounts.

What parents need to know

Though the developers claim comments are moderated and users have to be 17 to use it, neither of those efforts are preventing bullying and online drama. Comments about users being ugly and that they should kill themselves pepper app store reviews, and connecting the app account to a wider pool of social media users only intensifies the risk.

 [Zepeto](#)

Zepeto is a combination avatar-maker and social media platform. The main draw is the ability to create your own likeness and have your avatar interact with your friends' avatars so you can create cute posts for social media. In a section of the app called "Zepeto town street," you can text with people you don't know.

What parents need to know

Zepeto's texting format is less risky than the video-chatting of HOLLA, but any interaction with strangers is iffy (especially for younger teens who might be interacting with grown-ups). User privacy is probably a bigger problem, though. Zepeto doesn't use location-tracking, but it does collect plenty of information on its users. And like some others on this list, there's a focus on image and appearance as well as lots of opportunities to spend money.

GroupMe is an app that doesn't charge fees or have limits for direct and group messages. Users also can send photos, videos, and calendar links.

What parents need to know

- **It's for older teens.** The embedded GIFs and emojis have some adult themes, such as drinking and sex.
- **Teens are always connected.** Without fees or limits, teens can share and text to their heart's content, which may mean they rarely put the phone down.

Kik Messenger is an app that lets kids text for free. It's fast and has no message limits, character limits, or fees if you only use the basic features. Because it's an app, the texts won't show up on your kid's phone's messaging service, and you're not charged for them (beyond standard data rates).

What parents need to know

- **Stranger danger is an issue.** Kik allows communication with strangers who share their Kik usernames to find people to chat with. The app allegedly has been used in high-profile crimes, including the murder of a 13-year-old girl and a child-pornography case.
- **It's loaded with covert marketing.** Kik specializes in "promoted chats" -- basically, conversations between brands and users. It also

offers specially designed apps (accessible only through the main app), many of which offer products for sale.

WhatsApp lets users send text messages, audio messages, videos, and photos to one or many people with no message limits or fees.

What parents need to know

- **It's for users 16 and over.** Lots of younger teens seem to be using the app, but this age minimum has been set by WhatsApp.
- **It can be pushy.** After you sign up, it automatically connects you to all the people in your address book who also are using WhatsApp. It also encourages you to add friends who haven't signed up yet.

Instagram lets users snap, edit, and share photos and 15-second videos, either publicly or within a private network of followers. It unites the most popular features of social media sites: sharing, seeing, and commenting on photos. It also lets you apply fun filters and effects to your photos, making them look high-quality and artistic.

What parents need to know

- **Teens are on the lookout for "likes."** Similar to the way they use Facebook, teens may measure the "success" of their photos -- even

their self-worth -- by the number of likes or comments they receive. [Posting a photo or video can be problematic if teens are posting to validate their popularity](#).

- **Public photos are the default.** Photos and videos shared on Instagram are public unless privacy settings are adjusted. Hashtags and location information can make photos even more visible to communities beyond a teen's followers if his or her account is public.
- **Kids can send private messages.** Instagram Direct is like texting with photos or videos and you can do it with up to 15 mutual friends. These pictures don't show up on their public feeds. Although there's nothing wrong with group chats, kids may be more likely to share inappropriate stuff with their inner circles.

 [Tik Tok - Real Short Videos](#) is a performance- and video-sharing social network that mostly features teens lip-synching to famous songs but also includes some original songwriting and singing. Users can build up a following among friends or share posts publicly.

What parents need to know

- **Songs and videos contain lots of iffy content.** Because the platform features popular music and a mix of teen and adult users, swearing and sexual content are commonplace.
- **Gaining followers and fans feels important.** Teens want a public profile to get exposure and approval, and many are highly motivated to get more followers and likes for their videos.

[Tumblr](#) is like a cross between a blog and Twitter: It's a streaming scrapbook of text, photos, and/or video and audio clips. Users create and follow short blogs, or "tumblogs," that can be seen by anyone online (if they're made public). Many teens have tumblogs for personal use: sharing photos, videos, musings, and things they find funny with their friends.

What parents need to know

- **Porn is easy to find.** This online hangout is hip and creative but sometimes raunchy. Pornographic images and videos and depictions of violence, self-harm, drug use, and offensive language are easily searchable.
- **Privacy can be guarded but only through an awkward workaround.** The first profile a member creates is public and viewable by anyone on the internet. Members who desire full privacy have to create a *second* profile, which they're able to password-protect.
- **Posts are often copied and shared.** Reblogging on Tumblr is similar to re-tweeting: A post is reblogged from one tumblog to another. Many teens like -- and, in fact, want -- their posts to be reblogged.

[Twitter](#) is a microblogging tool that allows users to post brief, 140-character messages -- called "tweets" -- and follow other users'

activities. It's not only for adults; teens like using it to share tidbits and keep up with news and celebrities.

What parents need to know

- **Public tweets are the norm for teens.** Though you can choose to keep your tweets private, most teens report having public accounts. Talk to your kids about what they post and how a post can spread far and fast.
- **Updates appear immediately.** Even though you can remove tweets, your followers can still read what you wrote until it's gone. This can get kids in trouble if they say something in the heat of the moment.

 Houseparty - Group Video Chat is a way for groups of teens to connect via live video. Two to eight people can be in a chat together at the same time. If someone who's not a direct friend joins a chat, teens get an alert in case they want to leave the chat. You can also "lock" a chat so no one else can join.

What parents need to know

- **Users can take screenshots during a chat.** Teens like to think that what happens in a chat stays in a chat, but that's not necessarily the case. It's easy for someone to take a screenshot while in a chat and share it with whomever they want.
- **There's no moderator.** Part of the fun of live video is that anything can happen, but that can also be a problem. Unlike static posts that developers may review, live video chats are spontaneous, so it's

impossible to predict what kids will see, especially if they're in chats with people they don't know well.

Live.me – Live Video Streaming allows kids to watch others and broadcast themselves live, earn currency from fans, and interact live with users without any control over who views their streams.

What parents need to know

- **It's associated with Tik Tok - including musical.ly.** Because of the parent app's popularity, this streamer is very popular, and many kids who use one app use the other, too.
- **Kids can easily see inappropriate content.** During our review, we saw broadcasters cursing and using racial slurs, scantily clad broadcasters, young teens answering sexually charged questions, and more.
- **Predatory comments are a concern.** Because anyone can communicate with broadcasters, there is the potential for viewers to request sexual pictures or performances or to contact them through other social means and send private images or messages.

YouNow: Broadcast, Chat, and Watch Live Video is an app that lets kids stream and watch live broadcasts. As they watch, they can

comment or buy gold bars to give to other users. Ultimately, the goal is to get lots of viewers, start trending, and grow your fan base.

What parents need to know

- **Kids might make poor decisions to gain popularity.** Because it's live video, kids can do or say anything and can respond to requests from viewers -- in real time. Though there seems to be moderation around iffy content (kids complain about having accounts suspended "for nothing"), there's plenty of swearing and occasional sharing of personal information with anonymous viewers.
- **Teens can share personal information, sometimes by accident.** Teens often broadcast from their bedrooms, which often have personal information visible, and they sometimes will share a phone number or an email address with viewers, not knowing who's really watching.
- **It's creepy.** Teens even broadcast themselves sleeping, which illustrates the urge to share all aspects of life, even intimate moments, publicly -- and potentially with strangers.

[Snapchat](#) is a messaging app that lets users put a time limit on the pictures and videos they send before they disappear. Most teens use the app to share goofy or embarrassing photos without the risk of them going public. However, there are lots of opportunities to use it in other ways.

What parents need to know

- **It's a myth that Snapchats go away forever.** Data is data: Whenever an image is sent, it never truly goes away. (For example, the person on the receiving end can take a screenshot of the image before it disappears.) Snapchats can even be recovered. After a major hack in December 2013 and a settlement with the FTC, Snapchat has clarified its privacy policy, but teens should stay wary.
- **It can make sexting seem OK.** The seemingly risk-free messaging might encourage users to share pictures containing sexy images.
- **There's a lot of iffy, clicky content.** Snapchat's Discover feature offers a grab-bag of articles, videos, and quizzes from magazine publishers, TV networks, and online sources mostly about pop culture, celebrities, and relationships (a typical headline: "THIS is What Sex Does To Your Brain").

 Whisper is a social "confessional" app that allows users to post whatever's on their minds, paired with an image. With all the emotions running through teens, anonymous outlets give them the freedom to share their feelings without fear of judgment.

What parents need to know

- **Whispers are often sexual in nature.** Some users use the app to try to hook up with people nearby, while others post "confessions" of desire. Lots of eye-catching, nearly nude pics accompany these shared secrets.
- **Content can be dark.** People normally don't confess sunshine and rainbows; common Whisper topics include insecurity, depression, substance abuse, and various lies told to employers and teachers.

- **Although it's anonymous to start, it may not stay that way.** The app encourages users to exchange personal information in the "Meet Up" section.

Monkey -- Have Fun Chats. If you remember Chatroulette, where users could be randomly matched with strangers for a video chat, this is the modern version. Using Snapchat to connect, users have 10 seconds to live video-chat with strangers.

What parents need to know

- **Lots of teens are using it.** Because of the connection with Snapchat, plenty of teens are always available for a quick chat -- which often leads to connecting via Snapchat and continuing the conversation through that platform.
- **Teens can accept or reject a chat.** Before beginning a chat, users receive the stranger's age, gender, and location and can choose whether to be matched or not.

MeetMe: Chat and Meet New People. The name says it all. Although not marketed as a dating app, MeetMe does have a "Match" feature whereby users can "secretly admire" others, and its large user base means fast-paced communication and guaranteed attention.

What parents need to know

- **It's an open network.** Users can chat with whomever's online, as well as search locally, opening the door to potential trouble.
- **Lots of details are required.** First and last name, age, and ZIP code are requested at registration, or you can log in using a Facebook account. The app also asks permission to use location services on your teens' mobile devices, meaning they can find the closest matches wherever they go.

Omegle is a chat site that puts two strangers together in their choice of a text chat or a video chat. Being anonymous can be very attractive to teens, and Omegle provides a no-fuss way to make connections. Its "interest boxes" also let users filter potential chat partners by shared interests.

What parents need to know

- **Users get paired up with strangers.** That's the whole premise of the app. And there's no registration required.
- **This is *not* a site for kids and teens.** Omegle is filled with people searching for sexual chat. Some prefer to do so live. Others offer links to porn sites.
- **Language is a big issue.** Since the chats are anonymous, they're often much more explicit than those with identifiable users might be.

Yubo (formerly Yellow - Make new friends) is an app that is often called the "Tinder for teens" because users swipe right or left to

accept or reject the profiles of other users. If two people swipe right on each other, they can chat and hook up via Snapchat or Instagram.

What parents need to know

- **It's easy to lie about your age.** Even if you try to enter a birthdate that indicates you're under 13, the app defaults to an acceptable age so you can create an account anyway.
- **You have to share your location and other personal information.** For the app to work, you need to let it "geotag" you. Also, there are no private profiles, so the only option is to allow anyone to find you.
- **It encourages contact with strangers.** As with Tinder, the whole point is to meet people. The difference with Yellow is that the endgame is sometimes just exchanging social media handles to connect there. Even if there's no offline contact, however, without age verification, teens are connecting with people they don't know who may be much older.

Amino - Communities, Chat, Forums, and Groups is an interest-based app that lets users find people who are into the same things. Teens can join groups -- or create them -- and then post within the group, follow other users, and chat with them via text, voice, or video.

What parents need to know

- **Contact with strangers is part of the experience**. While it's great for kids to be able to feel a sense of belonging and kinship with others, the mix of kids and adults blended with all varieties of chat makes it risky. Also, unless a kid is in a closed group, everything they

post is public, and other users can search for them. Make sure your kid's location is not included in their profile.

- **Mature content and bullying is common**. Since each community makes its own rules, profanity, sexual references, and violent content are a part of some forums. A lot of what your kid sees, who they meet, and what people post is determined by the groups they decide to join, as some are very tame and some are definitely not for kids.
- **It's not made with kids in mind**. Because this app wasn't created for kids, it doesn't have the same safeguards or privacy standards as apps that are made for kids.

 Line

Line is another all-in-one mobile hub for chatting, sharing photos and videos, and free texting and video calls. Users decide how long their messages will be visible (two seconds or a week). They also can be charged for in-app activities, but that would only be an issue if your child has access to a credit card.

 Tinder

Tinder is a popular app that allows users to "rate" profiles and locate people via GPS track ing. That means if you turn on the "10 mile radius," your search results will filter people within that range, making it far too easy for adults and minors to find one another. Like many other apps, it states that you must be "18 years of age or older to create an account," but there is no verification. Similarly, there is an app, Yubo, that has been called the "Tinder for teens" because users are able to swipe left or right on profiles to

accept or reject each other. Once a connection is made, they can chat and hook up via Snapchat or Instagram.

Vora

[Vora](#) is a dieting app that allows a user to track their fasting activity. The app has a social media feature that connects users with other fasters. While the intent of the app may have originally been for health benefits, it could be dangerous for kids prone to eating issues.

Ask.fm

[Ask.fm](#) is a Q&A site where users can ask other users questions anonymously, and that has become a big problem. Because of the incognito aspect, the chance to ask suggestive or insulting questions can happen.

Voxer

This walkie-talkie PTT (push-to-talk) app allows users to quickly exchange short voice messages. They can have chats going on with multiple people at a time and just have to tap the play button to hear any messages they receive. Although it largely has an adult following, including some people

who use it for their job, it's becoming popular among teens who enjoy its hybrid style of texting and talking. Hurtful messages from cyberbullies can be even more biting when they're spoken and can be played repeatedly. Surprisingly, the app is rated ages 4+ in the App Store.

 Vsco

Vsco is a photo creation app that gives users the tools to shoot, edit and post images to a profile, kind of like Instagram. However, you should know that you have to manually turn on privacy settings and limit location sharing. There are also in-app purchases for more serious photo editing tools that could cost you some serious money if your kid decides to download them.

 Vine

Vine is Twitter's mobile app that allows users to shoot and share short loops of video (6 seconds or less). It's rated 17+, but children and teens are still downloading it. As with any multimedia app, the content on Vine runs the gamut from naughty to nice. "With the most basic creative searching,

kids can find nudity, sex, drug use, offensive language, hardcore sexuality, and more," Common Sense Media says in its review of the app. "While there are plenty of cute, fun videos, even adults might be shocked at some of the things they find."

BUMBLE is similar to "Tinder" (which is a popular dating app. But this app requires women to make the first contact. Kids use Bumble by creating a fake account by using a fake age..

HOT OR NOT Encourages users to rate your profile, check out people in their area and chat with strangers. The goal of this app is to hook up.

BURN BOOK The description of the app says, " Together We Can Keep a Secret." This app post Anonymous rumors about people through audio messages, text, and photos

WISHBONE an app that allows users to compare kids against each other and rate them on a scale

Jailbreak Programs and Icon-Hiding Apps

These aren't social media apps — and they're confusing — but you should still know about them (especially if you have a tech-savvy teen or have had to take away your child's mobile phone privileges because of abuse). "Jailbreaking" an iPhone or "rooting" an Android phone basically means hacking your own device to lift restrictions on allowable applications — meaning, the user can then download third-party apps not sold in the App Store or Google Play store (read: sometimes sketchy apps). It's hard to say how many teens have jailbroken their mobile device, but instructions on how to do it are readily available on the Internet. Cydia is a popular application for jailbroken phones, and it's a gateway to other apps called Poof and SBSettings — which are icon-hiding apps. These apps are supposedly intended to help users clear the clutter from their screens, but some young people are using them to hide questionable apps and violent games from their parents. Be aware of what the Cydia app icons look like so you know if you're getting a complete picture of your teen's app use.

Keepsafe Calculator Vault
Another cleverly disguised calculator vault, Keepsafe offers users the ability to store up to 5,000 items, compressing images for storage, in private,

cloud-based storage. If you find Keepsafe on your teen's device, it's better to ask them to open it with you, as the app will take a photo when a person inputs the incorrect passcode.

Hide Pictures Keep Safe Vault
Keep Safe Vault is a content cloaking app, allowing users to hide content behind a variety of password locks. Keep Safe Vault is a little trickier than other vault apps, as it can hide anything, anywhere on your child's device, securing items user's wish to keep secret under phony file names and passwords.

What sets Keep Safe Vault apart from other vault apps is that it offers the ability for users to enter a recovery email address; with other apps, if you forget your PIN, you won't be able to access your photos and files again.

Best Secret Folder
Another content cloaking app, Best Secret Folder provides users with a sneaky way to conceal items on their devices. Look for a folder entitled "My Utilities," which is the front for Best Secret Folder. When someone attempts to open the folder, they will be prompted to enter a passcode or pattern, and unsuccessful attempts at opening the folder are kept in a log for the app owner to access.

Best Secret Folder also offers users the ability to be notified when someone has tried to open the folder, unsuccessfully, snapping a photo of the intruder and sending it - along with the location -- to the app owner. Watch the video below for more info about this app.

HIP

You know the old saying "don't judge a book by its cover?" Well, that is the case for Hide it Pro (HIP), an app disguised as a music manager, but really it's meant for hiding anything from photos and videos to text messages and other apps. The name is pretty straightforward in the app store, but on your screen it simplifies to HIP to add to the clever mask. The user sets a pin code and can then move files to the app and remove them from the phone (i.e., photos, messages, etc.). This, and similar hidden "vault" apps, helps kids hide inappropriate material from their parents.

(If there are two calculator apps it is likely one is a fake app) Calculator+

Same concept, but this app has a calculator icon posing as something it isn't. The calculator actually acts as the password input (PASSCODE followed by %), which reveals hidden photos, contacts, browser history, and passwords. Again, the name 'secret calculator' is straightforward in the app store, but the app appears as calculator+ once it's downloaded to the user's phone, to help minimize suspicion and hide the purpose from concerned parents.

Other apps that allow users to hide content include: KeepSafe, HPS, SA, and more.

- **CALCULATOR%** is only one of SEVERAL secret apps used to hide photos, videos, files and browser history.This app looks like a calculator but functions like a secret photo vault. Here is how it works, it is actually a functioning calculator. You will be able to type in numbers and do normal calculations on it, however once

you type in a passcode and then press another key such as the percent button, the app will then unlock and reveals a vault of secret photos or video files. There are other apps just like this that have an icon that looks normal, but it is a Hidden Icon or some other app or etc.