

How Much Do You Know About On-Line Sites And Apps Your Kids Are Using?

Next-generation apps that let user's text, video chat, shop, and share their pics and videos are attracting teens.

Remember My Space? Not so long ago, practically every teen in the world was on it and then many left for Facebook – now Facebook is on the decline with teens. You might be wondering what the new "it" social network is. But the days of a one-stop shop for all social networking needs are over. Instead, teens are dividing their attention between an array of apps and tools that let them write, share, video chat, and even shop for the latest trends.

Instagram is a platform that lets users snap, edit, and share photos and 15-second videos – either publicly or with a network of followers.

Why it's popular:

Instagram unites the most popular features of social media sites: sharing, seeing, and commenting on photos. Instagram 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 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 post it to validate their popularity.
- **Public photos are the default.** Photos and videos shared on Instagram are public and may have location information unless privacy settings are adjusted. Hashtags (#) can make photos even more visible to communities beyond a teen's followers.
- **Inappropriate can and often times slips in.** The terms of service specify that users should be at least 13 years old and shouldn't post partially nude or sexually suggestive photos – but they don't address violence, swear words, or drugs.

Snapchat is a messaging app that lets users put a time limit on the pictures and videos they send before they disappear.

Why it's popular:

Snapchat's creators intended the app's fleeting images to be a way for teens to share fun, light moments without the risk of having them go public. And that's what most teens use it for: sending goofy or embarrassing photos to one another. Snapchats also seem to send and load much "faster" than email or text.

What parents need to know:

- **Many schools have yet to block it.**
- **It's a myth that Snapchats go away forever.** Data is data: Whenever an image is sent, it never truly goes away. Snapchats can be recovered or saved by another.
- **It can make sexting seem OK.** The **seemingly** risk-free messaging allows teens to share pictures containing inappropriate content.

Tumblr is like a cross between a blog and Twitter. It's a streaming scrapbook of text, photos, and/or videos and audio clips. Users create and follow short blogs, or "tumblelogs," that can be seen by anyone online (if made public).

Why it's popular:

Many teens have tumblrs for personal use – sharing photos, videos, musings, and things they find funny with their friends. Tumblelogs with funny memes and gifs often go viral online, as well (case in point: "[Texts from Hillary](#)").

What parents need to know:

- **Porn is easy to find.** Pornographic images and videos, depictions of violence, self-harm, drug use, and offensive language are easily searchable and found on this site.
- **Privacy can be protected, but only through a difficult bypass method.** 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.

Vine is a social media app that lets users post and watch looping six-second video clips. This Twitter-owned service has developed a unique community of people who post videos that are often creative and funny – and sometimes thought-provoking.

Why it's popular:

Videos run the gamut from stop-motion clips of puzzles doing and undoing themselves to six-second skits showing how a teen wakes up on a school day vs. a day during summer. Teens usually use Vine to create and share silly videos of themselves and/or their friends and family.

What parents need to know:

- **It's full of inappropriate videos.** Ranging from clips of full-frontal male and female nudity, to kids blowing marijuana smoke into each other's mouths. There's a lot of funny, clever expression on Vine, but much of it isn't appropriate for kids.
- **There are significant privacy concerns.** The videos you post, the accounts you follow, and the comments you make on videos are all public by default. But you *can* adjust your settings to protect your posts;
- **Parents can be star performers (without knowing).**

Pheed is best described as a hybrid of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube – except that you can require others to pay a premium to access your personal channel.

Why it's popular:

Pheed's multimedia "all in one" offering seems to be capturing teens' attention the most. Some teens also like the fact that they have more control over ownership and copyright since Pheed allows its users to watermark their original content.

What parents need to know:

- **It's hot!** According to Forbes, Pheed has swiftly become the No. 1 free social app in the App Store, thanks in large part to teens.
- **Users can make money.** Users can charge others a subscription fee to access their content. Note that a part of all proceeds goes to Pheed.
- **Privacy updates are in the works.** Kids should be aware that their posts are currently public by default and therefore searchable online.

Ask.fm is a social site that lets kids ask questions and answer those posted by other users – sometimes anonymously.

Why it's popular:

Although there are some friendly interactions on Ask.fm – Q&As about favorite foods or crushes, for example – there are lots of mean comments and some creepy sexual posts. This iffy content is part of the site's appeal for teens.

What parents need to know:

- **Bullying is a major concern.** There are reports that the site has been linked to the suicides of several teens. Talk to your teens about cyberbullying and how anonymity can encourage mean behavior.
- **Anonymous answers are optional.** Users can decide whether to allow anonymous posts and can remove their answers from streaming to decrease their profile's visibility. If your teens do use the site, they'd be best turning off anonymous answers and keeping themselves out of the live stream.

For more sites and apps kids are using click on this link: <http://www.commonsensemedia.org/blog/11-sites-and-apps-kids-are-heading-to-after-facebook#.Um67-FV4wOg.facebook>