



GEMS Online Safety Newsletter Spring 2023



Hollie Guard App

This app allows you to keep an eye on your child while they are traveling using the Journey feature. Whenever they use this feature, their emergency contacts are informed when they have arrived at their destination.

With the free version, users can also use this app to get help quickly if they are in danger. If a user is in danger, they hold down the button for 5 seconds to raise an alert, which activates Hollie Guard and automatically sends their location to their designated contacts. Visit their website for further information: <https://hollieguard.com/>

Emergency SOS calls

You can set up emergency SOS calls on your iPhone/Android, so it calls the emergency services even when your phone is locked. Here's how to set it up:

iPhone At the same time, press and hold the side button and either volume button until the sliders appear. Once the countdown on Emergency SOS ends, release the buttons. You can also enable iPhone to start Emergency SOS when you press the side button five times.

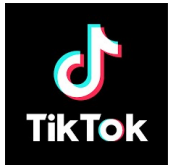
Android Press the power button five times or more. A five-second countdown begins before emergency services are called.

Tik Tok

You must be over 13 years of age to use TikTok.

Some of the videos on TikTok may not be appropriate for your child to view and there is also the risk of strangers contacting your child.

If your child is using TikTok then make sure the appropriate security/privacy settings are on.



Account set up

By default, accounts for people under 16 are set to private at the start and we would recommend keeping it as this. This means your child can approve follower requests. You can read more about the other settings available (such as switching off comments and switching on restricted mode) here: <https://support.tiktok.com/en/account-and-privacy/account-privacy-settings>

Inappropriate content, themes and challenges on TikTok

Whilst against TikTok's guidelines, explicit and inappropriate content can be found on this platform, for example nudity/sexual content and hate speech. We often see viral challenges on TikTok, some of which can be dangerous. If your child is using TikTok, chat to them regularly about what they are viewing and to ensure they know not to try challenges they see online.

Family Pairing

This allows you to link your own account to your child's account. You can then set controls such as restricted mode (limit the appearance of content that may not be appropriate) and screen time management. You can find out more here: <https://www.tiktok.com/safety/en/guardians-guide/>

Blocking and Reporting

Ensure your child knows how to use the safety features available to them. You can find out more here:

<https://support.tiktok.com/en/safety-hc/report-a-problem>

Bullying on TikTok

This article makes suggestions on appropriate settings as well as how to deal with bullying: <https://www.tiktok.com/safety/en-sg/bullying-prevention/>

Tech Tips Live with Parent Zone

You can watch back this 13-minute broadcast from Parent Zone (originally broadcast Jan 2023) which discusses what you need to know if your child is using TikTok. It's an excellent overview including how algorithms work on social media. You can access it here:

<https://parentzone.org.uk/tech-tips-live>



What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

TIKTOK

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

Some features are restricted to over-18s only

TikTok is a free social media platform that lets users create, share and watch short videos ranging anywhere from 15 seconds to 30 minutes in duration. The app gained notoriety for its viral dances, trends and celebrity cameos and can be a creative fun platform for teens to enjoy. Now available in 70 languages it has grown to a billion active users worldwide (as of spring 2022) and is most popular with the under-18 age bracket. In fact, a 2022 Ofcom report found TikTok to be the most-used social media platform for sending content, particularly among young people aged 12 to 17.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

While TikTok's "Following" feed only displays videos from users someone follows, "For You" is a stream of clips based on their previously watched content, their views on a video, their age, location and whether they are a male or female. It could therefore surface something unsuitable. TikTok's guidelines prohibit the sharing of explicit or inappropriate content, but this stream of user-generated clips means they aren't manually monitored and vetted.

18
CONTENT

DANGEROUS CHALLENGES

Some of TikTok's immense popularity, some young users have unfortunately been influenced by videos challenging them to perform harmful, extreme or even deadly acts. One extreme example was the "blackout" trend, which encouraged users to hold their breath and then pressed and then a link of oxygen. In fact, several young users have died after seeing the tragic results of this challenge.

CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

With around 13 billion users globally, the potential for contact from strangers on TikTok is high – especially as accounts created by over-18s or youngsters using a fake name at times can be public by default. This can mean that someone's profile is visible to anyone and through it links, their videos or even direct messages and email addresses can be contacted through direct messages.

IN-APP SPENDING

TikTok is free, but users have the option to buy TikTok Coins, which can be used to purchase virtual gifts in the app. These virtual gifts that can be received (including their monetary value) to other users for videos they've created. Coin bundles range from £1.50 to an eye-watering \$100. TikTok's policy is that they can't be bought by under-18s, but it's possible to bypass this with a few techniques.

ADDICTIVE NATURE

TikTok can be addictive, reported to be keeping people awake late at night and causing problems with sleep patterns and a disinterest from other activities. The platform recently introduced default screen time limits of 60 and 30 minutes for new members under 18 (in the UK, children with TikTok average 132 minutes per day on the app), but these restrictions can also be removed in the settings.

TIKTOK NOW

Introduced in June 2022, the TikTok Now feature lets users post a 15-second video or photo of the exact same time as their friends. Users receive a synchronous notification of a new video of the day, giving them three minutes to take a video or post a photo. This option can not only be a distraction to young people but could pose to them inadvertently sharing private content such as their location.

Advice for Parents & Carers

ENABLE FAMILY PAIRING

Family Pairing allows parents to link their child's account with their own and control their settings remotely. Parents can then, for example, restrict direct messages (including the choice of a child being inappropriate content), set screen time limits, and restrict their child's ability to send messages (and to whom). Children can't alter these settings without parental approval.

MAKE ACCOUNTS PRIVATE

Although under-18s can't have their TikTok account set to private by default, bypassing this setting is relatively easy. However, parents can help by making sure their child's account is private – meaning that their videos won't be visible to strangers and they won't be able to exchange messages with people who aren't on their friends list.

LIMIT IN-APP SPENDING

If your child is using an iPhone or Android device to access TikTok, you can adjust the settings to prevent them from making purchases. For Android users, you should go to Google Play Store for a young person – without realising what they're doing – and a significant portion of real money bought. TikTok notes on their own that more features of the app.

DISCUSS THE DANGERS

If your child wants to use TikTok and you're happy for them to do so, it's crucial to talk about the potential risks in this type of app. For example, ensure they understand not to share any identifying personal information – and that they realise they could be exposed to inappropriate content. Talking critically about what they see on TikTok can help children become generally more social media savvy.



READ THE SIGNS

If you're concerned that your child might be spending too much time on TikTok, or that they've been emotionally affected by searching inappropriate or upsetting that they've seen, it's important to know how to spot the possible signs. Increased irritability and a lack of concentration are potential red flags, as are failing to complete homework or regularly not eating meals.

Meet Our Expert

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National Online Safety

#WakeUpWednesday