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Keep your child safe on TikTok

What is it?

A video-sharing app that's huge with children and teenagers right now. You lip-sync to music or do comedy sketches, and can add effects to your videos. You can also gain followers ('fans') and watch other people's videos.

The age recommendation is 13 and above, but it's easy for younger children to sign up too.

What are the concerns?

On the surface, not many (so far). But, there are a few things to watch out for, like:

- User profiles talking about 'trading' or swapping pictures or videos
- Emojis that are seen as sexually suggestive, like the aubergine Hashtags, like #tradefortrade, which suggest the user is looking to trade illicit content
- Sexual lyrics and swearing in songs
- Content about eating disorders (known as 'pro-ana')

As of 30 April 2020, under-16s can't send private messages. But once users have made contact, like through comments on videos, they could still switch to another app like Snapchat to chat privately and swap images and videos.

Seven steps to keep your child safe

1. Set account to private and limit profile information

If your account is public, anyone (even people with no account) can watch your TikTok videos.

Even with a private account, anyone can see your child's profile information. Tell them not to share personal information publicly, like their full name or where they go to school.

Plus, tell your child to only accept 'fan' requests from people they know and trust.

To make the account private, simply go to your child's profile > Settings (the 3 dots in the top right) > Privacy and Safety > turn on 'Private Account'.

2. Use family safety mode (also known as family pairing)

This is a new feature, where parents can control some settings on their child's account (more on which features below) from their own phone.





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You'll need to download TikTok and link your account to your child's. Once you've created a profile, go to your profile > Settings > Digital wellbeing > Family safety mode > Choose 'Parent'. Follow the same steps on your child's phone but choose 'Teen', then scan the QR code with your camera to link your accounts.

3. Restrict interactions like direct messages and 'duets'

Duets are where users reply to one person's video with another video and then share it all. The videos appear together, side by side. Having a private account automatically means you can't do duets, and, for users aged 16 and over, stops people who aren't your friends sending you messages.

If your child's account isn't private, they can restrict these features by going to Settings > Privacy and Safety > 'Who can send me messages' / 'Who can Duet with Me' > set to 'Friends' or 'Off'. If you have family safety mode set up, you can limit direct messages, or turn them off completely. You do this through the Digital wellbeing section.

4. Set age limits so your child doesn't see inappropriate content

You can do this through family safety mode, in the Digital wellbeing section.

If you're not using family safety mode, on your child's phone go to Settings > Digital wellbeing > Restricted mode > follow the steps in the app.

5. Consider setting a time limit on use

TikTok can be hard to put down – help your child rein in their use with a time limit. You can do this through the Digital wellbeing section in either family safety mode, or on your child's phone. Go to the Digital wellbeing section > Screen time management > follow the steps in the app.

6. Restrict in-app purchases to block spending

On iPhones, if you already have Screen Time turned on, go to Settings > Content and Privacy Restrictions > enter your passcode if asked > turn on Content and Privacy > tap iTunes and App Store Purchases > In-app Purchases > set to Don't Allow.

If you don't already have Screen Time turned on, go to Settings > Screen Time > tap to turn it on > choose whether it's your device or your child's device > follow the steps to set up a passcode. Then just follow the steps above to block in-app purchases.

On Android, open Play Store, tap the menu button in the top left > scroll to Settings > Require Authentication for purchases > Select 'For all purchases through Google Play on this device'.





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Keep an eye on your bank statements for in-app purchases to make sure your child isn't getting round your parental controls.

7. Make sure your child knows how to report content and users

Filters aren't perfect, so make sure your child knows how to report harmful or upsetting content or users. Make sure you both know the rules too – TikTok bans sexually explicit content, bullying, graphic content, "pro-anorexia" content, and hate speech.

To report a user, go to their profile > Settings > Report > follow the steps in the app.

To delete a fan, your child should go to their Profile > Followers > tap the follower they want to remove > tap the 3 dots icon > tap Block.

To block users altogether, go to their profile > Settings > Block > follow the steps in the app.

You report specific content through the video, comment or message itself. To report a video or message: open it, then tap Share > Report > follow the steps in the app. To report a comment: tap the comment > Report > follow the steps in the app.

