Social Media Apps Commonly Used by Teens

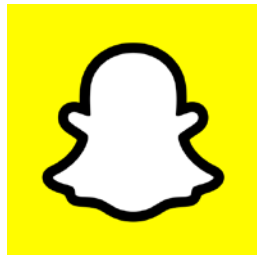| THE APP	WHAT IS IT?	THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR
Instagram	Instagram is a photo snapping, editing and posting app that has become very popular with youth. The product allows users to take a photo or short video, apply a "filter" to enhance or modify it, and then instantly share it with other Instagram users as well as people on Facebook, Twitter and other services.	You might want to ask your youth if he or she is familiar with the privacy settings and have a brief talk about the appropriate use of photo sharing. Instagram can also display a map of where your photos were taken, but this too can be toggled off and on and it's a good idea for kids not to disclose their physical location. Also talk to your child about a second Instagram account, often referred to as a "spam account" or "finsta." Finsta stands for "fake Instagram," and these accounts are only meant for very close friends to see. Not every kid maintains more than one account, but don't be alarmed if your kid does. As long as they follow responsible social media practices such as using privacy settings, not posting things they'll regret, and limiting their audience, finstas can be useful tools as kids go through the natural process of figuring out their identities. To see if your kid has more than one account, you'll need access to their phone. Then tap the person icon and the arrow next to your kid's username. If they have another account, you'll see it there.
Tik Tok	TikTok is a social network for sharing videos. It was originally called musical.ly. Users can create and upload their own videos where they lip-synch, sing, dance, or just talk. You can also browse and interact with other users' content, which covers a wide range of topics, songs, and styles.	When you sign up for TikTok, your account is public by default, meaning anyone can see your videos, send you direct messages, and use your location information. Parents should make sure to turn on all privacy settings for accounts kids are using. Many videos include swearing and sexual lyrics, so it may not be age-appropriate for kids to use on their own. It's also easy to find people wearing revealing clothing and dancing suggestively, although TikTok won't let you search for objectionable content such as "sex" or "porn." If you supervise your kids and stick to songs you already know from the radio, TikTok can be a kid-friendly experience. In 2019, after settling with the Federal Trade Commission for child privacy violations due to all the children under 13 on the site, the developers created a separate section of the app for kids that only allows them to access curated, clean videos: They can't comment, search, or post their own videos. However, bypassing that section only requires entering a false birthdate.

Kik	An instant messaging app with over 100 million users that allows users to exchange videos, pics and sketches. Users can also send YouTube videos and create memes and digital gifs.	Youth using the app for sexting and sending nude selfies through the app is common. On other social media apps, it's common to see comments that say "Kick me at _____." Kik does not offer any parental controls and there is no way of authenticating users, thus making it easy for sexual predators to use the app to interact with minors. Parents also should be aware that inside the *Kik* app is a huge range of other apps, some of which cost money and not all of which are age-appropriate. Within the app, there's *Nearby*, a Tinder-like dating game that matches you to other users in your area; the *New York Times*, which offers access to top stories as well as more in-depth articles for a fee; *Funny Pics*, a gallery of photos from the website Reddit; and *Jam*, where you can read about musical artists, see photos, and , chat with other fans. There also are lots and lots of games.
Snapchat	Snapchat is a popular messaging app that lets users exchange pictures and videos (called snaps) that are meant to disappear after they're viewed. An essential function is to take a picture or video and add filters or effects and share them with friends. Once you customize your snap, you can send it to your friends list or add it to your story, which is a record of the day that friends can view for 24 hours. In addition to individual texting, Snapchat also offers group texting and group stories.	While it's typically used by youth to share funny photos with each other, it's also popularly used for sexting because youth think it is the safer way to share explicit images. However, the receiver can take a screenshot and share the photo with others. Teens really need to understand that the content they share can be saved and shared and may never go away. It's best to have this conversation before they download Snapchat, but it's never too late. Talk about whether any of their friends have ever pressured them to send a sexy image and discuss why someone who would do that does not have your best interests at heart. Kids should also ask permission before sharing a picture of someone else. Also be aware that SnapChat's SnapMap feature reveals a users location when they post. To turn off this feature, select "Ghost Mode" in SnapChat's settings. A portion of the app called "Discover" offers content created by celebrities, news and entertainment outlets, and other users. You can subscribe to specific Discover sources to receive their feeds. While Discover offers some legitimate news from publishers including the *New York Times*, the offerings can be promotional and are frequently mature. But if your kid has signed up with their correct birth date, they'll miss the alcohol ads and other adult content that Snapchat filters out for underage users.

Omegle	Omegle's tagline is "Talk to strangers!" and is primarily used for video chatting. When you use Omegle, you do not identify yourself through the service. Instead, chat participants are only identified as "You" and "Stranger." However, you can connect Omegle to your Facebook account to find chat partners with similar interests.	Although the website claims to moderate the conversations, the video connection with the random stranger is immediate, creating ample opportunity for youth to be exposed to unwanted sexual material. Users list subjects of interest to them, and the app pairs them with people who have selected the same. From there, users are free to say whatever they'd like, which can sometimes be inappropriate for children. Finding sexual, obscenity-laced, and otherwise inappropriate content is very easy -- and isn't something users can filter out or see coming. Users can drop out of conversations very quickly, though.
Monkey	With Monkey, teens connect their Snapchat accounts and can "meet" random people via video chat. To sign up, they have to share their phone number and Snapchat username and password as well as invite friends by messaging them.	Monkey randomly connects teens with other Snapchat users for a 10-second video chat. They can add more time or add the person on Snapchat to continue the connection. Before connecting, teens will see the age and gender of the potential friend, and they can accept the video chat or not. The terms of service allow users ages 13 and older, but there's no verification of age. Because 10 seconds probably isn't long enough for teens to get to know someone well enough to invite them into a social network, it is likely that a conversation would move to a personal Snapchat conversation. This poses all of the risks of a Snapchat account, meaning that this stranger that has been added on Snapchat as a "friend" and can potentially view a teen's location and their "stories." NOTE: Another app that can be used by youth but is best for 18+ and has many of the same features as a random video-chat app is called HOLLA.

Information in this resource is derived from content developed and created by www.comonsensemedia.org and www.love146.org. If your child or teen has used an app that is not featured here and you have questions or concerns about possible risks, please feel free to use these resources above or contact us at CPCTraining@choa.org.