



[Kids and Technology](#)

The 12 Most Dangerous Apps for Kids: A Guide for Parents

*****Update: As of November 2023, Omegle has shut down over claims of abuse.*****

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For even the most tech-savvy of parents, keeping up with all of the latest apps your kid wants to download can be a real struggle. Trends change, social media platforms evolve, and new viral apps can explode onto the scene in a matter of days. Making things even harder, it can be difficult to tell which apps are really a threat to your child's well-being. To help you out, we've compiled a list of the twelve most [dangerous apps](#) for kids today. Some you'll probably recognize, but a few may surprise you!

Bark's Top 12 Most Dangerous Apps for Kids

The roster of apps popular with kids is always changing, but these are currently the most widely-used and most dangerous apps for young people to have on their phones. Keep in mind that these aren't arranged in order of most dangerous to least dangerous. They all have different features with varying levels of inappropriateness.

1. Snapchat

Kicking off our dangerous apps for kids list is one that most parents are probably familiar with. Snapchat has been around since 2011 and popularized the trend of “[disappearing messages](#).” However, kids may not always fully understand that nothing really disappears on the internet — especially when a screenshot is just a quick button tap away.

In addition to providing a space to send [nudes](#), Snapchat also presents other dangers for teens. The GPS-powered Snap Map enables friends (and potentially even strangers) to know your child’s exact whereabouts. There’s also been a recent uptick in drug dealers using Snapchat to connect with young people, as they think it’s “safer” than texting or emailing. Spoiler alert: it’s not, and [the app is expanding efforts](#) to root out the sale of illegal substances.

2. Instagram

Close on the heels of Snapchat is [Instagram](#), the popular photo and video sharing platform owned by Facebook. Like Snapchat, Instagram has also added disappearing messages and photos. It’s even developed its own version of TikTok called Reels — short videos set to music or viral audio clips.

One of Instagram’s primary dangers is the sheer amount of inappropriate content kids can access in just a matter of seconds, especially porn. Parents may overlook this, but remember that a private account does nothing to prevent explicit searches — it just prevents certain users from viewing your kid’s posts.

The app has recently taken steps to [create a safer environment](#) for its younger users, but many of these changes (like defaulting to private profiles for those under 16) are either ineffective or can quickly and easily be turned off by a child in their settings.

3. Discord

[Discord](#) is a huge place for teens to hang out and talk about gaming, whether they’re actively holding a controller during a game of Call of Duty or just shooting the breeze after school. It’s a messaging platform that’s very similar to Slack, and features chatrooms, direct messaging, voice chat, and video calls. Users can join different “servers” and within each server are different “channels.” Think of these like chat rooms. They can be for anything, from huge public video game servers to small, private groups of friends.

So, why is Discord considered one of many dangerous apps? Because it can expose kids to all sorts of inappropriate content, from hate speech and porn to bullying and online predators. Bark's [2022 annual report](#) found Discord consistently in the top five platforms for bullying, suicidal ideation, body image, and more. And even though it's popular among teens, Discord is used by more than just kids, which means that adult content on the app is rampant. It can be easy for kids to get involved in a Discord server and make "friends" and then be influenced by sketchy adults.

4. Yik Yak

One of the most dangerous messaging apps for kids of the past decade has recently made a resurgence. [Yik Yak](#) is an anonymous chatting app that lets users within a five-mile radius read publicly posted messages. When we say anonymous, we really mean it: Yik Yak has no user names, no handles, no real names, and no photos.

Kids can struggle with online etiquette when they're using their real names, so imagine how wild things can get in an environment with no accountability. Yik Yak is also a breeding ground for bullying, especially when it becomes popular on school campuses. Rumors can be posted and spread like wildfire. Another threat to watch out for is content that promotes [sexual assault and violence](#), an issue the app had back in 2017.

5. TikTok

TikTok is the most popular app in the world, and it's the go-to cultural touchstone for teens and tweens. But like many other apps, it presents a whole host of dangers.

TikTok is more than just silly dances and lip syncing — it can also present tons of inappropriate content like sexual discussion, profanity, violence, and viral trends that could put kids in physical danger. There's also the potential for strangers to interact with children via comments and DMs, which is never a good thing. Be sure to keep up to date with [TikTok slang](#) and the latest news about their [parental controls](#).

6. Twitter

If you're surprised by this one, you're definitely not alone! Twitter is usually considered an app for breaking news, celebrities, and stand-up comedians. But

it's also [a go-to source for porn](#). Twitter is so expansive and has so many users that the app's search bar is basically like a Google search.

Kids know this and use Twitter to find porn because the platform won't look suspicious if a parent does a quick browser history check. Similarly, because Twitter isn't exactly all the rage with Gen Z, it's also not usually an app parents tend to worry too much about when setting screen time rules or creating web filters. Finally, kids don't even have to sign up for a Twitter account or use the app to access its content — they can check it out anonymously through any web browser.

7. Omegle

Omegle is an anonymous video chatting platform that pairs you with a complete stranger somewhere in the world. Sensing a theme? That's right — anonymous apps are usually some of the most dangerous apps for kids out there.

Children have been known to go on [Omegle](#) in groups, looking for excitement during a sleepover much like our generation did with prank calls or AOL chat rooms. But what they find on Omegle can be extremely dangerous. Kids can be exposed to nudity and even real-life sex acts on screen. Predators can lurk on the site, grooming children and saving photos and videos from their encounters.

8. Hoop

What is [Hoop](#)? Think of it like Tinder meets Snapchat — almost literally. The app allows kids as young as 12 to form connections with total strangers. By swiping through profiles — which include the person's age, gender, and photos — users can pick who they'd like to start a conversation with. They can then request that person's Snapchat username with the tap of a button to continue the conversation there. While adults are also able to use the app, Hoop claims that users over 18 won't be shown kids' profiles (and vice versa). Still, this seems a little too close for comfort.

9. Kik

[Kik](#) is a free instant messaging/chat app that has almost no redeeming value. The company states that it's for kids 13 and older, but the App Store rates it as inappropriate for anyone younger than 17. This is because of the vast amount of sexual content the app can expose kids to. If you don't use Kik to chat with friends you already know (and why would you, if you have texting capability,

Facebook Messenger, or other more reputable apps), you're left with nothing but strangers in chat rooms. Because of this, the potential for predation is enormous with Kik. As such, it's definitely not a messaging app for kids.

10. Vault apps

[Vault apps](#) are used to hide content on phones and tablets, from photos and files to other apps that kids don't want their parents to know about. They often look like harmless apps — a popular one is a fake calculator, which grown-ups wouldn't usually think twice about. Sometimes, these apps require a passcode to gain entry. Some even take a photo if someone is trying to figure out the combination to it! Whether they're hiding off-limits apps like Snapchat or even inappropriate photos, nudes, or racy memes, vault apps can spell trouble.

11. Roblox

Similar to Minecraft, [Roblox](#) is an open-world video game that's wildly popular with kids 5–12. You can often find games with characters and settings from pop culture — worlds that kids like to spend time in. Roblox isn't just one game, it's actually a platform hosting millions of games that users have created and published.

Like with any other app that has user-generated content and an in-game chat feature, there's always the chance that kids can run into inappropriate content while playing. This can include profanity, sexual content, drugs/alcohol, and more. The games themselves are similar to mainstream video games, with simulated violence (players can kill and be killed). There's also the chance of children messaging with potentially predatory adults. Keep up to date with Roblox slang with our helpful [guide](#)!

12. Yarn

Many of the apps we've discussed so far are social media platforms or games. [Yarn](#), on the other hand, is something you wouldn't expect. It's a reading app, but definitely not one you want your kids downloading. Yarn tells stories via fake text messages (it looks like you're in iMessage reading a friend's thread) that are either scary or sexual. Some of the titles you can access include "Send Nudes?," "He's Watching Me," "Serial Slasher," and "Sexting 101."

In addition to text messages, you can also watch short videos on a variety of topics. Sometimes, they're even in the form of TikToks. You can also listen to audio clips kind of like an audiobook or podcast.

How to Talk With Your Kid About Apps

Oftentimes, children just want to keep up with the apps that their peers are using. They may not even realize just how dangerous apps for kids can be. We recommend sitting down with your child and talking through any new apps they'd like to download. Discuss the pros and cons of each, keeping in mind that "because everyone else has it" isn't the best of arguments. But be sure to listen to what they have to say. Their research and passion may surprise you!

Sometimes, talking about a simple app can turn into a very important conversation about safety, sex, or even mental health. No matter what you decide when it comes to allowing your kid to use an app, consider [making a tech contract](#). This document, which is created collaboratively, can help set expectations around and guidance for your child's online activity.