

The “Grown Folks” Guide to Popular Apps in Social Media



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Technology moves fast and so does social media. This resource is designed to help adults stay current with what is new in the world of popular social media sites and applications (apps) for youth. The information provided is not exhaustive, but focuses on the trends and is updated periodically as new apps and sites emerge and others disappear.

Like most tools, technology itself is neutral. All the sites listed can be used for many constructive purposes, linking youth to their friends and interacting in positive ways. Many youth use social media to create vibrant communities and engage in social action and ally behavior. Schools and educators are increasingly using social media to communicate with students about assignments and create learning communities. However, we know that sometimes youth (and adults) choose to use the same technology in negative ways. And people sometimes use others’ identity and [differences](#) as a basis to disrespect others online.

It is important to understand the technology and teach young people how to engage safely and respectfully on social media. Do not assume that just because they know more than you about the specific apps that they know more than you about how to engage online in thoughtful and respectful ways. Encourage young people to think about their personal values and actions as they relate to online spaces overall—not just specific apps. Check out the list and the suggestions below for ways adults can stay informed and guide the youth in their lives.

The source for age ratings is [Common Sense Media](#), a leading independent nonprofit organization dedicated to helping kids thrive in a world of media and technology.

Popular Social Media Sites and Apps



4chan. An image board (see definitions below) website where users generally post anonymously, 4chan is split into various, topic-specific boards and many popular memes (see definitions) have been originated on the site. Given its anonymous nature, there are very few rules for posting. *Age rated 17+*



After School. An anonymous, private message board for specific schools. As with other anonymous sites, there are concerns about youth posting mean and hurtful material, as well as sexually explicit content. *App rated 17+*



ASKfm. A social networking site where users set up a profile, ask questions and answer those posted by others using a text message or video. Users are allowed to be anonymous, which has led to some youth using it to engage in hurtful and cyberbullying behavior. *App rated 13+*



badoo.* A free “meet up” app that connects users based on their hobbies and interests to make new friends, chat or date. Allows users to search for people in close geographic proximity, called geosocial networking. *App rated 18+*



Blindr.* A location-based dating app that connects like-minded people to one another. Users share messages, videos or communicate in real time. *App rated 18+*



Boomerang from Instagram. This app creates animated GIFs by recording ten quick images. Users share these GIFs to Facebook, Instagram or other social media platforms connected on the device. All videos made with Boomerang are automatically saved to the device's camera roll. *App rated 14+*



Bumble.* A location-based dating or hookup app. In heterosexual matches, only women are allowed to message males, but in same-sex matches either party can initiate a chat. Users must access the app via Facebook, and photos and profile information are pulled from there. There is a “BFF feature” (best friends forever) for users seeking platonic relationships. *App rated 18+*



Facebook. A social networking site with 1.2 billion users. Users share status updates, pictures, articles and other media with friends or the public, depending on their privacy settings. Facebook friends can “like,” respond and comment on posts. Facebook users can also send messages to one another through a separate Facebook Messenger app. Facebook also has numerous game applications that many adults and youth play. *App rated 13+*



Foursquare. A location-based app that lets users search for restaurants, stores and other places of interest nearby. The app detects a user's current location without them needing to “check in,” or users can tell friends where they are by

tapping in a location. Friends can then message them or meet up for in-person connection. Users also can check tweets nearby to see who's in their area. *App rated 17+*



Flickr. A video and image hosting site where images can be accessed by non-registered users, but an account is required to upload content onto the website. Registering an account allows users to create a profile page with photos, memes and videos that the user has uploaded and also grants the ability to add other Flickr users as contacts. *App rated 15+*



Google+. A social networking site fashioned like Twitter and Facebook, The site offers specific safety guidelines for young people. Users can identify “circles” or networks of family, friends, etc. that they follow. *App rated 13+*



GroupMe. A messaging app that lets users exchange limitless direct messages and group chats. Two features that are appealing for young people include its custom emojis and GIF search tool. Some emojis and GIFS contain adult-themed and inappropriate content. *App rated 15+*



Houseparty. A live video group chat app that allows users to talk with up to eight people at a time. There is a “stranger danger” feature that alerts users when a person who is not your direct friend enters the chat, which gives users the chance to exit the conversation. *App rated 13+*



Instagram. A smartphone app where users can share pictures, memes and videos and follow certain hashtags (see definitions below) related to their interests. Sharing can be set to either “friends” or public. Users can like and comment on posts or explore public pictures using hashtags. Some users create “finstas,” fake Instagram accounts with a different username than their regular account or “rinsta,” that only their closest friends can see. *App rated 13+*



kik. An easy and free chat app that allows users to message people one-on-one or in groups. Users can exchange texts, pictures, web content, etc. *App rated 17+*



Musical.ly. With this free music video sharing site, users upload their own videos, remix others' material or search for music videos created by other users or popular musicians. Users can share their videos with friends, followers or the general public. Contains some sexually explicit material. *App rated 16+*



Line. This social media app is gaining popularity. It is wide-ranging, allowing users to use text, video, voice-messaging, games, group chats and timelines. The app is free, but in-app purchases are required for several features so the cost can add up. A "hidden chat" erases messages after a short time, much like

Snapchat (see below). *App rated 16+*



Messenger. This app can be used as part of Facebook or as a stand-alone app. Users can exchange messages, photos, videos, GIFs, stickers and voice calls. Encryption options are available so users can communicate secretly. *App rated 16+*



omegle. Online site and app for anonymous text or video chatting. The site randomly picks users to talk one-on-one. Users do not have to register and Omegle keeps users anonymous unless they choose to identify themselves (which Omegle makes a point of saying they do not advise and warns that predators have been known to use it). *App rated 18+ or 13+ with parental consent; however, it doesn't verify age.*



ooVoo. Popular among millennials, ooVoo allows users to do video or text chat one-on-one or in groups of up to 8 people. *App rated 16+*



Peeks Video. Formerly known as Keek, this video-sharing site allows users to post videos up to 36 seconds long. Users can follow one another and share comments on video postings. Hashtags are used for trending topics and to aggregate content, some of which is inappropriate for young people. *App rated 15+*



Periscope. A live video streaming app, owned by Twitter, where users share through their Twitter feed and can choose to make their videos private to their followers. *App rated 17+*



Pinterest. Allows users to upload their images and videos (called “pins”) and collect other people’s images and categorize them on different boards. Users can follow other people’s boards. *App rated 13+*



Quora. This free community-based app allows registered users to post questions and answers and vote up or down answers that other members have posted. Users can add a profile picture, locate friends, follow and message other users and follow up to five content areas that interest them. *App rated 13+*



Reddit. This fourth most visited website in the U.S. is an entertainment, social networking and news website where registered community members submit content and comment on other people’s posts. Registered users vote submissions “up” or “down” which determines their position on the page. Reddit is divided into communities, or “subreddits,” which cover a full range of interests and topics, including those that are considered offensive and derogatory. *App rated 15+*



snapchat. App where users send photos and videos that disappear from view within 10 seconds from being opened upon receipt or after 24 hours in the app’s “Stories” feature. Users should understand that the pictures disappear from view but they do not totally disappear and can be retrieved, as well as saved through the recipient’s screen shot functions. *App rated 16+*



Telegram. A cloud-based messaging app that allows users to send texts, videos, stickers, memes and other files to individuals or groups of up to 5,000. There are no subscription fees or ads. Messages are encrypted and users can set a self-destruct timer for messages, similar to snapchat. *App rated 17+*



Tinder. A location-based dating or “hook-up” app where users can view pictures of other users in the same geographic area. Users swipe left to reject and right to make a match and an instant messaging feature is enabled allowing users to communicate directly if they both agree to the “match.” *App rated 18+ (The app connects with Facebook—which is technically for ages 13+—to pull in photos for users/ Tinder profile pictures.)*



tumblr.* A blog site where users upload pictures, links, text, memes or gifs in a steady stream of information. It is a streamlined microblog site that favors creative expressions. Users can post text, but gifs and pictures are the most reblogged types of content. Users can use hashtags to search site content or have their content associated with popular hashtags. There is a lot of content that is inappropriate for young people. *Users must be 13+*



Twitter. A popular site where users communicate in 140 characters or fewer. Users can share website links, pictures and videos. Hashtags are used to search for tweets that have a common topic and to begin a conversation; however, they can also be used to insult. *App rated 15+*



Viber. Users exchange free text and video messages, images and voice calls with other Viber users. They can include stickers (some free, some not) and draw messages or doodle on photos. It can be used internationally with Wi-Fi or cellular data access. Group messages can include up to 100 users. *App rated 16+*



voxer. A walkie-talkie app that includes both a live push to talk (PTT) and a voice messaging system. Messages on voxer are delivered live as they are being recorded and then also delivered as a voice message. In 2017, voxer added an opt-in private chat feature that encrypts users’ content. *App users must be 13+*



WeChat. A social networking platform with over 963 million users—one of the most widely used apps worldwide. Users can exchange voice calls, texts, stickers, custom emojis, etc. The “People Nearby” feature allows users to chat with people near them. It also has a “Shake” button that locates other users in

the world who are shaking their phones too; from there users can immediately start chatting with them. The platform also has a “Moments” section for photo status updates and WeChat Games. *App rated 16+*



WhatsApp. With 1.2 billion users, WhatsApp is popular worldwide. Users can exchange texts, audio messages, photos, videos and face-to-face calls for free. Accounts are connected to a mobile phone number. *App rated 16+*



whisper. An app which allows people to share videos, photos or texts anonymously. The postings, called “whispers,” consist of text superimposed over an image. Users can share or comment on the posts. Posts also can include geo-location. *App rated 17+*



YouNow. A live broadcasting service where users stream their own video content, such as performing music, dancing, talking or interacting with other users’ live streaming. Trending and tag-based systems allow users to browse content and follow popular webcasters. Because live-streaming is unpredictable and difficult to monitor, teen users can be exposed to inappropriate content. *App rated 17+*



YouTube. A video-sharing site and app that allows users to upload, view, rate, share and comment on a wide range of videos, including user-generated videos, TV show clips, documentary films, video blogs and educational material. Unregistered users can only watch videos and registered users can upload an unlimited number of videos and add comments to videos. Since videos are user-generated, content that is inappropriate for teens is easily accessible. *App rated 13+*

***Dating Apps**

Although dating or “meet up” apps are intended for adult users only, young people can gain access to these sites and apps by falsifying their birthdate or creating a fake profile and account. It is important to make young people aware of the potential dangers and inappropriate content that these apps can contain. Be sure to include ground rules specific to dating apps when talking with young people about safe internet use, such as they should never make plans to meet up with someone that they do not know.

Considerations

In addition to staying informed of the most popular social networking sites and applications, here are some other things supportive adults can do:

- Communicate clearly and directly to young people that the values and standards for how we treat one another are the same regardless of whether you are communicating in person or online, and that they will be held to your expectations of treating others with respect and dignity.
- Keep open lines of communication. Ask open-ended questions to gain more information about the sites and apps young people are using and why. Try to better understand the importance of social media in their world and engage in open dialogue that builds mutual trust and critical thinking about what is appropriate and why. Check out ADL's resource for having discussions about technology use, [Table Talk: Teenagers and Technology](#).
- Talk to your children about [cyberbullying](#), not just about what to do if they are a target, but also about how to respond or [act as an ally](#) if they witness or experience cyberbullying. Explain that apps such as kik and ASKfm that allow anonymity and the ability to erase messages can lend themselves to cyberbullying so they should be used with care and caution.
- When necessary and appropriate, help youth [report cyberbullying](#) or online hate to appropriate authorities.
- [Contact ADL](#) if you have more information on social networking apps and sites creating a buzz in your community.

Definitions

Blog and Microblog: a website on which someone writes about personal opinions, activities and experiences. A microblog is a one that has very short posts relative to traditional blogs and/or may only be imagery such as a photo or meme.

Challenge: Internet users record themselves performing a “challenge” and then distribute the resulting video through social media sites, often inspiring or daring other users to repeat the act. A hugely popular challenge was the [ice bucket challenge](#).

Doxxing: Refers to the search for and subsequent online publication of private personal information of people without their consent, often with malicious intent and to “punish” them for something they did.

Flaming: A hostile and insulting interaction between persons over the internet, often involving the use of profanity. It can also be the swapping of insults back and forth or with many people teaming up on a single target.

Geosocial networking: Allows social network users to connect with local people, sites, venues or events that match their interests in their general geographic vicinity. Location data is collected from users directly or other methods, such as Twitter posts.

GIF (Pronounced with a soft g like “jif”): Commonly known as a short video that plays on a loop, GIF stands for Graphics Interchange Format, an image format that supports animation and graphics well.

Hashtag: A word or phrase preceded by a hash or pound sign (#) and used to search for social media posts on various platforms that have a common topic and to begin or continue a conversation. For example, if you search on #SCANDAL (or #Scandal or #scandal, because it’s not case-sensitive), you will get a list of tweets related to the TV show.

Image board: An image board is a type of Internet forum which operates mostly via posting images, like an online bulletin board.

Instant messaging (IM): A type of chat where an electronic message is sent in real time via the Internet or cellular data and is therefore immediately available to the recipient.

Meme: A humorous image, video or text that is copied (often with slight variations) and spread rapidly online.

Push to talk (PTT): an option offered by some mobile carriers, that allows subscribers to use their phones as walkie-talkies with unlimited range. This functionality allows one user to connect with a group with a single button press instead of making multiple calls to different users. When one user transmits, the other(s) receive. Some services also work on laptops, desktops and tablets.

Social networking site: A website that allows subscribers to interact by forming or joining groups based around shared interests, backgrounds or school sites. One can publish content so that specified groups of subscribers can access it.

Wi-Fi (Wifi or wifi): A wireless local area network (WLAN) that allows an electronic device (i.e., computers, smartphones, etc.) to connect to the Internet or communicate with one another wirelessly within a particular area and often times at no cost to the user. Some are more secure than others so a discussion about Wi-Fi settings and privacy should be included in any conversation with young people on the topic.

Viral: A digital video, image, social media post, blog or challenge “goes viral” when it gains in popularity and reaches a large number of users in a short period of time.