

TIKTOK:



ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

TikTok is a social media platform designed for short-form content, primarily in the form of videos ranging from roughly 15 seconds to minutes in length. It is the single most used social media platform for posting content, and is especially popular with people aged 12-17

What are the risks?

Age-inappropriate Content

TikTok's user guidelines prohibit illegal or socially unacceptable content, but the volume of uploads on makes it impossible for the platform to manually moderate. Users can sometimes be recommended content that may not be appropriate for them.

In-app Spending

TikTok is free to use, but users are able to buy "TikTok coins," which unlock extra features.

TikTok prohibits children from purchasing these, but circumventing that is as simple as setting a false birthdate in their accounts.

Dangerous Challenges

Users on TikTok often challenge each other to post videos of themselves engaging in often dangerous behaviours.

In 2021, the "Blackout" challenge encouraged users to hold their breath until they passed out, and was linked to the tragic deaths of multiple children.

TikTok Now

TikTok Now is a feature that encourages users to post a daily photo or video at the exact same time as each other.

This pressure to post during such a short window can cause young users to post content without properly thinking through whether it's a good idea.

Contact with Strangers

With over 1 billion users worldwide, the potential for contact from strangers is very high.

All accounts, including those of users under-16, are set to be publicly visible by default.

Addiction

TikTok can be addictive. Compulsive use can interfere with sleep patterns and distract from other activities.

Though the platform has implemented time limits for under-aged users, these limits can be removed easily in the settings.

So how do I keep my child safe?

Enable Family Pairing

Family pairing allows parents to link their own TikTok account to their children's. This allows them to remotely control their child's account settings. The parents can then turn on Restricted Mode, set screen time limits and manage their ability to send messages.

Make accounts private

Although children's accounts are automatically set to private by default, this setting can be changed. Check whether your child has disabled this feature, and turn it back on if they have so that they won't be visible to strangers online.

Limit in-app spending

If your child is using an iPhone or Android device to access TikTok, you can disable their ability to make purchases in the app via the settings.

Discuss the dangers

If your child wants to use TikTok, have an honest conversation with them about the dangers. Ensure they understand they should not share personal information online and that they can be exposed to inappropriate content if they aren't careful. Teach them to think critically about any information they see on social media.

Read the signs

Be on the lookout for signs that your child is being affected by their social media use. Irritability, lack of concentration, disinterest in school and homework, and a reduction in appetite can all be signs of mental distress linked with social media.