

Social media apps: setting safety and privacy settings

How to set parental controls on apps on some of the most popular social media apps young people love



Facebook

Minimum age: 13

Facebook's privacy settings let your child control who sees their posts and timeline.

Click or tap the **padlock icon** at the top of any page and this takes you to **Privacy Shortcuts** in the drop-down menu for further instructions. On the mobile app you will find it under **More** at the bottom of the screen.

Your child can also block someone (click or tap **the padlock icon** on the right side of their timeline, then select **How do I stop someone from bothering me** and type in their user name), and report abusive or offensive content (choose **Report post** after clicking the arrow to the right of the name of the person, or **Report group** by clicking on the three dots to the right of Notifications at the top). On mobiles and tablets, go to **Privacy Shortcuts** (see above) and then click on **How do I stop someone from bothering me**.

Instagram

Minimum age: 13

To set Instagram posts to private, your child should go to their profile by tapping the **person icon**. Then, tap the **gear icon** (iOS) or the **three dots icon** (Android) and turn on the **Private Account** setting.

Your child can also block and remove followers by tapping their user name, then the three dots icon and selecting **Block User**.

Find out more [here](#).

Snapchat

Minimum age: 13

Snapchat has two privacy settings, one for who can send your child Snaps and another for who can view their Stories. To change these privacy settings, tap the **gear icon** in the top right of the **Profile** screen to access **Settings**. To change **Who Can Send Me Snaps** within **Settings**, tap **Send Me Snaps** and choose from **Everyone** or **My Friends**. To change **Who Can View My Stories** within **Settings**, tap **View My Story** and select either **Everyone**, **My Friends** or **Custom**. Any changes will be saved when you press the back button.

To block someone, go to **My Friends**, tap on the name of the person you want to block, then the **gear icon**, which brings up a list of options. Click **Block**.

Twitter

Minimum age: no specific T&C but in their privacy policy they say that their services are not directed to people under 13.

Your child can choose to protect their tweets so they are only visible to the Twitter followers they have approved. On the Web, find **Settings** under your small profile pic, top right.

Go to **Security Privacy settings**, scroll down to the **Tweet privacy** section, tick the box next to **Protect my Tweets** and click the blue **Save** button. On a smartphone, go to **Me**, tap on the **gear icon** (iOS) or **overflow icon** (Android), select **Settings** and choose the account you'd like to edit. Then, for iOS devices, go to **Protect my tweets** and tap **On** and for Android devices, go to **Other** and tick the **Tweet privacy** box.

To block someone on the website and mobile, click on their tweet, select the **three dots icon**, then click **Block**. You can also **Report** a user or comment [here](#).

YouTube

Minimum age: 13 for an account, no minimum to watch videos

YouTube is very popular with children of all ages. You can watch videos without creating an account or (over 13s only) log in with a Google account to upload videos, comment and vote.

If you're worried about your child watching inappropriate content on YouTube, you can set up **Restricted Mode**. From your computer or tablet, click on the **drop-down menu** at the bottom of any page on YouTube and select '**On**'. To prevent your child from making changes, **lock** Restricted Mode for that particular browser – you'll need a YouTube account to do this.

To access **Restricted Mode** on mobile, you'll need to go to the **Menu** and look under **Settings**.

YouTube also allows you to flag, report and block videos, comments and accounts. To block or report a user, go to their channel, click **About**, click the **flag** icon and choose from the drop-down menu.

To report a video, click on **More** and select **Report**.

To report a comment on a video, hover over the comment, click the arrow in the top right corner and use the **Report spam or abuse** link.

YouTube Kids

YouTube Kids is designed for children aged 12 and under

Google recently launched the YouTube Kids app, designed to offer only child-friendly content. You can't make comments or upload your own videos to YouTube Kids.

Parents can also turn off the search feature and set a time limit for how long their children can browse.

All the videos on YouTube Kids should be appropriate for children, but if you come across something you think has made it through by mistake, you can report it. Tap the **menu** icon at the top of the video player, choose **Report** and then choose **Yes**.

Pinterest

Minimum age: 13

Pinterest is a service for sharing and organising images, videos and other media. Users upload their own content (called Pins) to their Pinboards. They can also save (or pin) other media that shows up in their Pin feed to their Pinboards.

To keep a Pinboard from showing up to search engines, under your name at the top of Pinterest, click the **gear** icon, **Edit settings**, and change **Search Privacy** from **No** to **Yes**. Click **Save settings** to confirm the change.

You can't completely hide your Pinterest profile from other users, but you can make specific Pins private by putting them on a secret Pinboard. Secret boards are only visible to you unless you give other users permission to view them. (See above, right)

To report an inappropriate Pin in your Pin feed, click the **flag** icon at the bottom of the image and choose your reason from the pop-up menu.

Tumblr

Minimum age: 13

Tumblr is a blogging platform popular with young people. It's especially popular with photo bloggers, but you can post and re-blog all different types of content.

Tumblr lets you create additional blogs in addition to your primary blog (the original, first one you create when you sign up to Tumblr). Your primary blog has to stay public, but you can make secondary blogs private, meaning other users will need a password to look at them. Secondary blogs don't have access to some of Tumblr's social features.

To report something on Tumblr, go to <https://www.tumblr.com/abuse> and fill out the form. You can add someone who's bothering you on Tumblr to your **Ignored Users** list by going to the list of blogs you're following and clicking **block users**. Follow the link to your **blog settings** page, scroll to the bottom, enter the name of the Tumblr you'd like to block in the **Blocked Tumblrs** box and click **block**.

Skype

Minimum age: Skype says its software is not intended for, or designed to attract, users under 13s

The video messaging service does allow users to block or report someone but there is no report button to click on while making a call.

Desktop: Sign in and click on **Contacts** in the side menu and then, to the right, click **Skype**. Find the contact you want to block. Right-click the contact's name (on a Mac, ctrl click) and choose **Block...** You are also offered the option to **Report abuse from this person**. Click this if you wish to alert Skype to the user's actions.

Mobile (OS): Go to **Search** at the top of the screen and tap on the contact's name you'd like to block. In the drop-down menu, tap **View profile**. Select either **Block** or **Remove contact**. You may need to scroll down to see it.

Mobile (Android): To block a contact: Start Skype. Go to **People**, tap and hold the contact you'd like to block. Tap **Block contact**, then tap **OK**.

Gmail

*Minimum age: 13**

Gmail is Google's email service. It's very popular, including with teens. If your child uses Gmail, they should make sure they've set a strong password and shouldn't share it with anyone.

If your child receives any suspicious messages via Gmail (like emails that ask for personal or financial information), they can report them to Google. Click on the **arrow** next to the **reply** button and select **Report phishing**. You can also report spam or block a particular email address from contacting you.

*It's worth noting that Google also offers [Apps for Education](#), an add-free version of lots of their popular services (like Gmail, Calendar and Drive) for use in schools. If your child's school uses Google Apps for Education they can have a school Gmail account even if they're under 13, although the school should get parental consent.