



Gooseberry Parent

ASK.fm

What is ASK.fm?

A free, social networking app where users create a profile, create and ask questions to other users and answer questions from other users in return. The questions can be about anything, can be asked anonymously and can be asked in both text and video formats.

Key Features of ASK.fm to be aware of

- To use ASK.fm, users can sign up using a Facebook account or email address and are then required to create a profile. Profile information includes a requirement to share personal information.
- The app can be downloaded through Google Play or the Apple App Store and used on mobile devices. The app requires use of the internet.
- Profiles can be shared and linked through other social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr. Sharing and linking accounts can make personal information more accessible.
- Users can view questions asked and answered by their friends and can 'Like' their answers.
- Users can control and manage anonymous questions, but this may not prevent them being seen or sent in the first place.
- Users can pose questions to friends on the app, about anything they like. Questions are typically designed to find out more about other people but can cover a range of adult and inappropriate themes.
- Users can 'follow' friends in the app to see the questions they have answered.
- Photos, videos and animated Gifs (animated image) can be added to answers.
- The 'Shoutout' feature of the app enables users to ask and receive questions of other users in the same region as them, even if they are not following each other. This will require access to location services on the device.
- All profiles, questions and answers on ASK.fm are available to the public and can be accessed through Google searches as well as searches on the app itself.

Enjoying ASK.fm safely and managing the risks

- **Signing Up** – Encourage your child to keep log in details and passwords secure and share them with you. Users should be aged 13 or older to create an account on ask.fm but there is nothing to stop account creation.
- **Take time to explore the app yourself** – Consider downloading the app and finding out how it works, focus on how to secure an account and manage the privacy in the app and device settings.
- **Creating a Profile** – Encourage your child to share as little information as possible on their profile. Keep personal information to a minimum and create a username that protects their real name. Suggest the use of an avatar (cartoon icon of a person) rather than an actual photo.
- **Asking and answering questions** – Encourage your child to think carefully before creating or answering any questions and to discuss their ideas with you first. Remind them not to share any personal or identifying information when asking and answering questions.
- **Reporting inappropriate questions** – Discuss with your child the types of questions they might be asked and agree the types of questions that are safer to answer. Ensure that your child knows how to respond safely to anything that has worried or upset them. Promote talking to a trusted adult and using in-app features to report, block and delete.



- **Anonymous Questions** – Accounts are set by default to allow anonymous questions. To minimise the risk of bullying online, encourage your child to disable this setting by selecting the ‘do not allow anonymous questions’ option in the privacy area of the app’s settings.
- **Following** – Encourage your child to follow only friends that they know and trust in real life.
- **Sharing Profiles** –If your child intends to share their profile on other social networking sites, ensure that these profiles are also set to ‘private’. It is a safer option to keep profiles private. Encourage your child to ask permission first.
- **Sharing Questions and Answers** –Encourage your child to think carefully about which questions and answers they choose to share with others.
- **‘Shoutouts’** – Encourage your child to turn off the ‘Shoutout’ feature in the settings area of the app, so that they reduce the risk of receiving questions from people they do not know.
- **Advertising** – Adverts are screened by the app to ensure that they do not contain any violent or sexually explicit material. If you or your child spots an inappropriate advert, use the report feature of the app.
- **Blocking and Reporting** – Remind your child that if they encounter any bullying online or inappropriate material on the app, they should report it using the ‘flag’ feature. Encourage them to block any users who send them inappropriate questions or answers.
- **Sharing Information** – Remind your child to never share details such as their address or phone number on the app. Keeping personal details private can help to reduce the risk of problems online.

Find out more about your friends...but do it safely.
Consider doing this in person!