

## What is TikTok?

TikTok is a Chinese-owned, video-sharing, social networking app. It is hugely popular with teens. It has an age limit of 13+ but it is easy to circumvent this restriction using a fake date of birth. TikTok allows users to create short videos of up to 60 seconds, then share them online with friends and other TikTok users. Users can give and get feedback, comments and likes on their performance. They can choose from 1,000s of popular tunes and use lip syncing, dancing and special effects to enhance their videos. The most 'liked' performances form part of a leader board, creating competition and the incentive for users to deliver even more memorable performances. The app also allows direct messaging between users, although this function is restricted to users over 16 years.

## Is TikTok safe for children?

Although it is very popular, and can encourage creativity, the app can also reveal children at their most vulnerable, expressive and, in some cases, provocative, in their bid to become the next internet sensation. The app encourages videos to be shared, and the use of hashtags (#) increases the viewing audience.

TikTok (and its earlier incarnation, music.ly) has hit the news from time to time due to concerns over deadly pranks, grooming and unsuitable content (eg. bad language, suicidal, pornographic). TikTok does use moderators and algorithms to filter inappropriate content but they are not 100% effective. Despite efforts to remove unsuitable content, users may continue to upload it, sometimes hiding it behind an initial, innocuous images. This can be traumatic for younger children.

## What should you do?

As with all online accounts, we recommend that parents get involved, so that they understand the apps that their children are keen to use. If you are not comfortable with your child dressing up and behaving suggestively whilst lip syncing to the latest tunes, TikTok is one to avoid.

If you do allow your child access, be aware that accounts are public by default, so make sure you activate the privacy settings and other safety features available within the app. Give out as little personal information as possible, keeping your child's name and location private. TikTok's website states *"Even with a private account, profile information – including profile photo, username, and bio – will be visible to all users. Counsel your teen not to reveal personal information such as age, address, or phone number in his/her profile."*

Visit <https://www.tiktok.com/safety/resources/for-parents?lang=en> for an explanation of Family Pairing – this requires a parental account as well as a teen account and will enable parents to control screen time, turn off direct messaging, and restrict inappropriate content. Set up accounts to be "private" so that your child can choose who sees and follows their content and who can duet with them. Content shared on public accounts can be seen by anyone. There are "Report" and "Block" functions if your child come across inappropriate content or contact

See TikTok's **Top 10 Tips for Parents** at <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-us/tiktoks-top-10-tips-for-parents>

Talk to your child about boundaries and the sort of content that should never be shared online. Even young children can get caught up in the drive to collect "likes", so make sure you have a conversation with them to explain why this is both unwise and not the best way to feel validated. Ask them to show you the sort of content they and their friends are creating or watching and explain what is safe and unsafe. Ask them from time to time if anything is worrying them and remind them to tell you if they come across any inappropriate content or contact. Check their privacy settings from time to time too, to make sure they are still private!

## TikTok's Privacy Policy:

Be aware that this app collects personal information of its users and shares it with third parties. For more details see <https://www.tiktok.com/legal/privacy-policy?lang=en>

It states: : "If your profile is public, your content will be visible to anyone on the Platform and may also be accessed or shared by your friends and followers as well as third parties such as search engines, content aggregators and news sites."

"If your profile is public, other users can use your content to produce and upload further content, for example, by creating a duet with your video."

The types of personal data we use:

"We also collect information regarding your use of the Platform, e.g., how you engage with the Platform, including how you interact with content we show to you, the ads you view, videos you watch and problems encountered, the content you like, the content you save to 'My Favourites' and the users you follow."

"We also infer your preferences, including your interests, gender and age for the purpose of personalising content. We process information about your followers, the likes you receive and responses to content you upload, for the purposes of promoting your content to other users and exploring whether your profile presents further opportunities for collaboration."

## Enjoying TikTok safely and managing the risks

- **Turn off app location settings** – Although other users are not able to search your child's exact location from the app, it will give them a good idea where they are. The app allows users to search for others in their location in the "my city" area of the app, to find those locally who are using TikTok.
- **Search and Check** – Ask your child to show you their account or search your child's account and see what information they are displaying. If you can see personal information, then so can others. **You are not prying, you are parenting.**
- **Take practical action** – If you are uneasy about your child using Tik Toc, they are under the age of 13 or have shared personal information without your permission, you can contact Tik Toc directly at [privacy@Tik Toc](mailto:privacy@TikToc) and they will be able to lock or delete your child's account.

Remember the World Wide Web should be a fun, creative and liberating experience for all but take the right steps to make it a safe one!