



The Oak-Tree Group of Schools

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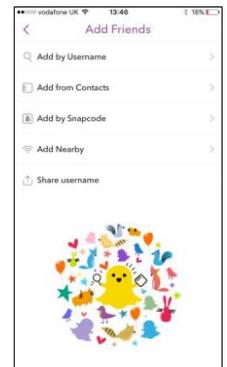
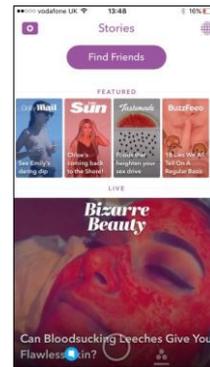
What is Snapchat?

Snapchat is a messaging App that allows users to send pictures or videos to each other that 'disappear' after being viewed. Users can set a maximum length of time that the pictures are visible for (been 10 seconds and 'infinite'), although users can also set a series of images that can be viewed for 24 hours called a 'Story'.



You can edit the picture in the app by 'drawing' on it and adding a filter or a 'Lens'. Lenses add animations to faces using facial recognition software, and filters are static overlays to 'jazz up' the image. You can also include text in the picture. Snapchat gives you the ability to save your own 'Snaps' but currently won't let you save others (although there are other ways they can be saved).

While most of the content available in the app is user-generated, some news agencies and companies use Snapchat to advertise products and services through the 'Discover' feature. It is also used by many celebrities, who you can add as 'friends' to ensure you see every Snap they share.



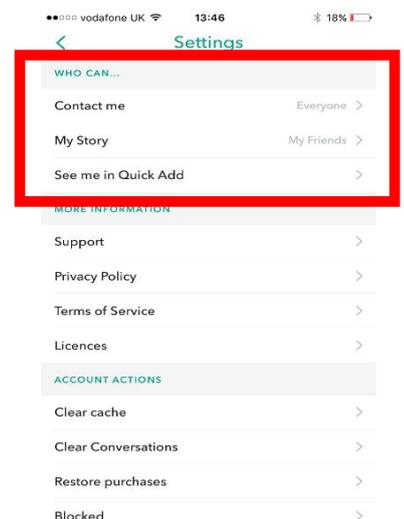
Do age restrictions apply?

Yes, you need to be over the age of 13 to set up an account – although there are no checks to check that a user is actually 13 and not younger. Any app or site that collects any personal information (name, email, pictures etc) requires users to be over 13 due to legislation in the USA. It's important to remember that when a Snap is sent to anyone, it is stored on Snapchat's own servers until they delete it, which they don't guarantee will happen once it has been viewed.

Are there any privacy settings?

Snapchat gives you the ability to share your 'Stories' with everyone and allows anyone to try to add you as a friend. The app also gives you control over some of its features. By default, only your Friends can see your 'Story' and only your friends will be able to send you snaps. Both of these options can be changed to 'Everyone'.

Another feature which many users forget when they send Snaps is the 'Replay Snap' function. This allows you to look at a Snap you have already seen recently, and look at it again. You only get one 'Replay' per day, but in the USA you can purchase additional 'Replays'. This is something they've trialled in the UK in the past.





Things to think about:

Snapchat gives users (particularly younger people) some fun technology, but it needs a great deal of responsibility as the App can be easily misused.

Sexting

One of the biggest issues reported with Snapchat is the sharing of indecent images. Adults and teens have used the App to send pictures of themselves in a state of undress or completely naked because they think the picture will vanish after 10 seconds. Taking, sending or saving an indecent image of anyone under the age of 18 is against the law and comes with some serious repercussions.

Cyber-Bullying

Many young people have reported cyber-bullying to schools and the police following the transfer of naked images of themselves to others via Snapchat. Many forget how easily someone can take a screenshot of the picture on a phone, meaning that 10 second picture can stay around forever. Although Snapchat will warn the user that a 'Snap' has been saved, it's too late to unsend it. Once someone has a copy, they can show anyone they like or send a copy to their friends which can be incredibly distressing to the person in the Snap. Young people should never send anything on Snapchat that they wouldn't be happy for someone to keep a copy of or that they would be happy for a parent or teacher to see.

There are also reports that some users have sent offensive 'Snaps', or used Snapchat to bully their peers because they think the evidence will disappear. As with any form of online bullying, it's important to save a copy to show someone - screenshotting the offensive 'Snap' and reporting it will help people understand what is happening.

Talk about appropriate sharing

Children and young people should know what they can and shouldn't take a picture of, and we cover this within our curriculum. However, it's easy to think that because they are becoming experts at using the technology we won't need to talk to them about how they actually use it. It would be worth parents giving some practical guidance around when, where and what they can photograph, and consider setting some photo-free zones at home, for example the bedroom, bathroom and toilet being just a few rooms that are not the best places for pictures to be taken.

Want to learn more?

A 'How to Guide' for Parents:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/guidance/snapchat-safety-a-how-to-guide-for-parents>

Snapchat Support: <https://support.snapchat.com/en-GB>

Sexting: What you should know from Internet Matters: <https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/sexting>

If you have concerns about the immediate safety of a child, you can call the Police on 101 or, in an emergency, 999