
9 Dangerous Apps Every Parent Should Know About

A Digital Safety Guide for Our School Families

Based on "The 9 Most Dangerous Apps for Kids" by Felicia Alvarez | Crosswalk.com | Prepared for our school community

The internet and smartphones have opened many doors for our children — including some we wish we could close. Many apps that look harmless, fun, or even educational on the outside can quietly expose children to strangers, inappropriate content, and cyberbullying. The risks are real, and they are closer than most of us realize.

As a faith community, we believe in equipping our families with knowledge and wisdom. This handout is meant to **inform, not alarm** — so we can have open, loving conversations with our children about online safety. You do not need to be a technology expert to protect your child. You just need to be aware and engaged.

One expert put it this way: *"The bad guy's not just at the bus stop anymore. He has entrance right into your kid's bedroom and hand-held cellphone device."*

That's a sobering thought — and a call to action for all of us as parents.

Apps to Be Aware Of

The following apps have been identified as particularly risky for children and teens. Some may already be on your child's device. Each entry includes a simple explanation of the risk and a suggested way to open a conversation with your child.

1. Whisper

Why it's risky: This app lets users post anonymous "secrets" and chat with other users nearby — including strangers. Children may feel safe sharing personal information or their location without realizing who is really on the other end of the conversation.

Conversation starter: "Would you ever tell your secrets to a stranger? What makes someone trustworthy enough to confide in?"

2. YikYak

Why it's risky: This anonymous posting app shows messages to the 500 nearest users within just a few miles. It has been widely used to spread cruel, anonymous rumors about students and teachers — and some schools have responded by banning smartphones entirely because of it.

Conversation starter: "How would you feel if someone posted something mean about you and no one knew who did it? What would you post if you knew no one could trace it back to you?"

3. Kik

Why it's risky: Kik is a free messaging app that does not require a phone number, which means conversations don't show up in normal phone logs. Parents often have no idea their child is chatting with strangers, and the app is frequently used to share inappropriate photos.

Conversation starter: "Is there anything you're talking about online that you'd feel uncomfortable sharing with me?"

4. Snapchat

Why it's risky: Snapchat sends photos and videos that disappear after a few seconds, giving children a false sense of privacy. The truth is that any content can be screenshot, recorded, or recovered — and what kids think is gone forever often is not.

Conversation starter: "If I could see everything you send on Snapchat, would you be okay with that?"

5. Vine & Short-Video Clones

Why it's risky: Though the original Vine is gone, similar short-video platforms still exist. Sexually explicit content can appear in user feeds without warning, and predators have used these platforms to locate teens and then contact them through other apps.

Conversation starter: "Have you ever seen something on a video app that made you feel uncomfortable or confused? I'd love for you to tell me about it."

6. ChatRoulette

Why it's risky: This app connects users via live video chat with completely random strangers from around the world. There is no age verification whatsoever, and exposure to adult content is extremely common. Some "users" are actually fake personas using pre-recorded video to deceive children.

Conversation starter: "What would you do if someone online started

acting strangely or asking personal questions? You can always come to me."

7. Omegle

Why it's risky: Very similar to ChatRoulette, Omegle connects children and teens with random strangers for text or video chat. The risk of encountering inappropriate content or adult predators is extremely high, and there is no way to verify who is really on the other end.

Conversation starter: "Would you ever get into a stranger's car just because they seemed friendly? Chatting with a stranger online can be just as dangerous — what do you think?"

8. Tinder & Similar Apps (Down, Skout, Pure, Blendr)

Why it's risky: These are adult dating and hookup apps that teens can easily access by entering a false age. They are designed specifically to facilitate romantic or sexual meetings with strangers, and underage users are far more common on these platforms than most parents would guess.

Conversation starter: "Do you know what dating apps are? Let's talk about why apps like that aren't meant for kids and what to do if someone tries to get you to use one."

9. Poof (App-Hiding Apps) ⚠️ Red Flag

Why it's risky: Poof and similar apps are designed to hide other apps from the phone's home screen, making them invisible to parents. If you find this app on your child's device, it is a strong signal that they are intentionally

concealing something from you. Approach the conversation with calm curiosity, not punishment.

Conversation starter: "Our home has a rule that we don't keep secrets from each other about what we do online. If something ever felt scary or wrong, I want you to know you can always come to me without fear."

Conversation Starters for Parents — Tools for Connection, Not Confrontation

These questions are meant to open doors, not start arguments. Pick one at dinner, in the car, or whenever a quiet moment comes along.

1. *"Is there anything you've seen or talked about online that made you feel uncomfortable or confused? I promise I won't get upset — I just want to understand."*
2. *"Would you ever get into a stranger's car just because they seemed nice? Chatting with strangers online can feel the same way — what do you think makes it safe or not safe?"*
3. *"If I could see everything you send and receive on your phone right now, how would you feel? Is there anything you'd want me to know about?"*
4. *"What would you do if someone online started asking for your name, school, or address? Who would you tell?"*
5. *"Would you ever tell your deepest secrets to someone you've never met in person? What would make you trust someone enough to do that?"*

Simple Safety Tips for Parents

You don't have to understand every app to keep your child safe. Here are eight practical steps you can take today:

1. **Check your child's phone together regularly.** Frame it as a family check-in — a time of openness, not punishment. Make it a normal part of your household routine.
2. **Know every app on their device.** If you see an app you don't recognize, look it up before assuming it's harmless. A quick internet search usually tells you everything you need to know.
3. **Set all social media profiles to private.** Go through each app and make sure only approved friends and followers can see your child's posts and profile information.
4. **Keep devices charging in a common area overnight.** Phones and tablets should not be in your child's bedroom while they sleep. This simple rule removes a great deal of late-night risk.
5. **Use built-in parental controls and screen time tools.** Apple devices offer "Screen Time" settings; Android devices can use "Google Family Link." Both are free and powerful.
6. **Create a family technology agreement together.** Sit down as a family and write simple, clear rules about screen time, app use, and online behavior — rules everyone agrees to and understands.
7. **Teach your children: nothing on the internet truly disappears.** Even deleted photos, messages, and videos can be recovered or shared. What goes online can stay online forever.
8. **Make your home a safe place to talk.** If children know they won't be punished for bringing a problem to you, they are far more likely to come to you when something feels wrong online.

A Word of Encouragement

As parents, we are called to guide and protect our children — and that calling extends into the digital world. These conversations may feel awkward at first. That's okay. You don't need to be a tech expert to protect your child. You just need to be present, curious, and willing to listen without judgment. The most powerful thing you can offer is an open door.

✨ *"The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise child will be glad in him." — Proverbs 23:24*

May God give us all the wisdom and courage to have the conversations that matter most.

Questions? Reach out to your child's teacher or school administrator — we're in this together.

Original article: Felicia Alvarez, Crosswalk.com | Additional resources:
netsmartz.org

This handout is for informational purposes and is intended to support family conversations about online safety.