Kids on Social Media and Gaming

Social Media Apps and Sites Commonly Used by Children and Teens

Digital media and apps allow children to communicate and express their creativity, connect with peers, and share their feelings. However, they can be an avenue through which [cyberbullying](#) occurs. There are many types of apps and sites available for free that give users the ability to search for people and share or post information about them anonymously.

Parents may not be aware of the apps that their children use regularly or may not be aware of the risks involved in using them. There are many ways that cyberbullying can be hidden in apps and sites, such as texts, videos, and web calls that disappear or do not appear on the device's call or text message logs.

Many apps also make it easy for users to access, view or participate in adult or harmful content. Privacy and location settings may make them more vulnerable to stalking, cyberbullying, exposure to adult content, or other dangers.

Some current popular social media venues and apps include:

- **Askfm:** A social networking site that allows users to ask other people questions, often anonymously.

- **Chatroulette:** There are over 20 different chat roulette sites that allow users to instantly connect via webcam and video chat. Sites typically pair the users randomly and instantly.

- **Discord:** A voice-over-IP (VOIP) app that allows users to video chat with others, private message, and join, create, or participate in public and private chat rooms. This app is often used by players to chat with each other while playing videogames.

- **Facebook and Facebook Live:** The most commonly used social media site that is accessible on many different media platforms.

- **Instagram:** A photo and video sharing and networking site that connects users through other social networking sites (e.g., Facebook).

- **Kik:** Messaging app that allows users of all ages to contact others anonymously.

- **Line:** A messaging app that allows users to make free phone calls, leave voice messages, and text. Users can delete texts or chats from recipient's phone using a timer.

- **Musical.ly:** Users can post their own videos and view videos posted by others.

- **Reddit:** A site that stores social news, rates and evaluates web content, and discussion threads.

- **Sarahah:** An anonymous messaging app that allows users to send anonymous messages to people they may know.

- **Snapchat:** A photo messaging app that allows for sharing pictures and short videos that are intended to be erased shortly after delivery.

- **Telegram:** Messaging app that allows users to share photos, videos, and files; make calls, and delete texts or chats from recipient's phone using a timer.

- **Tumblr:** A social networking site that allows posting of short blogs and media.

- **Twitter:** A microblogging site that allows users to send, read, and reply to "tweets" or short messages.

- **Vine:** An app that allows the posting of short 6-second looping videos.

- **WeChat:** An app that allows user to chat with friends, and to search for people nearby and around the globe.

- **WhatsApp:** A private messaging app that allows users to text, send photos, videos, and location information to their contacts.

- **YouTube:** A video sharing platform that allows users to post and share videos.

Social media has many benefits that must be balanced with the risks it presents. Risks to be aware of include:

- Screening for harmful content on websites and apps varies widely.

- Content posted can be incorrect, harmful, or hurtful (e.g., why are you so dumb?).

- Can be used to share harmful or adult content.

- Privacy controls over who can view or access posted material vary across apps, and many users are not aware of how to use them effectively.

- Apps that allow for real-time user videos "live streaming" can been used to show bullying, violence, suicide, and harmful acts as they are happening.

- Some apps that include location information can be used to get personal information, such as someone's age, current location, or where someone lives.

- Apps that support telephone calls do not show up on a call log, so parents may not know who their children are talking to.

Cyberbullying and Online Gaming

Playing videogames is a popular activity, with 72 percent of teens gaming online. Many video games – whether they are console, web, or computer-based – allow users to play with friends they know in person and others they have met only online. While gaming can have positive benefits like making new friends, socializing, and learning how to strategize and problem solve, it is also another place where cyberbullying occurs.

Anonymity of players and the use of avatars allow users to create alter-egos or fictional versions of themselves, which is part of the fun of gaming. But it also allows users to harass, bully, and sometimes gang up on other players, sending or posting negative or hurtful messages and using the game as a tool of harassment. If someone is not performing well, other children may curse or make negative remarks that turn into bullying, or they might exclude the person from playing together.

Because players are anonymous, they cannot necessarily be held accountable for their behavior, and their harassment can cause some players to leave games. Some anonymous users use the game as a means to harass strangers or to get their personal information, like user names and passwords.

There are things adults can do to prevent cyberbullying of children who are gaming:

- Play the game or observe when the gaming happens to understand how it works and what a child is exposed to in the game.

- Check in periodically with your child about who is online, playing the game with them.

- Teach your children about safe online behavior, including not clicking on links from strangers, not sharing personal information, not participating in bullying behavior of other players, and what to do if they observe or experience bullying.

- Establish rules about how much time a child can spend playing video games.

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