



مدرسة جيمس متروبول الواحة
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AL WAHA

W App

The brainchild of three Berlin-based developers, W App (initially known as ‘Slay’) was an instant hit – claiming the number one spot on the App Store in its home country just four days after launching in early 2023. Its central concept – to “promote positive online interactions” – is certainly praiseworthy but can actually introduce additional risks if not delivered carefully.

W App’s comparative lack of verification processes at the sign-up stage, for instance, leaves the door open for misuse by impersonators and potential predators: far from ideal on a platform that’s explicitly geared towards a school-aged teen audience.

Tik Tok

TikTok is a free social media platform that lets users create, share and watch short videos ranging anywhere from 15 seconds to 10 minutes in duration. The app gained notoriety for its viral dances, trends and celebrity cameos and can be a creative, fun platform for teens to enjoy. Now available in 75 languages, it has more than a billion active users worldwide (as of spring 2022) and is most popular with the under-16 age bracket. In fact, a 2022 Ofcom report found TikTok to be the most-used social media platform for posting content, particularly among young people aged 12 to 17.

Roblox.

Roblox is one of the most popular video games on the market. By 2020, the game’s makers were claiming that more than half of children in the USA were playing it. As a ‘sandbox’ title, Roblox offers a huge amount of creative freedom: it lets players create their own gaming experiences with the Roblox Studio to build custom levels and games, which can then be shared with other players online. Roblox fosters creative thinking and enjoys a robust online community of fans.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is the most widely used messaging platform on the planet, with over two billion users (forecast to become three billion by 2025), across more than 180 countries. The majority of those people (70%) open the app at least once a day – but what exactly are they seeing? Contact from strangers, fake news and convincing scams are all among the service's well-documented hazards.

According to Ofcom, WhatsApp is used by more than half of 3- to 17-year-olds in the UK (including one in three from the 8–11 bracket), despite its 16+ age restriction. If your child hops onto WhatsApp to stay in touch with friends or family.

YouTube Kids.

YouTube Kids is a child-friendly version of YouTube, offering a colourful and easy-to-navigate environment which is suitable for young children. The app is easily accessible and can be downloaded for phones and tablets without needing the YouTube app to be installed on the device already. Although YouTube Kids is obviously intended to be (and mainly succeeds in being) an extremely child-friendly platform, it has still raised concerns over its advertising policy as well as inappropriate content seeping through the curation process.

Setting up apps, games and software.

Millions of new phones, tablets, laptops and games consoles will be nestling under Christmas trees this year. However, even if parents and carers have gone to the trouble of setting up these new devices and enabling the safety features, there are still potential hazards in the apps, games and software that children will want to install and use. Knowing what to look for and discussing those risks with your child may help avoid any nasty surprises this Christmas. Here are our top tips for ensuring that unwrapping this year's presents doesn't unleash any unexpected dangers.

BeReal.

BeReal is the latest trending social media app. The concept is that people see others in their authentic day-to-day lives, sharing candid photos without editing or applying filters. Each day at a random time, users are simultaneously notified to take a photo of what they're doing at that exact moment. The two-minute window to submit an image means there's no time to select a particularly glamorous or exciting activity. BeReal shares two pictures: a selfie, and an image of the immediate surroundings. Users can only view and react to their friends' photos once they upload their own.

Instagram

Instagram is one of the most well-known social media platforms around, frequented by users of all ages all over the world, and allowing them to share photos and videos with friends, family and the wider public if they wish. The site has many younger users, allowing people as young as 13 to create an account and engage with its community.

As a popular choice of platform for teenagers, it's vital that parents and educators understand the risks associated with the site and what can be done to mitigate them.

Telegram.

With more than 700 million users worldwide, Telegram is a popular alternative to the likes of WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger; indeed, in some countries, it's overtaken that pair to become the most-used instant messaging app. Telegram's no stranger to controversy, however, and has occasionally been made unavailable for download in some nations (including the UK).

Facebook Messenger.

Facebook Messenger is a communication app through which users can exchange messages and send photos, stickers, and video and audio files. Messenger allows both one-to-one and group chats, has a 'stories' feature and – via its latest addition, Rooms – can host a video call with up to 50 people. As of 2021, the app had 35 million users in the UK alone (more than half the population!) among its 1.3 billion users worldwide. Whereas Messenger is integrated into Facebook on desktops and laptops, it has existed as a standalone app for mobile devices since 2011.

Not Gonna Lie (NGL).

NGL is another of those 'bolt-on' apps which is designed to work alongside a major social media network. In this instance, the 'host' platforms are Instagram and X – with NGL (meaning, as you may have surmised, 'Not Gonna Lie') inviting a user's friends and followers to ask them questions anonymously. An intriguing novelty, perhaps – but also not without risk.

Human nature being what it is, some people take the smokescreen of online anonymity as an excuse to behave in ways that they certainly wouldn't if their identity were visible.

HiPal.

HiPal is a trending social media app which turns phones into walkie-talkies, allowing people to have voice conversations with friends or strangers. There are two account options: one for users aged under 12 and one for those aged 12 or above. The former has

fewer features and limits interaction with strangers; enabling use of the walkie-talkie feature or photo sharing with friends and family only. The 12+ accounts offer more options, including adding strangers as friends, sharing photos and videos publicly, send private messages and holding voice chats with strangers as well as friends.

OmeTV.

OmeTV is an emerging social networking app that aims to let its users connect, ideally forming new friendships or simply getting to meet interesting people from all around the world. It's not particularly new technology, but it's remained popular amongst younger audiences. OmeTV uses video chats to randomly connect its users, much like its better-known sister app, Omegle.

Microtransactions

Microtransactions figure in the business model of many game and app developers, allowing them to bring in ongoing revenue as users continue to pay for extra features and content; even software that's initially free to download can be monetised in this way. It's a system which has featured in many of younger gamers' perennial favourite franchises, from Fortnite to FIFA.

As well as encouraging regular spending, however, microtransactions – especially the increasingly common use of loot boxes – have also been scrutinised for what many argue is a resemblance to gambling, with the potential to foster addictive behaviours.

Amigo.

Amigo is a social platform which purports to connect strangers from around the world – and, with built-in translation software, it reduces the expected language barriers. Focusing heavily on one-to-one chat, video calls and live streams, Amigo encourages its users to build up online relationships to unlock exclusive features such as private video and audio calls: essentially, the more that people chat, the more features become available to them. This is an app designed with mature users very much in mind and is therefore definitely not recommended for children.

Wizz.

Recently rising in popularity among children and young people, Wizz is a social networking app that allows users to chat live with people from around the world. In similar fashion to a dating app, it facilitates conversations with people that users would not ordinarily meet – but of course, making connections to individuals online bring its own self-evident potential safety issues.

While Wizz makes use of face recognition technology to assesses users' age and group them by age group – but the software is far from perfect and is no guarantee that some individuals won't attempt to exploit the app for sinister purposes.

Steam.

Steam is a computer gaming digital distribution platform and storefront. It is the biggest platform for desktop- or laptop-based gaming, with a range of more than 30,000 games available. The platform has become a lively social environment for many gamers and allows people to trade, sell and buy gaming items for real money. Valve, the developers behind Steam, have also released different hardware that works with the platform, including the Steam Deck – a handheld console that lets users play their favourite games while away from their computer.

Sendit.

Sendit is an add-on to Snapchat, not a standalone app: it requires users to have an active Snapchat account, which they then connect to Sendit. It's important that trusted adults realise, therefore, that any risks associated with Snapchat also affect children using Sendit. Within the app, people play question games like 'Truth or Dare' and 'Never Have I Ever': users select a question to share on their Snapchat story for their friends to reply to. All responses are anonymous, although – for paying subscribers – Sendit reveals hints about who sent which messages.

Location tracking.

Location tracking has always been a fundamental part of the way mobile phones work, the most basic element of which is the ability to triangulate a device's position in relation to a mobile network's radio masts. As smartphones became popular, Global Positioning System (GPS), Wireless networking (Wi-Fi), and Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) technologies complemented this, any one or combination of which can now feed highly accurate location data via any app on that device.

Houseparty

Houseparty is a live streaming app, which described as a face-to-face social network where people 'drop in' on each other to video chat, leave messages and hang out in groups. The app is available for iOS, Android, macOS and Google Chrome and has gathered tens of millions of users worldwide. It's important to note that children under the age of 13 must have a parent's permission to access the services; no proof of age is required, however, to create an account.

iPhone Apps

Most smartphones allow parents and carers to choose which apps and features appear on their child's device and which ones don't – also preventing young people from buying and downloading anything that's unsuitable for their age. In our guide, you'll find tips relating to built-in apps, the game centre and app store purchases.

Android Apps

Most smartphones allow parents and carers to choose which apps and features appear on their child's device and which ones don't – also preventing young people from buying and downloading anything that's unsuitable for their age. In our guide, you'll find tips on how to block app downloads, how to stop auto-updates and how to restrict apps.