PARENT/CARER FACTSHEET –
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Keep your child safe on TikTok

What is TikTok?

A video-sharing app that's very popular with children and teenagers. Users can gain followers and watch other people's short-form video content or slideshows. Anyone can make and upload their own videos, which often include:

- Dance routines
- Lip-syncing to music
- Comedy sketches

There are also videos of news and world events – such as live footage of sports events, protests, natural disasters and world crises.

The age recommendation is **13 and above**, but it's easy for younger children to sign up too.

What are the main things to watch out for?

Some of TikTok's popularity comes from videos of 'viral' challenges (i.e. when 1 person attempts a particular skill and then others make their own videos copying it).

Most of these challenges are harmless (for example, copying dance moves or bottle flipping) but some can be dangerous. For example:

- Eating or drinking inedible substances, eating and drinking a far greater quantity of something than is recommended, or purposeful overdosing on common medicines (e.g. 'the TidePod challenge', 'the nutmeg challenge' and 'the Benadryl challenge')
- Holding your breath or being choked until you pass out (the 'blackout challenge')
- Challenges with sexualised content (e.g. the 'silhouette challenge' or 'foopah', which feature indirect nudity using mirrors, shadows or reflections to avoid content filters)

Other things to watch out for on TikTok include:

- Search results on TikTok are based on a number of factors, including trending content and content a child has seen or interacted with in the past. If a child has accidentally clicked on unsuitable content, the search algorithms may drive more unsuitable content to their 'For You' page (their personal feed)
- Sexual, violent, racist and/or homophobic and misogynistic content and other forms of hate speech can appear on your child's 'For You' page. Watching the video and commenting, even if they comment negatively, can drive more related content to their feed
- Content about eating disorders (known as 'pro-ana') and bullying
- Advertising of products available through the TikTok Shop (TikTok's marketplace)

Under-16s can't send or receive private messages. But once users have made contact, for example through comments on videos, they could still switch to another app like Snapchat to chat privately and swap images and videos.

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7 steps to keep your child safe

1. Use Family Pairing (also known as family safety mode)

This feature lets parents/carers control some settings on a child's account from their own phone, including screen time limits, muting notifications, filtering keywords and enabling Restricted Mode. You can also view your child's account activity, restrict search functions and limit who can discover your child's account.

You'll need to download TikTok and link your account to your child's. Once you've created a profile, follow the instructions from TikTok Help Centre to set up Family Pairing, linking your device and your child's.

https://support.tiktok.com/en/safety-hc/account-and-user-safety/family-pairing

2. Keep their account set to private and limit profile information

Accounts for users aged 13 to 15 are set to private by default. This means that only approved 'followers' can see your child's videos.

If their account is public, their content becomes viewable on or off TikTok, may appear in search engines, and even news sites.

Even with a private account though, anyone can see your child's profile information. Tell them not to share personal information publicly, like their full name or where they go to school. Encourage your child to only accept 'follower' requests from people they know and trust.

To check your child's account is private, on their phone, simply follow these instructions provided by the TikTok Help Centre.

https://support.tiktok.com/en/account-and-privacy/account-privacy-settings/making-your-account-public-or-private

If you have family pairing set up, you can check this using family pairing.

3. Enable Restricted Mode so your child doesn't see inappropriate content

You can do this through the Family Pairing settings. Restricted Mode limits content containing mature and complex themes. Restricted Mode also disables going LIVE (live-streaming) from the account and gifting.

If you're not using Family Pairing, you can enable Restricted Mode by following the instructions here from Tiktok Help Centre

https://support.tiktok.com/en/safety-hc/account-and-user-safety/restricted-mode

4. Consider setting a time limit on use

TikTok can be hard to put down – help your child rein in their use with a time limit.

You can do this through the Family Pairing settings, or on your child's phone by setting a daily screen time limit. You can do this by following the instructions here. So long as your child is using the same account, this will apply across multiple devices.

https://support.tiktok.com/en/account-and-privacy/account-information/screen-time

5. Restrict in-app purchases to block spending

TikTok has its own marketplace, TikTok Shop, which allows sellers to advertise and sell products to other users. Your child might also be tempted to support their favourite TikTok personalities by gifting TikTok Coins, an in-app currency paid for with real money.

The steps to prevent this will differ depending on your child's device.

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On **iPhone/iPad**, you can use Screen Time settings to disable in-app purchases by following the instructions here. https://support.apple.com/en-gb/102470

You can also restrict spending on your child's device with Family Sharing.

https://support.apple.com/en-gb/108380

On **Android** devices, you can enable purchase verification for any spending through Google Play. You can find further instructions on this process on the Google Play help page. https://support.google.com/googleplay/answer/1626831

For children under 13, you can use the parental controls available through the Family Link app. You can find guidance on how to set up Family Link here. https://support.google.com/families/answer/7101025

Keep an eye on your bank statements to check your child isn't getting round the controls.

6. Check settings on interactions like duets, stitching, direct messages and comments

Duets are where users reply to 1 person's video with another and then share it. The videos appear together, side by side. Users can also respond by 'stitching', where the original video is reposted and the response plays afterwards. This feature isn't available for users under 16 and set to friends only by default for users aged 16 and over.

Your child can also change settings for comments on their videos via the Privacy section, and for users aged 16 and over, change settings for who can send them direct messages, duet and stitch with them, and download their videos.

If you have Family Pairing set up, you can do this through the Family Pairing settings.

7. Make sure your child knows how to report content and users

Filters aren't perfect, so make sure your child knows how to report harmful or upsetting content or users. Make sure you both know the rules too – TikTok bans nudity, sexually suggestive or explicit content, bullying, graphic content, misinformation, gambling, pro-anorexia content, dangerous activities and challenges, and hate speech.

You can keep your child safe by showing them how to report or block unwanted or harmful content:

- To **report an account,** follow the instructions here from the TikTok Help Centre. https://support.tiktok.com/en/safety-hc/report-a-problem/report-a-user
- **To report a video, comment, series, LIVE or other problem**: follow the instructions from TikTok Help Centre: https://support.tiktok.com/en/safety-hc/report-a-problem/
- To **delete a follower**, follow the instructions here from the TikTok Help Centre https://support.tiktok.com/en/using-tiktok/followers-and-following/removing-followers
- To **block users** altogether, follow the instructions here from the TikTok Help Centre https://support.tiktok.com/en/using-tiktok/followers-and-following/blocking-the-users
- **To delete, mute, or filter messages, or block users from sending direct messages:** follow the instructions provided by the TikTok Help Centre https://support.tiktok.com/en/account-and-privacy/account-privacy-settings/direct-message

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Sources

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