

TickTock – A parent's guide to TickTock

Is TikTok safe? How does it work? And can I do a duet with my kid? Everything you need to know about this popular musical singing and sharing app.

What is TikTok?

TikTok is a social network for sharing user-generated videos, mostly of people lip-synching to popular songs. It was originally called musical.ly (pronounced MU-zik-lee). Users can create and upload their own videos where they lip-synch, sing, dance, or just talk. You can also browse and interact with other users' content, which covers a wide range of topics, songs, and styles. These videos can be grouped by hashtags, which often correspond to challenges or memes.

How safe is TikTok?

Using any social network can be risky, but it's possible for children to safely use the app with adult supervision (and a private account). When you sign up for TikTok, your account is public by default, meaning anyone can see your videos, send you direct messages, and use your location information. Parents should make sure to turn on all privacy settings for accounts children are using, so only people you know can interact with your videos or message you on the app. That means either opting for a private account or changing the settings for comments, duets, reactions, and messages to "Friends" instead of "Everyone." You can also turn those features off completely.

How does TikTok work?

Tik Tok users sign up with a phone number, an email address, Facebook, or Instagram. Once logged in, you can search popular creators, categories (comedy, animals, sports), and hashtags to find videos. Or you can use your phone contacts or social media followers to find friends already on the app. Many children on Tik Tok like to create videos, but plenty of people don't post themselves -- they just use the app to find and follow content creators.

Is TikTok appropriate for kids?

Because of TikTok's emphasis on popular music, many videos include swearing and sexual lyrics, so it may not be age-appropriate for children to use on their own. It's also easy to find people wearing revealing clothing and dancing suggestively, although TikTok won't let you search for objectionable content such as "sex" or "porn." If you supervise your children and stick to songs you already know from the radio, TikTok can be a kid-friendly experience. Users can also earn TikTok Reward points by inviting friends to download the app, and then they can redeem those points for coupons from brands like Sephora and Uber. It's also possible to spend real money by adding virtual coins to your Wallet.

What age is TikTok recommended for?

CCHSG recommends the app for age 15+ mainly due to the privacy issues and mature content. TikTok requires that users be at least 13 years old to use the full TikTok experience, although there is a way for younger kids to access the app. Anyone under the age of 18 must have approval of a parent or guardian -- but there are plenty of young tween users.

Can kids under 13 use TikTok?

If your younger child or tween wants to use the app, there's a section of the app for kids under 13 that includes additional safety and privacy features. Kids can only see curated, clean videos, and aren't allowed to comment, search, or post their own videos. However, the lack of these features makes it unappealing

for most kids, and bypassing that section only requires entering a false birthdate, so it's not perfect. The section is only available in the United States. It was introduced in 2019, after TikTok settled with the Federal Trade Commission for child privacy violations from TikTok's predecessor, Musical.ly.

How can you make your TikTok account private?

To make your TikTok account private, go to your profile page and select the three-dot icon in the top-right corner. Select Privacy and Safety. There, toggle the switch for "Private Account." You can also select who can send you comments and direct messages, and who can do a duet with you. Using the "Friends" setting or turning those features off completely limits contact with strangers.

How do I delete a TikTok video?

To delete a TikTok video that you have posted to your account, select the video you want to delete from your profile. From there, tap the "..." icon in the bottom-right corner and select Delete or the trash can icon. You will be asked if you are sure you want to delete the video. Then it will be removed from your profile.

How can I delete a TikTok account?

To delete a TikTok account, go to your profile, then select the "..." icon in the top-right corner. Select Manage My Account. From there, you must add a phone number if you haven't already. This must be a working number, as they will text you a code to verify the number and later to verify deleting the account. Once you've added a phone number, an option at the bottom of the Manage My Account menu will appear, asking, "Thinking about removing your account?" Tap the phrase, which will lead you to a new page prompting you to enter a verification code. Choose "Send Code" to receive a text message with the verification code. Enter the number, then select Continue. You will be given information on what is entailed in deleting the account. Choose Continue once again for a final confirmation that you want to delete your account, then tap Delete Account.

How can I use TikTok with my children?

You can provide a buffer between your children and iffy content by watching with your child and making videos together. Offer to hold the camera or turn it around to do a selfie duet. You can post it or save it as "private" so only you can see. The app also lets you share videos by email, text, or other social media where you can better control who sees it, so children can perform for friends and relatives instead of a wider network of people.

How do you do a duet on TikTok?

TikTok has a feature that allows two users who aren't in the same place to perform a duet. Both users must follow each other to make it work. One user creates and posts a video, and then a mutual follower can tap the "..." icon at the bottom right of the video and select "start duet now!" The second user can then lip-synch along with the first person, either swapping back and forth or in a split screen.

What are TikTok Challenges?

Challenges are any idea that goes viral. They can be songs, activities, or dances that start trending and then get copied by users on the platform. Sometimes they're spontaneous, but sometimes they're planned out by brands, musical artists, or influencers for marketing purposes. Most popular challenges, such as the intricately choreographed dance number Renegade and pranks such as the backwards hoodie fridge mixup

are harmless. But some, such as the skull-breaker, are really dangerous. Learn more about viral internet challenges and how to talk to your kid about them.

Does TikTok have parental controls?

TikTok offers a few parental controls in its Digital Wellbeing section. You can enable the features on your child's phone and protect them with a passcode. Or, TikTok gives you the option of using your own TikTok account to control your child's phone from your device using the app's Family Pairing feature. If you choose Family Pairing, you'll need to download the app on your phone.

Whichever way you choose, here's how to do it: either on your child's phone or your phone, tap the three dots at the top right of the user profile. Then select "Digital Wellbeing" next to the icon of an umbrella. From there, select the features you want to enable:

Screen Time Management. This setting limits users to a maximum of two hours on the app per day, but you can limit it to 40 minutes. If you're only enabling this on your child's phone, choose a passcode to lock the setting.

Restricted Mode. This blocks mature content, but even with the filter on, children using the app on their own might come across age-inappropriate videos. Lock the setting with a passcode.

Family Pairing. This lets you control the above two settings plus disable direct messaging on your child's account. You'll need your child's phone to set it up. From the Digital Wellbeing screen, tap Family Pairing and sync your account to your kid's via the QR code.

Keep in mind children can always re-download TikTok and create a new account using a different phone number or email address, so any controls you enable aren't foolproof.

How can I monitor my child's activity on TikTok?

Other than Restricted Mode, there's no way to filter out content on TikTok, so parents are encouraged to share an account with children under the age of 13. This will let you keep an eye on what your child is viewing and posting. Parents of older children who are more resistant to monitoring can ask about their favourite video creators and get to know their videos (with or without your child). Also, take the time to regularly look at the most popular songs, videos, memes, and challenges.

What if my child wants to get famous on TikTok?

While the safest way to use TikTok is with a private account, the social nature of the app and the rapid success of its stars might have your children begging to set it to public. There's huge enticement to get famous, which could encourage children to do things they wouldn't normally do to get a larger audience. They may also become obsessed with "likes" and virtual approval. Encourage and model safe behaviour, and make sure to set limits on the type of information your child shares.

Information on this page has been adapted from:

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