

WhatsApp – A parent’s guide to WhatsApp

Parents need to know that WhatsApp Messenger lets users start video calls and send text messages, videos, photos, and audio messages to one or many people with no message limits or fees. Messages can only be sent to other smartphone users who also have WhatsApp, which is available on different devices. The app checks your phone's address book for WhatsApp users and connects you automatically. It also encourages you to urge friends not using the app to sign up. Privacy and security can be customized in settings, including a two-step verification feature uses a PIN for added account security and the ability to turn off location sharing. Users also have the ability to send disappearing photos, videos, and GIFs through the Status feature, which is similar to features on Instagram and Snapchat. Read the developer's privacy policy for details on how your (or your children's) information is collected, used, and shared and any choices you may have in the matter, and note that privacy policies and terms of service frequently change.

What is WhatsApp?

WhatsApp Messenger uses push notifications to allow users to send each other unlimited text messages without data limits or international charges. As with most messaging apps, teens can send text, videos, documents, and GIFs to individuals or groups, make calls, and use filters. Within a chat, teens can use Live Location to share where they are and stop sharing whenever they choose. The status feature allows users to share updates with all of their contacts at once, or they can also use the broadcast feature to send out messages to selected contacts.

Is WhatsApp any good?

Families with some members living or traveling internationally will find this tool valuable. The voice-messaging feature's impressively clear audio is a plus, as are group texting and check marks that confirm messages have been sent and read. As the app adds fun and cosmetic features, it stays competitive with some of the other top apps for teens, and its no-fee system makes it appealing, especially for those with family and friends in other countries. It presents the same hazards as other social media apps but is message-focused and has more family-friendly reputation. The biggest pitfalls are probably huge group messages and disappearing messages, so parents should talk to teens about the potential hazards, and their limits around, these features.

Talk to your children about.

- Families can talk about limits with WhatsApp Messenger and other apps: During what hours are children allowed to text? How much screen use are they allowed?
- Talk about the types of information that are best shared in text messages and the types best discussed in person. Let children know that tone isn't always clear, and emojis can't fill in every blank.
- Discuss location sharing and the risks it has. When might it be useful to share your location, and with whom? When is it a bad idea?

Information on this page has been adapted from:

WhatsApp Messenger App review

By Dana Anerson 30/10/2019

<https://www.common sense media.org/app-reviews/whatsapp-messenger>