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The 12 Apps That Every Parent Of A Teen Should Know About

Some apps just enable bad choices.

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Ann Brenoff
Senior Columnist, The Huffington Post



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Not everything online is evil, nor does danger lurk behind every new app that

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comes to market. But keeping up with your teens' and preteens' online activities is much like trying to nail jelly to the barn door -- frustrating, futile and something bound to make you feel inept.

Keep in mind that no app poses a danger in and of itself, but many do provide kids with an opportunity to make, ahem, bad choices.

1. Audio Manager.

The 12 Apps That Every Parent Of A Teen ...

Share

managing your teen's music files or controlling the volume on his smartphone and everything to do with him hiding things like nude photos from you. It's one of the top apps for hiding other apps.

Yes, there are such things. Kids can hide any app they don't want you to see, [Teen Safe says](#). When you press and hold the Audio Manager app, a lock screen is revealed -- behind which users can hide messages, photos, videos, and other apps.

2. Calculator%.

Same deal, but this time with a calculator icon posing as something it isn't. Sedgrid Lewis, [online safety expert](#), notes that these apps look like a normal calculator app but when teens push a button within the app they can hide all inappropriate pictures. "It's a key way teens are hiding their nude pictures from their parents," said Lewis.

Lewis says the best way to solve this situation is for parents to add their teen to their iCloud account. That way, whenever a new app is downloaded by the teen, it will automatically download to the parent's phone as well.

Think it's not serious? Last fall, there was a headline-making case in a Colorado high school where [teens used apps to hide a huge sexting ring](#) from parents and school officials. And an Alabama district attorney, Pamela Casey, posted the video below to warn parents about the Calculator% app.

3. Vaulty.

Vaulty will not only store photos and videos away from parental spying eyes, but it also will snap a photo of anyone who tries to access the "vault" with the wrong password. Parents who find it on their teens' phones can conclude just one thing: Your kid is hiding things from you.

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4. Snapchat.

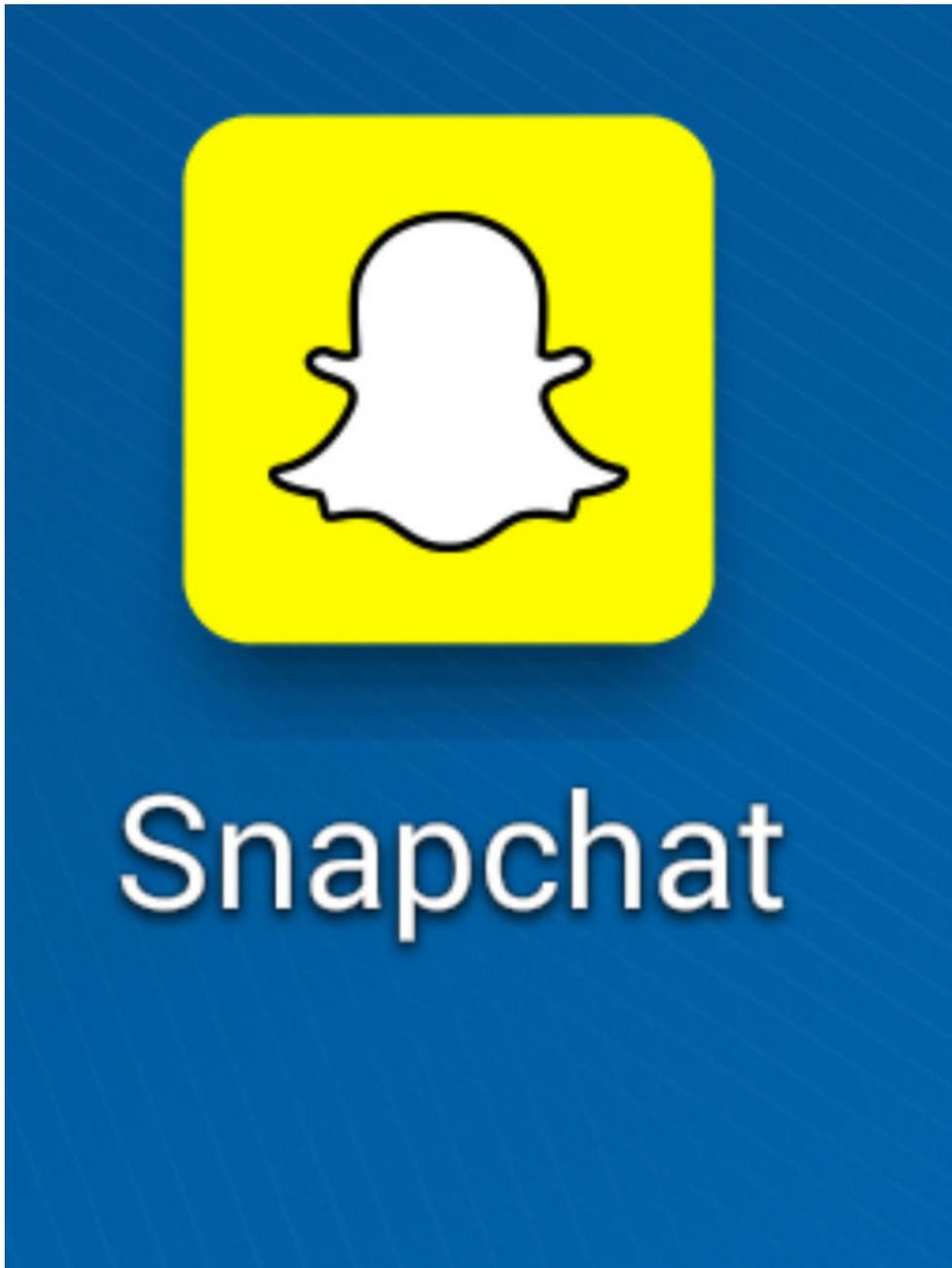
[by Gravity](#).

OK, so you've undoubtedly heard of Snapchat, an app that allows you to send a photo or video from your phone and determine how long the person on the other end can see the image until it self-destructs. But what you probably didn't know is that a lot of images from Snapchat are regularly posted to revenge porn sites, called "snap porn."

Snapchat [may not](#) be the #1 app used for sexting but that's not to say it isn't the [principal appeal](#) of the app for many: Users think their snaps will disappear and they are wrong. It's actually pretty easy to recover a Snap, take a screenshot of it and share it with others -- and by others, we mean porn sites. No parent wants to find a photo of their teen daughter or son on sites like [snapperparty](#) or [sexting forum](#).

Not for nothing, Snapchat last year published a "[Snapchat Safety Center](#)" reminding kids that nude pictures were not allowed. "Don't use Snapchat for any illegal shenanigans and if you're under 18 or are Snapping with someone who might be: Keep your clothes on!" [the company wrote](#).

The reality is, Snapchat is likely on your kid's phone. The best control you have (besides taking the phone away) is to just have a frank heart-to-heart about how there is no such thing as texts or photos that disappear and this is some down-and-dirty stuff that can come back to haunt them.



PETER BYRNE/PA ARCHIVE

5. Burn Note.

Like Snapchat, [Burn Note is a messaging app](#) that erases messages after a set period of time. Unlike Snapchat, this one is for text messages only, not photos or videos. Burn Note's display system shows just one word at a time, adding a sense of secrecy to the messages. Again, by promising a complete delete, kids could feel more comfortable revealing more than what they would do otherwise. And again, capturing a screenshot so that the message can be shared and lives forever, may be the app's Achilles' heel.

Even if your kid doesn't have the app and has no interest in reading super secret messages, she could unwittingly get involved: The app sends a Burn Note alert that she has a message waiting. Curiosity can kill the cat and an app like this could encourage cyberbullying when kids feel they can get away with things because there will be no record of it.



BURN NOTE

6. Line.

This is a real up-and-coming app, says online safety expert Lewis. It's an all-in-one mobile hub for chatting, sharing photos and videos; free texting and video calls too. But the devil is in the details. Things can get dicey with the hidden chat feature; users can decide how long their messages can last (two seconds or a week). But the biggest shock may come to your credit card: Your kid can rack up some hefty in-app charges on Line as well. While the app says that minors need their parents' permission to use it, there is no monitoring to ensure this takes place.

Bottom line: If your kid doesn't have a credit card number, you are controlling access to his in-app purchases.

7. Omegle.

Omegle provides users with a chance to converse online with random strangers. Is there anything that strikes fear into a parent's heart faster than that sentence?

We turn to our friends at [Common Sense Media](#) for this review: "Parents need to know that *Omegle* is an anonymous chat client with which users discuss anything they'd like. This can easily result in conversations that are filled with explicit sexual content, lewd language, and references to drugs, alcohol, and violence. Many users ask for personal data upfront, including location, age, and gender [ASL], something kids might supply (not realizing they don't have to). Adults wishing to

chat anonymously may find use in this app, but kids should be kept far away."

'Nuff said. And it took us awhile to find a photo with language that was publishable.



Talk to strangers!

Connecting to server...

Looking for someone you can chat with. Hang on.

You're now chatting with a random stranger. Say hi!

You: hi!

Stranger: asl

You: no!!!

Your conversational partner has disconnected.

[Start a new conversation](#) or [send us feedback](#).

[HELLABELLA/FLICKR](#)

8. Tinder.

Tinder is a popular app used for hooking-up and dating that allows users to "rate" profiles and locate hookups via GPS tracking. It is too easy for adults and minors to find one another. And the rating system can be used for cyber-bullying; a group of kids can target another kid and intentionally make his/her rating go down.

9. Blendr.

Blendr's 300 million users meet new people through GPS location services. You can message, exchange photos and videos, and rate the "hotness" of other users (encouraging your kid to engage in superficial values at best). But since there are no authentication requirements, sexual predators can contact minors and minors can hook up with adults -- and of course there is the sexting, [notes](#) [ForEveryMom.com](#).

10. KiK Messenger.

[KiK](#) is an instant messaging app that lets users exchange videos, photos and sketches. Users can also create gifs. All well and good so far. Unfortunately, the term "sext buddy" has been replaced with "KiK buddy." Sex researcher [Megan Maas](#), wrote on [ForEveryMom.com](#) that kids are using Reddit and other forums to place classified ads for sex by giving out their KiK usernames. KiK does not offer any parental controls and there is no way of authenticating users, thus making it easy for sexual predators to use the app to interact with minors.



[ROSS LAROCCO/FLICKR](#)

11. Yik Yak.

Yik Yak is the "[Twitter meets Reddit](#)" app. It allows users to post text-only "Yaks" of up to 200 characters that can be viewed by the 500 Yakkers who are closest to the person who wrote the Yak, as determined by GPS tracking. The issue is that these other users are regularly exposed to a barage of sexually explicit content,

profanity and even personal attacks-- anonymously, of course. It's also the app du jour for sending a bomb threat to your school. Yes, that has happened.

[Elizabeth Long](#), an Atlanta teenager who was encouraged on Yik Yak to try harder to kill herself after her attempted suicide failed, led a [Change.org drive to shut the app down](#). She wrote, "With the shield of anonymity, users [of Yik Yak] have zero accountability for their posts, and can openly spread rumors, call classmates hurtful names, send threats, or even tell someone to kill themselves -- and all of these things are happening."

12. Ask.fm.

This is one of the most popular social networking sites that is almost exclusively used by kids. It is a Q&A site where users can ask other users questions anonymously. The problem is that kids sometimes target one person and the questions get nasty. It is cyberbullying with no chance of ever getting caught. Ask.fm had been associated with [nine documented cases of suicide](#) in the U.S. and the U.K. through 2012. In 2014, its [new owners](#) pledged to crack down on bullying or said they would shut down the site.

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