



What parents need to know about

TikTok

BEING INFLUENCED

One third of children aged 6-17 consider 'social stars' to be among their top role models. There are many creators on TikTok, showcasing their 'talents, skills and knowledge', from singing to dancing to stunts and comedy skits, which receive thousands of likes and comments from around the world, quickly turning people into internet stars. There is the danger that children may develop unrealistic expectations of how they should look and behave in order to become the next 'star'. They may have unrealistic expectations and low self-esteem or become swayed by certain opinions.

INAPPROPRIATE SONG LYRICS

Many users lip-sync to their favourite songs and produce their own music videos. Some of the music choices contain explicit lyrics or sexual themes. So not only can children be exposed to potentially inappropriate content but they can also be seen miming or singing these lyrics.

CONCERNING CONTENT

Some of the outfits and dance moves in videos can be overtly sexual and provocative. There have also been reports of some users sharing concerning content, such as videos that promote anorexia, porn, self-harm and violence.

DANGEROUS TRENDS & CHALLENGES

On TikTok, there are always 'trending challenges' and hashtags that users can copy or build upon, and sometimes, these challenges can pose risks to young people.

STRANGERS CAN FOLLOW YOUR CHILDREN

If your child's profile is open, strangers can use the app to comment on your child's videos. While this isn't always sinister, it gives potential predators the ability to contact your child through the platform.

IN-APP PURCHASES

Of course, as with many apps, there's a paid element to TikTok. Users can buy virtual coins to be exchanged for virtual gifts - for example, if they like a specific video, your child can use coins to purchase emojis to show approval. These can be expensive and easily purchased - there is the option to buy 10,000 coins for £97.99 with a one-click buy button.

ANYONE CAN SEE YOUR CHILD'S CREATIONS

TikTok encourages users to 'share their passion and creative expression through their videos' and while something may seem fun at the time, videos can get in the wrong hands and cause embarrassment in the future. If posted publicly, anyone in the world can see your child's homemade music video and potentially cause bullying within personal friendship groups or even online.

National Online Safety

Top Tips for Parents

TALK ABOUT THE PITFALLS OF OVERSHARING

Encourage your kids to always think before they do, say, like or share anything online, explaining that their 'digital footprint' can shape their online reputation and the way other people see them. Something they may find funny or entertaining now may impact them in the future. Talk to them about how to deal with peer pressure and how doing things they think will impress others could affect them.

HANDLING CRITICISM

It's fantastic to see your child being creative and confident and bonding with people with similar interests, but it's important to be aware that not everyone will be supportive. Comments can be negative or even cruel. Make sure your child knows how to comment respectfully and handle feedback. In the app's Privacy and Safety settings, you can decide who can react to their videos, who can comment, and who can send them private chat messages. Encourage them to use these settings so only their friends can interact with their posts.

SIGNING UP WITH THE CORRECT AGE

When signing up to TikTok, you are prompted to input your birth date. If your child inputs their age as 'under 13', the app will not allow them to sign up and will be locked for 24 hours. The app is intended for users aged 13+, so explain that the reason for this is to protect them from online dangers. It is actually possible to watch TikTok videos without even creating an account, so it's important to check if your underage child has downloaded the app to their devices.

USE THE 'DIGITAL WELLBEING' SETTING

If you're concerned about the amount of time your child is spending on TikTok, in the app's settings, you can switch on a feature called Digital Wellbeing. This includes 'Screen Management' to limit the amount of time your child spends on the app.

SET THE ACCOUNT TO PRIVATE

This means that only people who you and your child approve of can see their creations. To make an account private, tap the

REPORT INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

If you or your child see something on TikTok that appears to be inappropriate, they can report content in different ways within the app. They can report an account, video, comment or chat conversation by simply tapping 'Report'. In the app's 'Digital Wellbeing' feature, there is also an 'Enhanced Restricted Mode', which limits the appearance of videos that may not be appropriate for all audiences.

AVOID IDENTIFIABLE OBJECTS

To ensure that there's no way of anyone tracking your child's location or identity, make it clear to them that they should never film a video in their school uniform or near a landmark that gives away where they live.

DISCUSS IN-APP PURCHASES

To lower the risk of your child making accidental in-app purchases, teach them exactly what in-app purchases are and the risks of making them without permission. Tell them that they are not essential to enjoy the app and that if they want to make a purchase, they should always ask you beforehand. In