

Is my child old enough?



Get the answers to the questions you're asking about Kik



Kik is a messaging app for smart devices such as smartphones, ipod touches and tablets. Once the app is downloaded the user can send texts, 'stickers', pictures, surveys and videos to other Kik users free of charge (other than normal data costs) – which is one of the reasons it is popular with kids. Kik states that users must be 17 years or older.

Kik users have a User Name to identify them; they don't use their phone number. Some users share their User Names with each other on other platforms like Instagram to continue the chat privately.

Are there risks for my child?

Kik allows children to send messages to other users as they would with SMS. The main difference is that you might not know who they are messaging and in some cases they may not know who is messaging them. Kik also allows you to send messages and pictures to more than one user at a time.

What should my child do to protect themselves?

Ideally children should only message friends they know offline. If they are going to message strangers or 'friends of friends' they should keep their information including their phone number private. In the 'privacy' settings of Kik users can block people. Under the 'notifications' setting, users can choose whether to turn the 'Ignore new people' on – the default is set to off.

Is there sexual and violent content on Kik?

The type of content your child will receive will depend on who they are sharing messages with. If they only message people they know the risk of being sent inappropriate content is the same as with normal messaging.

If they seek out anonymous users, they may be subject to inappropriate content. Remember the Kik developers recommend use by those 17 years and over.

If my child is quite vulnerable should I stop them using Kik?

You know your child better than anyone else. If you are concerned about them you should keep a close watch on all their on and offline activities. If you feel they are in contact with anonymous users talk to them about your concerns.

How do I talk to my child about my concerns?

Be honest with them. Express your love and concern about what might happen. Ask if they have experienced bullying or sexual advances. Banning seldom works and children will find other ways to get online and may stop talking to you about issues to avoid getting in trouble. Keep the communication open. If they won't talk to you about things, recruit a trusted family friend or family member to keep the communication going.

When should I be worried about my child?

If your child's behaviour changes at home and/or school you should talk to them. Examples of changed behaviour could include disinterest in things they used to like, seeming very unhappy and/or their sleep and eating is being impacted. Seek professional advice if necessary from a school counsellor, your GP or a psychologist. If your child has particular vulnerabilities, be vigilant about their contacts offline and online. Help them join groups out of school where they can find friends and support. Talk to the school and make sure they are supported.

Kids Helpline provides free online and phone counselling for children and young people.
Visit www.kidshelpline.com.au or call 1800 55 1800.



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