Tips on How to Stay Safe using TikTok

TikTok is a social media app where people can create and share short funny and creative videos up to 10 minutes long. The app also allows in-app messages from one user to another. Users over 16 can live stream content while users over 18 can give and receive virtual gifts with one another.

TikTok is available on the App Store and on Google Play for users as young as 13 year olds. In order to download the app, you will need to provide your name, age and email address. Users also have the option to link it to their other social media accounts.

Who can see my videos on TikTok?

TikTok accounts are set to public by default which means anyone can see your content and follow you. You can set your account to private. This will allow you to approve or deny follower requests and ensure that only approved followers can view your videos and message you. To do this:

- Go to your Profile> three dots in the upper right corner> Privacy and Safety Settings> Privacy and Safety> Turn Private Account on

Note that your profile photo, username and bio will remain public even if your account is set to private.

Are there any safety concerns with TikTok?

- As TikTok accounts are automatically set to public, there have been cases of individuals posting suggestive and sexual comments on teenagers' videos. Additionally, there have been recorded instances of predators sending private messages to teenagers and children through the app. This content can lead to grooming and inappropriate sexual content being sent to children which can cause them emotional and psychological distress
- Using an app like TikTok regularly could result in young people comparing themselves with others online, cyberbullying and having decreased person to person interactions
- There are a number of viral challenge videos on TikTok. Although most are fun, some challenges can be dangerous. The Fire Challenge sees users douse a portion of their body with a flammable liquid, light it and record the effects. It is important to talk to your children about the effects of these challenges before they record a video
- People of all ages use TikTok to create videos. This could result in your child seeing videos of a sexual nature or videos featuring offensive language, alcohol or drugs

How do I stay safe using TikTok?

We recommend doing the following to safely use the app:

- **Change video privacy:** When your child uploads a video, ensure that they change their video privacy settings to restrict who can view the video.
  - To do this when uploading a video, select Who can watch this video> choose either Everyone, Only me, or Friends.
- **Make accounts private:** Before posting anything, your child's account should be changed to private to ensure that they can approve or deny followers and restrict their uploaded content and incoming messages to come from only their followers
- **Use Family Safety Mode:** You can assign accounts as 'Parent' or 'Teen' which gives you remote control over a child's TikTok account. To activate this, the adult(s) who want to use Family Safety Mode must create their own account, which they can then link to a teen's account. This allows you to set time limits, exclude inappropriate content and limit who messages your child.
  - To do this open TikTok on both phones> profile> settings> Digital Wellbeing> Family

Safety Mode> Pick whether the current phone belongs to the adult or the teen> You'll have to scan a QR code on one phone with the other to link the accounts> The adult now has access the parent password-protect security features for their child's account

- **Activate Restricted Mode:** This setting prevents inappropriate content from appearing for children. Note that the setting isn't perfect, and some inappropriate content may get through
  - To activate this, open your child's profile> Settings > Digital Wellbeing > Restricted Mode> Turn on Restricted Mode> Set and confirm a passcode
- **Set time restrictions:** TikTok allows you to limit how much time your child spends watching videos on the app each day
  - To do this this open the app on your child's phone> Profile> Settings> Digital Wellbeing> Screen Time Management> Press the red button to turn it on> Set and confirm a passcode> The time limit is now set to 60 minutes per day
- **Limit direct messages:** You can limit who messages your child's account. You also have the option to turn off direct messaging completely
  - To do this open the app on your child's phone> Profile> Settings> Privacy and safety> Who can send you messages> Choose from Everyone, Friends, or Off.

TikTok recommend that parents remain aware of what their children are posting onto the app and oversee their child's use of the app to help keep them safe.

How do I report online abuse on TikTok?

You can report online abuse within the app itself.

- **Report an account:** If you would like to report another user on TikTok you can go to the profile of the account you want to report> Settings icon> Report > follow the steps provided
- **Report a video:** If you see a video you believe does not meet the community guidelines you can report it by opening the video> Share video> Report > Follow the steps provided
- **Report comments:** If someone makes an inappropriate comment on your video you can report it by tapping on the comment you want to report> Report > Follow the steps provided
- **Report message:** If another user sends you an inappropriate private message you can report it by opening the conversation> Share conversation> Report > Follow the steps provided
- **Block an account:** By blocking another user they will not be able to view your videos or send you messages, comments or likes. To do this go to the profile of the account you want to block> Settings> Block> Follow the steps provided
- **Delete your account:** If you would like to delete the app and remove your account you can do this by opening your profile> "Me"> three dots in the top-right corner> "Manage my account"> "Delete account"

I want some more information about TikTok and staying safe online

If you want more information you can follow the below links:

- TikTok Community Guidelines: tiktok.com/community-guidelines
- Netsafe New Zealand have more information on how to stay safe using the app: netsafe.org.nz/tiktok
- If you experience bullying or abuse on TikTok you can report it to Netsafe: netsafe.org.nz/reportanincident
- If you are concerned about online grooming you make a report to the New Zealand Police: https://105.police.govt.nz
- Te Tari Taiwhenua, Department of Internal Affairs - Factsheet on 'Helping children stay safe when using smart devices': dia.govt.nz/Censorship-Downloadable-Resources