



The Cyber Safety Tech Mum

TikTok - Fact Sheet for Parents

What is TikTok?

TikTok – the app that has captured our Tweens and Teens hearts!

I bet if you have a tween or teen you have not only heard about TikTok, you have probably either been asked to watch some videos with them or even participate in making a video!

If you are thinking that this app sounds a lot like Musical.ly, then you would be right – TikTok was formerly known as Musical.ly.

So what is all the fuss about?

TikTok is a social media platform for sharing short music videos that are created by the users. Dancing, lip-syncing like Karaoke to a massive variety of songs to choose from as well as filters and effects to use.

You can even use the ‘dual’ or ‘duet’ function to create one video with two people in separate locations. Perfect for kids and their besties.

Age Ratings for TikTok

The App Store has an age rating of 12+. The Google Play store’s rating is ‘Teen.’

You may be interested to learn though, that in many other countries, the rating is 15+. I think that illustrates just how much thought should go into allowing your child to have an account.

As outlined in the App Store, here are the ratings for TikTok

- Infrequent/Mild Alcohol, Tobacco, or Drug Use or References
- Infrequent/Mild Profanity or Crude Humor
- Infrequent/Mild Mature/Suggestive Themes
- Infrequent/Mild Cartoon or Fantasy Violence
- Infrequent/Mild Sexual Content and Nudity



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TikTok Features

- Popular Songs
- Filters
- Video Editing features
- Duets
- Livestream

Even though a user must be 13 years old to create an account, in 2019 due to an a court settlement, TikTok created a separate section of the app for users under 13. Users can only view curated videos. They are unable to comment, search or post their own data and their personal details are not collected. Of course, this special under 13's section only works if the account has been created in truth – ie. The child has not used a false, older birthdate to create their account.

For kids aged 13-15, an account is automatically private at the time of creation. Only friends can comments on videos and they are unable to create duets. *This feature is only available in the US.

Users that are 16 years older and over can livestream and direct message. Users over 18 can buy, send or receive virtual gifts.

To create a TikTok account the user will need a phone number, an email address or a third-party account like Instagram or Facebook. Once they are logged in they can search for popular TikTok creators, search using categories and hashtag to find videos to watch.

They can also use their phone contacts or social media followers to find friends to already use TikTok. There are lots of users who just have a TikTok account to watch videos. Others like to have fun with features creating videos but not posting them.

TikTok Dangers you need to know about

Sounds like a fairly harmless, fun kind of app, right?

First up, when an account is created, it is automatically defaulted to be a public account. This means that anyone can see your child's videos, message them directly and see their location. Other users can like and comment on videos.

Not only could your children potentially be listening to music with inappropriate lyrics, suggestive dance and partial nudity, they could be contacted by an online predator pretending to be a 'friend of a friend.'



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They can become obsessed with the number of likes they get for the videos they have posted (or the lack of likes) and cyberbullied by way of nasty comments.

They can find swearing in song lyrics and 'sexy stuff' in dance movements.

And then there are the **"Challenges"**.

Challenges are where a number of TikTok users will create a video of themselves doing the same thing. Most recently, we have seen a challenge where 3 people stand together and the two people on the outside trip the middle person. This has led to head injuries such as concussion and stitches. #kullbreakerchallenge

You and I know that this is a really dangerous thing to do. That's because we can assess the risk. Unfortunately, our younger kids (and sometimes older ones) only see some fun.

Sadly, some challenges have even resulted in death.

TikTok Privacy Settings

I'm going to start by saying that children under 13 definitely should not have a TikTok account unless you live in the US, have an account setup up with their correct birthdate and they only use the app under your supervision. *The under 13 separate section of TikTok is only available in US.

If (after reading all of the above) you decide to allow your 13 year old to have an account than I recommend that you still view/**supervise them whilst they use the app**.

One way to manage this is to put the app on your phone, not their device and limit the amount of time they use it.

Ensure that you speak with your child about things to consider when creating TikToks. No wearing school or sporting uniforms, no indicators of their location, no family pictures in the background and so on.

You can create as many TikToks as you like and keep them as drafts. No one can see your drafts but when you post a TikTok then others can see it depending on the privacy settings.

You can delete TikToks after they have been posted but if you have not turned 'Who Can Download My Video' to no-one, then it is possible that others have already downloaded the video and can then share it.

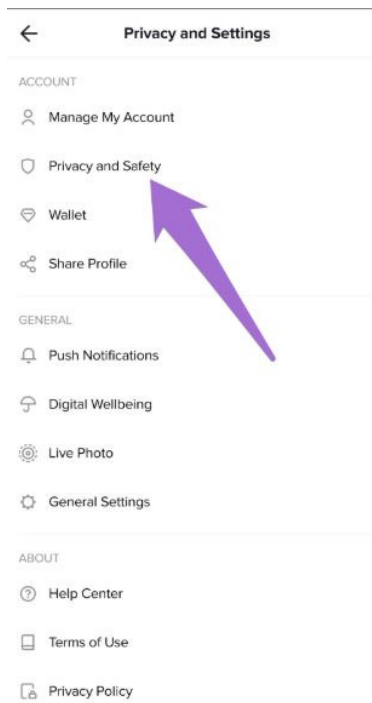


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My other recommendation is to set the **Privacy Settings** in their account.

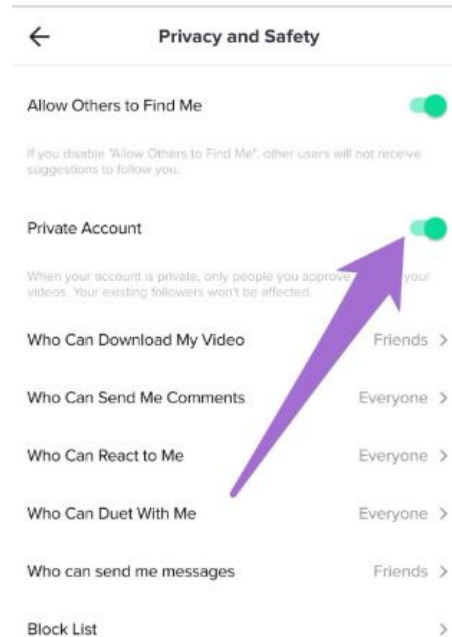
Go into TikTok, select ME (bottom right) and then tap the 3 dots in the top right. Tap Privacy and Safety.

Then move through the options making the account Private and changing the Everyone options to Friends or No one.





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Digital Wellbeing Settings

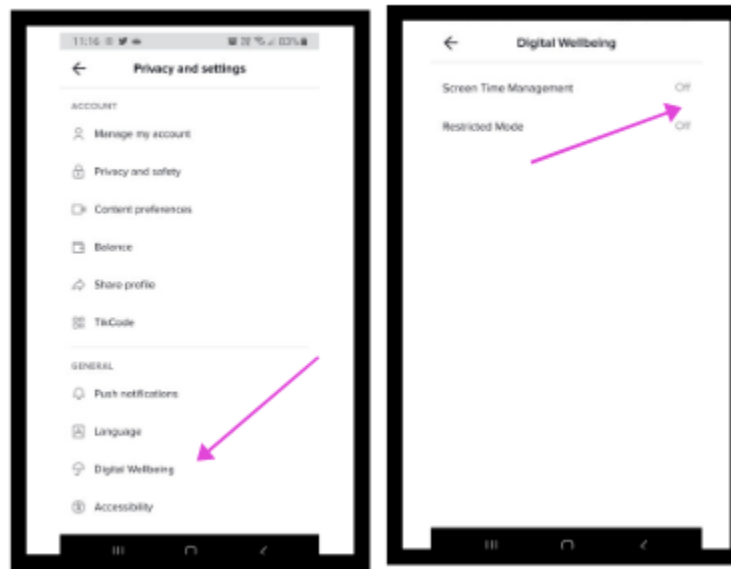
You can manage **Screen Time** (a time limit for how long your child can use TikTok) and turn on **Restrictions** to filter out some videos identified by TikTok as inappropriate. These settings are 'locked' when you use a passcode or, you (the parent/guardian) can download TikTok, create your own account and use the Family Pairing Feature to manage your child's settings using your phone.

Select the 3 dots in the top right again and select **Digital Wellbeing** to set screen time limits – a maximum of two hours on the app per day or minimum of 40 minutes.

Restricted Mode will block mature content however, there is still a high chance your child will come across material that is not appropriate for their age.



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To use **Family Pairing** – on both phones, tap the three dots next to the user profile and then tap Family Pairing to sync your account (the parent account) to your child’s account using the AR code.

Of course, if your child deletes the TikTok app, re-downloads it and creates a new TikTok account without your knowledge then these settings are no longer effective.

What can parents do?

- Make sure that you understand the features in TikTok
- Make sure that your child meets the terms & conditions to create an account
- Talk to your child about creating and posting videos – what’s on the internet stays on the internet.
- Use the privacy settings, screen time setting and restriction.
- Talk to your child about talking to strangers online.
- Ask your child to teach you how to use the app. This creates conversation around the dangers.