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## 11 Sites and Apps Kids Are Heading to After Facebook



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Categories: [Advice for Parents](#), [Common Sense Resources](#)

Remember [MySpace](#)? Not so long ago, practically every teen in the world was on it — and then [many left for Facebook](#). Now, as [Facebook's popularity among teens is starting to wane](#), you might be wondering what the new "it" social network is. But the days of a one-stop shop for all social networking needs are over. Instead, teens are dividing their attention between an array of apps and tools that let them write, share, video chat, and even shop for the latest trends.

You don't need to know the ins and outs of every app and site that's "hot" right now (and frankly, if you did, they wouldn't be trendy anymore). But knowing the basics -- what they are, why they're popular, and the problems that can crop up when they're not used responsibly -- can make the difference between a positive and negative experience for your students.



## 11 Social Media Tools Parents and Teachers Need to Know About Now

[Twitter](#)

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[Wanelo](#)

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[Ask.fm](#)

1. **Twitter** is a microblogging site that allows users to post brief, 140-character messages -- called "tweets" -- and follow other users' activities.

### Why it's popular

Teens like using it to share quick tidbits about their lives with friends. It's also great for keeping up with what's going on in the world -- breaking news, celebrity gossip, etc.

### What parents and teachers need to know

- **Public tweets are the norm for teens.** Though you can choose to keep your tweets private, most teens report having public accounts ([Pew Internet & American Life Project](#), 2013). Talk to kids about what they post and how a post can spread far and fast.
- **Updates appear immediately.** Even though you can remove tweets, your followers can still read what you wrote until it's gone. This can get kids in trouble if they say something in the heat of the moment.
- **It's a promotional tool for celebs.** Twitter reels teens in with behind-the-scenes access to celebrities' lives, adding a whole new dimension to celebrity worship. You may want to point out how much marketing strategy goes into the tweets of those they admire.

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2. **Instagram** is a platform that lets users snap, edit, and share photos and 15-second videos -- either publicly or with a network of followers.

### Why it's popular

Instagram unites the most popular features of social media sites: sharing, seeing, and commenting on photos. Instagram also lets you apply fun filters and effects to your photos, making them look high quality and artistic.

### What parents need to know

- **Teens are on the lookout for "Likes."** Similar to Facebook, teens may measure the "success" of their photos -- even their self-worth -- by the number of likes or comments they receive. Posting a photo or video can be problematic if teens post it to validate their popularity.
- **Public photos are the default.** Photos and videos shared on Instagram are public and may have location information unless privacy settings are adjusted. Hashtags can make photos even more visible to communities beyond a teen's followers.
- **Mature content can slip in.** The terms of service specify that users should be at least 13 years old and shouldn't post partially nude or sexually suggestive photos -- but they don't address violence, swear words, or drugs.

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3. **Snapchat** is a messaging app that lets users put a time limit on the pictures and videos they send before they disappear.

### Why it's popular

Snapchat's creators intended the app's fleeting images to be a way for teens to share fun, light moments without the

risk of having them go public. And that's what most teens use it for: sending goofy or embarrassing photos to one another. Snapchats also seem to send and load much "faster" than email or text.

### What parents need to know

- Many schools have yet to block it, which is one reason why teens like it so much ([Pew Internet & American Life Project](#), 2013).
- It's a myth that Snapchats go away forever. Data is data: Whenever an image is sent, it never truly goes away. (For example, the person on the receiving end can take a screenshot of the image before it disappears.) Snapchats can even be recovered.
- It can make sexting seem OK. The seemingly risk-free messaging might encourage users to share pictures containing inappropriate content.

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4. [Tumblr](#) is like a cross between a blog and Twitter: It's a streaming scrapbook of text, photos, and/or videos and audio clips. Users create and follow short blogs, or "tumblelogs," that can be seen by anyone online (if made public).

### Why it's popular

Many teens have tumblrs for personal use -- sharing photos, videos, musings, and things they find funny with their friends. Tumblelogs with funny memes and gifs often go viral online, as well (case in point: "[Texts from Hillary](#)").

### What parents and teachers need to know

- Porn is easy to find. This online hangout is hip and creative but sometimes raunchy. Pornographic images and videos, depictions of violence, self-harm, drug use, and offensive language are easily searchable.
- Privacy can be guarded, but only through an awkward workaround. The first profile a member creates is public and viewable by anyone on the Internet. Members who desire full privacy have to create a second profile, which they're able to password protect.
- Posts are often copied and shared. Reblogging on Tumblr is similar to re-tweeting: A post that's reblogged from one tumblelog then appears on another. Many teens like -- and in fact, want -- their posts reblogged.

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5. [Google+](#) is Google's social network, which is now open to teens. It has attempted to improve on [Facebook's friend concept](#) -- using "circles" that give users more control about what they share with whom.

### Why it's popular

Teens aren't wild about Google+ yet. But many feel that their parents are more accepting of it because they associate it with schoolwork. One popular aspect of Google+ is the addition of real-time [video chats in Hangouts](#) (virtual gatherings with approved friends).

### What parents and teachers need to know

- Teens can limit who sees certain posts by using "circles." Friends, acquaintances, and the general public can all be placed in different circles. If you're friends with your kid on Google+, know that you may be in a

different "circle" than their friends (and therefore seeing different information).

- **Google+ takes teens' safety seriously.** Google+ created age-appropriate privacy default settings for any users whose registration information shows them to be teens. It also automatically reminds them about who may be seeing their posts (if they're posting on public or extended circles).
- **Data tracking and targeting are concerns.** Google+ activity (what you post and search for and who you connect with) is shared across Google services including Gmail and YouTube. This information is used for targeting ads to the user. Users can't opt out of this type of sharing across Google services.

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6. **Vine** is a social media app that lets users post and watch looping six-second video clips. This Twitter-owned service has developed a unique community of people who post videos that are often creative and funny -- and sometimes thought-provoking.

#### **Why it's popular**

Videos run the gamut from stop-motion clips of puzzles doing and undoing themselves to six-second skits showing how a teen wakes up on a school day vs. a day during summer. Teens usually use Vine to create and share silly videos of themselves and/or their friends and family.

#### **What parents and teachers need to know**

- **It's full of inappropriate videos.** In three minutes of random searching, we came across a clip full of full-frontal male nudity, a woman in a fishnet shirt with her breasts exposed, and people blowing marijuana smoke into each other's mouths. There's a lot of funny, clever expression on Vine, but much of it isn't appropriate for kids.
- **There are significant privacy concerns.** The videos you post, the accounts you follow, and the comments you make on videos are all public by default. But you *can* adjust your settings to protect your posts; only followers will see them, and you have to approve new followers.
- **Parents or teachers can be star performers (without knowing).** If your students film you being goofy or silly, you may want to talk about whether they plan to share it.

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7. **Wanelo** (Want, Need, Love) combines shopping, fashion blogging, and social networking all in one. It's very popular among teens, allowing them to discover, share, and buy products they like.

#### **Why it's popular**

Teens keep up with the latest styles by browsing Wanelo's "trending" feed, which aggregates the items that are most popular across the site. They can also cultivate their own style through the "My Feed" function, which displays content from the users, brands, and stores they follow.

#### **What parents and teachers need to know**

- **If you like it, you can buy it.** Users can purchase almost anything they see on Wanelo by clicking through to products' original sites. As one user tweeted, "#Wanelo you can have all of my money! #obsessed."
- **Brand names are prominent.** Upon registering, users are required to follow at least three "stores" (for example, Forever21 or Marc Jacobs) and at least three "people" (many are other everyday people in Wanelo's network,

but there are also publications like *Seventeen* magazine).

- **There's plenty of mature clothing.** You may not love what kids find and put on their wish lists.

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**8. Kik Messenger** is an app-based alternative to standard texting that kids use for social networking. It's free to use but has lots of ads.

#### Why it's popular

It's fast and has no message limits, character limits, or fees if you just use the basic features, making it decidedly more fun in many ways than SMS texting.

#### What parents and teachers need to know

- **It's too easy to "copy all."** Kik's ability to link to other Kik-enabled apps within itself is a way to drive "app adoption" (purchases) from its users for developers. The app also encourages new registrants to invite everyone in their phone's address book to join Kik, since users can only message those who also have the app.
- **There's some stranger danger.** An app named *OinkText*, linked to Kik, allows communication with strangers who share their Kik usernames to find people to chat with. There's also a Kik community blog where users can submit photos of themselves and screenshots of messages (sometimes displaying users' full names) to contests.
- **It uses real names.** Teens' usernames identify them on Kik, so they shouldn't use their full real name as their username.

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**9. Oovoo** is a free video, voice, and messaging app. Users can have group chats with up to 12 people for free. (The premium version removes ads from the service.)

#### Why it's popular

Teens mostly use Oovoo to hang out with friends. Many log on after school and keep it up while doing homework. Oovoo can be great for group studying and it makes it easy for kids to receive "face to face" homework help from classmates.

#### What parents and teachers need to know

- **You can only chat with approved friends.** Users can only communicate with those on their approved "contact list," which can help ease safety concerns.
- **It can be distracting.** Because the service makes video chatting so affordable and accessible, it can also be addicting. [A conversation with kids about multitasking](#) may be in order.
- **Kids still prefer in-person communication.** Though apps like Oovoo make it easier than ever to video chat with friends, [research shows that kids still value face-to-face conversations over online ones](#) -- especially when it comes to sensitive topics. Still, they sometimes find it hard to log off when all of their friends are on.

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**10. Pheed** is best described as a hybrid of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube -- except that you can require others to pay a premium to access your personal channel.

#### Why it's popular

Pheed's multimedia "all in one" offering seems to be capturing teens' attention the most. Some teens also like the fact that they have more control over ownership and copyright, since Pheed allows its users to watermark their original content.

#### What parents and teachers need to know

- **It's hot!** According to Forbes, Pheed has swiftly become the No. 1 free social app in the App Store, thanks in large part to teens. Time will tell whether artists and celebrities will jump on the bandwagon and start using Pheed to promote themselves and charge their fans to view what they post.
- **Users can make money.** Users can charge others a subscription fee to access their content, ranging from \$1.99 to \$34.99 per view, or the same price range per month. Note that a cut of all proceeds goes to Pheed.
- **Privacy updates are in the works.** Kids should be aware that their posts are currently public by default and therefore searchable online.

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**11. Ask.fm** is a social site that lets kids ask questions and answer those posted by other users -- sometimes anonymously.

#### Why it's popular

Although there are some friendly interactions on Ask.fm -- Q&As about favorite foods or crushes, for example -- there are lots of mean comments and some creepy sexual posts. This iffy content is part of the site's appeal for teens.

#### What parents and teachers need to know

- **Bullying is a major concern.** [The British news website MailOnline reported that the site has been linked to the suicides of several teens.](#) [Talk to your teens about cyberbullying](#) and how anonymity can encourage mean behavior.
- **Anonymous answers are optional.** Users can decide whether to allow anonymous posts and can remove their answers from streaming to decrease their profile's visibility. If teens do use the site, they'd be best turning off anonymous answers and keeping themselves out of the live stream.
- **Q&As can appear on Facebook.** Syncing with Facebook means that a much wider audience can see those Q&As.

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The bottom line for all of these tools? If teens are using them respectfully, appropriately, and with a little guidance, they should be fine. Encourage parents to take inventory of their kid's apps and review the best practices.

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## Trend Alert: 6 Messaging Apps That Let Teens Share (Iffy) Secrets

Capturing and posting casual moments seems consequence-free. But, of course, it's not.

Kelly Schryver March 26, 2014 Categories: Social networking for kids

Senior Content Specialist

You probably never thought you'd see the day when Facebook wasn't the center of teens' universe. But keeping up with Facebook friends through ad-filled newsfeeds and lengthy profiles, especially given the fact that everyone knows your name, is starting to feel tiresome to many teens.

Facebook is still a go-to place for many things, such as wishing someone a happy birthday or stalking a crush. However, newer social apps make it easier, faster, and more fun to capture and share fleeting moments -- sometimes anonymously. These temporary and anonymous-messaging apps provide an environment that feels more appropriate to the random, silly, saucy, and experimental sides of the average teenager.

Perhaps most importantly to teens, these apps can feel consequence-free. But of course they're not. Data never really disappears, and anonymity carries big risks. If you don't recognize the apps your kid is currently obsessing over, here's what you need to know:

### Temporary Apps

Temporary apps allow people to send messages and images that self-destruct after a set window of time. Teens can use these apps to more carefully manage their digital trails -- so long as they don't share things they wouldn't normally send otherwise.

**Snapchat:** A messaging app that lets users put a time limit on the pictures and videos they send before they disappear.

Why it's popular:

Snapchat's creators intended the app's fleeting images to be a way for teens to share fun, light moments without the risk of having them go public. And that's what most teens use it for: sending goofy or embarrassing photos to one another. Teens may pay more attention to Snapchats, knowing they'll disappear in a matter of seconds.

What parents need to know:

Many schools have yet to block it, which is one reason why teens like it so much.

It's a myth that Snapchats go away forever. Data is data: Whenever anything is sent online, it never truly goes away. (For example, the person on the receiving end can take a screenshot of the image before it disappears.) Snapchats can even be recovered.

It can make sexting seem OK. The seemingly risk-free messaging might encourage users to share pictures containing inappropriate content.

**Burn Note:** A texting-only app that erases messages after a set period of time. Messages are stored until first view and then deleted.

Why it's popular:

Unlike other temporary apps, Burn Note's unique display system makes it more difficult (but not impossible) to copy or take a screenshot of sent messages. Though sending sensitive information via SMS (such as a PIN) isn't the smartest idea, Burn Note makes it safer.

What parents need to know:

Deleted texts cannot be recovered. Burn Note claims to completely expunge deleted messages from its server. Unread messages self-destruct after 30 days.

Burn Note doesn't share personal information with third parties for analytics or advertising purposes.

Recipients don't need to have Burn Note. You can send a message to an email address or a phone contact. The note will show up as a link.

## **Anonymous Apps**

On the positive side, going incognito online helps us express ourselves in ways we might not be able to in the real world. On the negative side, anonymous apps are often riddled with inappropriate content. They also can encourage bullying behavior.

**Whisper:** A social "confessional" app that allows users to post whatever's on their mind. Users type a confession, add a background image, and share it with the Whisper community. It's intended for users age 17 and older.

Why it's popular:

There's something to be said about sharing one's innermost thoughts without any repercussions, especially if they're not socially acceptable. It's cathartic. For those who simply choose to browse, Whisper can be amusing, heartbreakingly, troubling, and comforting all at once.

What parents need to know:

The scenarios can be hard to stomach. Reading that a teacher has fantasies about his or her students or that someone's father is going to be released from jail and start a custody battle can weigh heavily on teens. Some confessions, however, are totally benign (and funny!).

There is plenty of inappropriate content. All too often, whispers are sexual. Some use Whisper to solicit others for sex (using the app's geo-location "nearby" feature). Strong language and drug and alcohol references also are prevalent (for example, "My wife and I were both high on our wedding day" and "I dropped acid with my mom once").

Whispers can go public. Entertainment news sites, such as BuzzFeed, are beginning to feature Whispers. The problem? When secrets -- including the embellished or fake ones -- become news, we may begin to find ourselves in tabloid territory.

**Secret - Speak Freely:** A social-media app that's designed to let people voice whatever's on their minds anonymously.

Why it's popular:

Similar to Whisper, Secret lets people vent, confess, and share freely -- without anyone knowing who said what.

What parents need to know:

It tries to prevent users from defaming others. When Secret first launched in Silicon Valley, its adult users started using it to smack-talk their coworkers and bosses. Secret now detects when you mention someone by name (most of the time) and sends you a warning about it.

It requires some private information. Despite the fact that it promises user anonymity, it requires your email address and phone number.

Kids may encounter strong language. We came across "hell" and "f--k" almost immediately.

**Ask.fm:** A social site that lets kids ask questions and answer those posted by other users -- sometimes anonymously.

Why it's popular:

Although there are some friendly interactions on Ask.fm -- Q&As about favorite foods or crushes, for example -- there are lots of mean comments and some creepy sexual posts. This iffy content is part of the site's appeal for teens.

What parents need to know:

Bullying is a major concern. The British news website MailOnline reported that the site has been linked to the suicides of several teens. Talk to your teens about cyberbullying and how anonymity can encourage mean behavior.

Anonymous answers are optional. Users can decide whether to allow anonymous posts and can remove their answers from streaming to decrease their profile's visibility. If teens do use the site, they'd be best turning off anonymous answers and keeping themselves out of the live stream. Q&As can appear on Facebook. Syncing with Facebook means that a much wider audience can see those Q&As' behavior.

**Omegle:** An anonymous chat client through which users discuss anything they'd like. Its conversations are filled with lewd language and references to sexual content, drugs and alcohol, and violence.

Why it's popular:

Online chat rooms have been around for ages, as have the iffy and inappropriate conversations that happen in them. Though there are many misconceptions about "online predators," it's true that risky online relationships -- though rare -- more frequently evolve in chat rooms when teens willingly seek out or engage in sexual conversation.

What parents need to know:

Users get paired up with strangers. That's the whole premise of the app. And there's no registration required.

This is NOT an app for kids and teens. Omegle is filled with people searching for sexual chat. Some prefer to do so live. Others offer links to porn Websites.

Language is a big issue. And since the chats are anonymous, they're often much more explicit than with someone who can be identified.

The best way to approach these apps with your kids? Talk to them about their online reputations -- not in terms of "getting caught" by teachers, college-admissions officers, or future employers, but as a matter of being the best person they can possibly be. Acknowledge that, chances are, they'll come across extreme, inappropriate, or hurtful content online...and that it's OK for them to ask you about it, especially if it upsets them. These kinds of conversations will be far from fleeting -- the benefits will last a lifetime.

## Three Additional Sites to be wary of

### Reddit

Reddit users submit links or text, which are voted up or down by other users. Content is ranked to determine the post's position on the front page. All the content is organized into categories known as "sub-reddits." This site is more popular with boys, who are using the app less as a social network than as a source of news and as a search engine. The forum-like interaction means your teen can "talk" to anyone.

### 4Chan

4chan is a simple forum platform. Anyone can post images on bulletin boards, and anyone can comment. Similar to Reddit, the boards are dedicated to a variety of topics, but here users do not need to create an account to participate in the community. Anonymity can create extremely hostile environments online, so if your teenager is using 4chan, you'll want to have conversations about how to deal with virtual aggression.

It can seem overwhelming to keep up with teens' online lives, but take some comfort in knowing that yours is probably not active in all of these networks. As sophisticated as the technology is, and as fast as it changes, communicating with teenagers still comes down to real life conversations. And maybe a little snooping around on their phones.

### Pinterest

Pinterest organizes users around interests. Users create boards, which are like digital bulletin boards where favorite content is "pinned." It's incredibly popular because of its ease of use, ability to "save" content to look at later, and highly visual layout. Danger? Once a gathering place for home cooks and interior design aficionados, Pinterest has attracted its share of porn. However, your teen probably won't find it unless he or she is looking.