

## Introduction

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*The Achieve and Learn Trust believes that nothing is more important than safeguarding the young people in our schools.*

This half term we will be responding to parent requests for more information on online safety and how to manage the risks of some of the most commonly used apps by young people.

This week we will be looking at the popular app TikTok—risks and what parents can do ensure their child is safe online.

## What is TikTok

TikTok is a video-sharing app where short clips are often set to music and shared with the TikTok community. Users can upload and share short videos of themselves lip-syncing to songs or acting out comedy sketches, and add special effects. They can gain followers ('fans') and browse other people's videos.

The age recommendation is 13 and above. However, you don't have to prove your age when creating an account, so younger children can still use it easily. It's most popular with under-16s. TikTok is free to download on Android and iOS devices (Apple phones and tablets). It carries ads and offers in-app purchases. It has about 150 million active users worldwide and is available in over 30 languages.



## What are the concerns?

On the surface, nothing. TikTok has a reputation for being unusually free of trolling and danger. But you may have seen news reports or heard concerns about some users harassing children for nude images and videos.

### AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

While TikTok's "Following" feed only displays videos from users someone follows, "For You" is a stream of clips based on their previously watched content. Most videos on a child's "For You" feed will therefore be light-hearted and amusing, but it could potentially surface something unsuitable. TikTok's guidelines prohibit the sharing of illegal or inappropriate content, but the sheer volume of uploads mean they aren't manually monitored and vetted.

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CENSORED

### DANGEROUS CHALLENGES

Due to TikTok's immense popularity, some young people have unfortunately been influenced by videos challenging them to perform harmful, criminal or even deadly acts. One extreme example was the 'blackout' trend, which encouraged users to hold their breath until they passed out from a lack of oxygen. It led to two families filing lawsuits against TikTok over the tragic deaths of their children.

### CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

With around 1.1 billion users globally, the potential for contact from strangers on TikTok is high – especially as accounts created by over-16s (or youngsters using a false date of birth) are set to public by default. This not only means that someone's profile is visible to everyone else on the app; it also lets their videos be suggested to others and enables anyone to comment on them or download them.

### IN-APP SPENDING

TikTok is free, but users have the option to buy TikTok coins, which can be used to purchase emojis in the app. These emojis are then sent as rewards (retaining their monetary value) to other users for videos they've created. Coin bundles range from £9.99 to an eye-watering £99; TikTok's policy is that they can't be bought by under-18s, but it's possible to bypass this with a fake birthdate.

### ADDICTIVE NATURE

Like all social networking platforms, TikTok can be addictive: figures show that young people are investing increasing amounts of time in it. In the UK, children with TikTok spend an average of 102 minutes per day on the app, versus 53 minutes on YouTube. This compulsive repeated use can interfere with their sleep patterns – leading to irritability – and distract them from other activities.

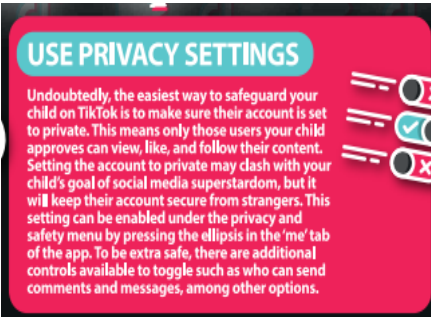
### TIKTOK NOW

Introduced in late 2022, the 'TikTok Now' feature lets users post a daily video or photo at the exact same time as their friends. Users receive a synchronised notification at a random time of day, giving them three minutes to take a video or real-time photo. This addition can not only be a distraction to young people but could lead to them inadvertently sharing private content such as their location.

## What should I look out for?

- ◆ User profiles which talk about 'trading' or swapping pictures/videos
- ◆ Use of emojis that are commonly considered to be sexually suggestive (such as the aubergine)
- ◆ Hashtags, such as #tradefortrade, which clearly suggest the user is looking to trade illicit content
- ◆ The lyrical content of some songs – parents have raised concerns that it's not always age-appropriate

# What Can Parents Do?



[Choosing between a private or public account | TikTok Help Center](#)

To set your TikTok account as private or public:

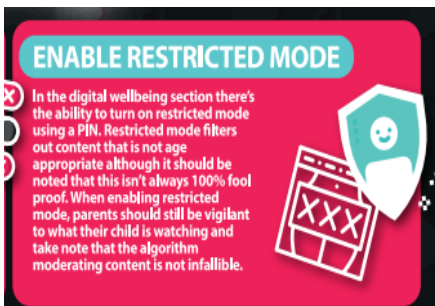
1. In the TikTok app, tap **Profile** at the bottom.
2. Tap the **Menu** button at the top, then select **Settings and privacy**.
3. Tap **Privacy**.
4. Turn **Private account** on or off.

[Blocking someone | TikTok Help Center](#)

1. In the TikTok app, go to the person's profile.
2. Tap the **Share** button at the top.
3. Tap **Block** to confirm.



[Restricted Mode | TikTok Help Center](#)



1. In the TikTok app, tap **Profile** at the bottom.
2. Tap the **Menu** button at the top, then select **Settings and privacy**.
3. Tap **Content preferences**.
4. Tap **Restricted Mode**.
5. Follow the steps in the app to set or enter a passcode, then turn Restricted Mode on or off. If this is your first time turning on Restricted Mode, you'll need to tap **Turn on** before you can set a passcode

[Family Pairing | TikTok Help Center](#)

Family Pairing on TikTok allows parents, guardians, and teens to customize their safety settings based on individual needs. A parent or guardian can link their TikTok account to their teen's account and set controls including;

**Daily screen time** Decide how long your teen can spend on TikTok each day.

**Screen time dashboard** Get a summary of your teen's time spent on TikTok. Learn more about [screen time on TikTok](#).

**Schedule time away** Set recurring times to limit your teen's access to TikTok:

**Mute push notifications** Decide when to mute your teen's push notifications. Learn more about how to [mute push notifications on TikTok](#).

**Managed topics** Review your teen's [content preferences](#) for their feeds.

**Filter keywords** Select keywords and their variations or hashtags to exclude from your teen's supported feeds on TikTok and manage the visibility of your keyword list.

**Restricted Mode** Restrict your teen's exposure to content that may not be appropriate or comfortable for them.

**Linked account activity** Get notifications about your teen's activity, such as if your accounts get unlinked, by turning on **Customized updates and more** push notifications.

**Search** Decide whether your teen can search for videos, hashtags, LIVE videos, and more on TikTok.

**Discoverability** Decide whether your teen's account is [private or public](#). With a private account, your teen can approve who can follow them and view their content.

**Interactions** View all blocked accounts, following and follower lists on your teen's TikTok profile.

**Suggest account to others** Decide whether your teen's account can be recommended to others. Learn more about [suggested accounts on TikTok](#).

**Direct messages** Restrict who can send messages to your teen or turn off direct messaging completely.

**Liked videos** Decide who can view your teen's liked videos.

**Comments** Decide who can comment on your teen's videos.

**How to set up Family Pairing** To link parent and teen accounts:

1. In the TikTok app, tap **Profile** at the bottom.
2. Tap the **Menu** button at the top, then select **Settings and privacy**.
3. Tap **Family Pairing**.
4. Tap **Continue**.
5. Tap **Parent** or **Teen**, then tap **Next**.
6. Follow the steps to link the accounts.

