

# e-Safety for Parents



Edition 5

## Apps and Apps

Following on from the last edition, there has been increasing concern (and reporting) in regards to apps that are available to (and advertised as appropriate for) younger children.

These apps are more interactive; they encourage talking to a real or a virtual person.

A few days ago a Headteacher friend from a local school contacted me with a concern

about an app called “Virtual Talk.” which is rated for years 4+ The app is advertised in the iTunes store as - “Virtual Talk is a AI (artificial intelligence) app that makes you chat with whomever you want.”

Whilst I am certain the developer of this app and others have the best intentions in mind, there are concerns that we all need to be aware of.

*Alan Mackenzie*

If you have an iTunes account, have a look at the ratings screen for the app Virtual Talk and see the comments that children themselves are making.

If you don't have an iTunes account, here's an example of one review of this app:

“OK, this is the worst thing ever, he swears (well at least he uses bad language), and writes inappropriate things and I am shocked that he writes things like this giving me attitude and asking personal questions such as “where do u live” “what is your age” and using horrid language towards me!”

This is just one example of many similar reviews of this app, but as I mentioned previously I'm sure the app developer has every good intention in mind, but the age rating of 4+ is

wholly inappropriate given some of the more mature content that the AI can come out with.

In younger players they don't necessarily know the meaning of what they are saying, or the information that they are passing over, particularly personal information.

Of course, this isn't the only app of this kind. As I mentioned in the last edition, social networking is about being social but as parents we have to be very careful about who (or what in this case) our children are talking to online, and on the following page are some more examples of similar apps that can be found.

## **Apps, apps and more apps**

By coincidence, a friend that I talk to on Twitter all the time has written a blog about some other apps that we need to be aware of.

As Wayne says in his blog ([www.waynedenner.com](http://www.waynedenner.com)) apps must be used in a responsible way by both children and adults, but unfortunately some apps have the potential to be used in a negative way; here's a few examples:

### **Confide**

This app allows users to create and send messages which, when viewed, disappear. It offers screen protection meaning it alerts users if a recipient has attempted to take a screen-shot. According to the Confide app, it allows you to, "Say what you want, honest and unfiltered," and allows you to, "Go off the record with self-destructing messaging."

### **Popcorn Chat**

Popcorn messaging allows you to chat privately with other users in a 1-mile radius of your phone. The idea behind the app is to discover what people around you are doing, converse with others, meet new people and share meaningful thoughts

amongst the local community.

### **Telegram**

This app is similar to SMS (texting) but more flexible users can send photos, videos and documents to your phone contacts who also use the Telegram app. Fundamentally, this app allows 'secret chat'. This includes a self-destruct timer that removes any message sent from both devices within a timescale of two seconds to one week.

### **What should I do?**

Don't forget, it isn't about the app, technology or the internet, it's about behaviour. It would be impossible to keep up with all the different apps and technologies that are being used, but we can keep up with what our own kids are using.

Talk to your kids, find out what they are doing on the internet and with what. Who are they talking to and what about? Have a look at the reviews online or use the app yourself so that you get an understanding of what it can do.

Talk it through with your kids and set boundaries, ensure they know what personal information is and also what information would be inappropriate to talk about with other people.

# Safe as Sam

## Sam Says.....

Not everybody is who they say they are online.

Personal information - your name, date of birth, address, school, friends, bank details, hobbies - is personal to you. Nobody else needs to know this information.

If somebody asks you to do something that makes you feel uncomfortable, or if you are not sure, tell your parents or a teacher straight away.

Never post pictures of other people online without asking them first.

Don't be nasty or hurtful to others online, you wouldn't like it. Remember, be respectful!

## For parents.....

Whatever social networks your children are using, learn how to make a report, report someone, or how to block someone if they are being nasty or hurtful.

Online life is an integral part of a child or



young person's real life. Talk to them about their online life in the same way you talk to them about their real life.

Let them know that you trust them, and that they can come and talk to you about anything they have seen or heard.

Resilience is important; understand that people can say something that appears nasty, but it isn't meant that way.

# Updates



## IMPORTANT

CEOP is the Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre, a hugely important part of the National Crime Agency. They have recently made a very worrying report regarding children as young as 8 being used as sex slaves, and consequently self-harming or committing suicide as a consequence.

See [www.parentsonlinesafety.com](http://www.parentsonlinesafety.com) for a link to the information and to download a factsheet.

## FACEBOOK

Users of Facebook between the ages had, until recently, pretty strict security settings by default.

Recently Facebook relaxed these settings by allowing users between the ages of 13-17 to now set their posts to public just like their older counterparts.

See [www.parentsonlinesafety.com](http://www.parentsonlinesafety.com) for a link to further information.

## Just Delete Me

You may wish to get rid of an old profile on a social network or website that you no longer use. A relatively new website has appeared that gives you instructions on how to do this, and also gives an indication of how difficult it is to do for each social network and website.

[www.justdelete.me](http://www.justdelete.me)

## Searching without the ads

A powerful search engine, as powerful but without all the intrusive ads and collecting of personal information.

DuckDuckGo is just such a website and is a much safer option for your children to use.

[www.duckduckgo.com](http://www.duckduckgo.com)

**Further information on these updates is available from  
[www.parentsonlinesafety.com](http://www.parentsonlinesafety.com)**

**The site is currently being re-designed with lots of new information and advice, and will now work on your PC, tablet or mobile phone.**

[www.parentsonlinesafety.com](http://www.parentsonlinesafety.com)