



KIK

A Safety Guide for Parents

What's Kik?



Kik is a messaging app available on smartphone devices. It allows teenagers to text each other using an internet browser instead of using up their data plan. This app is free to use and is relatively anonymous, causing a safety issue among teens. Kik was developed especially for teens, but teens aren't the only people using it to connect to others.

Safety Features

Username instead of phone number

Many apps take a phone number when creating an account. When this is the case, other people can find out the phone numbers of people they are chatting with. With Kik, a username is used instead of a phone number to protect anonymity. This username, along with a special code, can be searched by others in order to add the user as a friend.

New Chats

New Chats is a new feature on Kik that isolates messages from people the user hasn't chatted with before. Users have the option to mute these chats so they don't receive messages from people they haven't chatted with. The pictures and content sent by the messenger are blurred along with the profile picture. The person receiving these messages can choose to chat with the person or block/delete these messages.

But...Is It Safe?

No!

Username instead of phone number

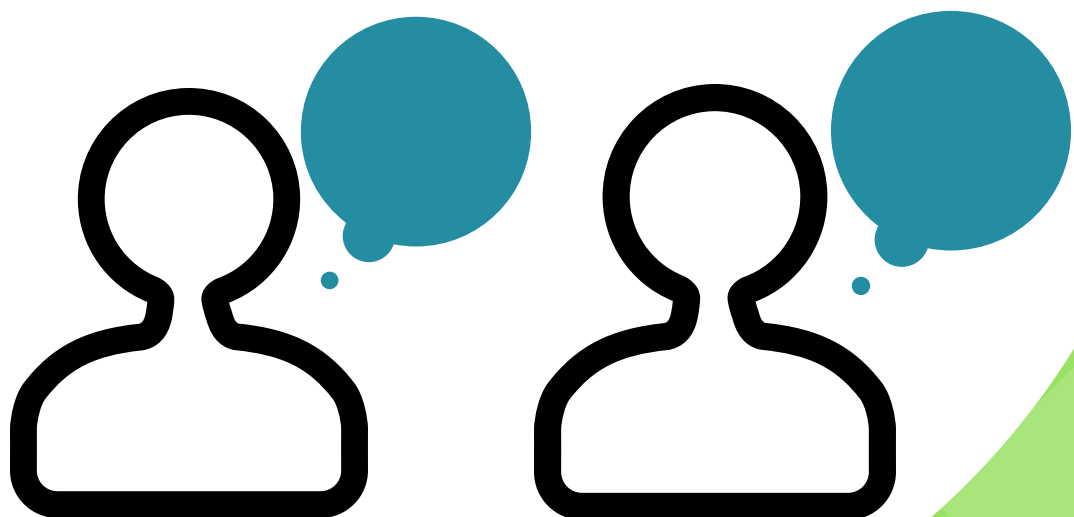
No! Usernames make people anonymous, which can lead to people feeling like they can bully others without consequences. Along with that, anonymity allows people to send explicit materials to others without feeling like there would be consequences. There are websites that list usernames of girls that are "willing to sext" that are available for the world to see.

New Chats

Sort of... New Chats prevents users from receiving messages from people they don't know without exposing them to potentially harmful material. The user can still choose to chat with people they don't know. If the user decides that they want to chat with a stranger, they can still accept the chat without knowing that the person could be someone wanting to hurt them.

"Do you have a Kik?"

Code for: "do you want to sext?". Kik has become an app primarily used for sexting other people, regardless of whether or not they are personally known to each other. As mentioned before, websites exist that advertise usernames of girls that are "willing" to sext anybody. This app is made primarily for teenagers, so there is a good chance that the person sexting is underage. That being said, there are a number of people who lie about their age on Kik, and some of them may be predators that prey on children.



What Can Parents Do?

- **Monitor your child's Kik usage. Ask them who they are talking to and notice when they are using the app. If they are talking to someone they shouldn't be, they may try to hide it from you, so monitor your child's phone activities.**
- **If your child is 13 or younger, they don't meet the age restrictions for a Kik account. If this is the case, report this information to Kik, and they will delete the account.**
- **Monitor the messages your child receives. Messages get automatically deleted after a short period of time, so it's important to pay attention when they are messaging. If your teen logs out of their account, you will be able to see who they were chatting with last, but not the content of the messages. You can log on to their account on your device, but an account can only be logged in on one device at a time.**
- **Encourage your child to block people who are harassing them. Users can block people that they don't want to speak with. Users can also report people if they feel like they are being harassed.**
- **The easiest way to keep your child safe on Kik is to restrict them from using it.**

Links to check out:

- Kik guide for parents:

<https://kikinteractive.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/217681808-Does-Kik-have-a-guide-for-parents->

- "What is Kik Sexting and Why You Should Be Concerned":

<https://nobullying.com/kik-sexting/>

- "Wildly Popular App Kik Offers Teenagers, and Predators, Anonymity":

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/06/us/social-media-apps-anonymous-kik-crime.html>

- "Messaging, Video Chat, and Email"

<https://www.netsmartz.org/MessagingVideoChatEmail>