Snapchat

Snapchat is a picture sharing app that has gained considerable popularity with young people. Thinkuknow have created a guide for parents and carers to help them understand the functions and features of Snapchat and ways to help young people stay safe if they are using the app.

What is it?

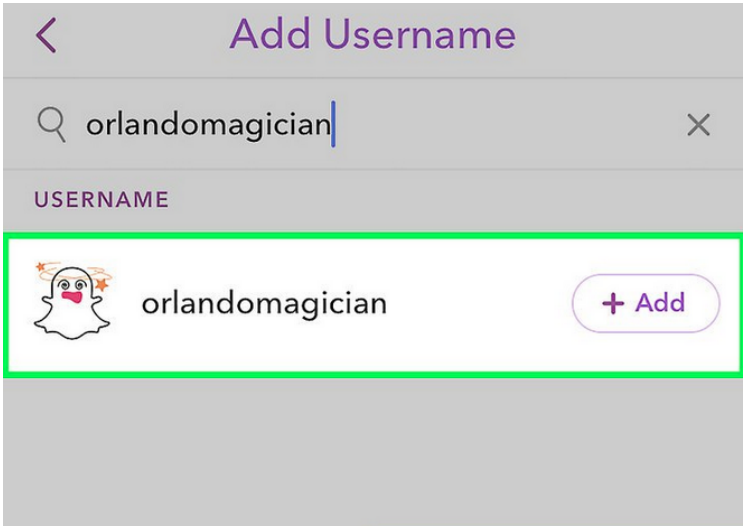
Snapchat is a mobile application that allows users to create, edit and share pictures and videos . Images sent on Snapchat are often referred to as 'snaps'. Snapchat's tag line is , "life's more fun when you live in the moment". Thus, Snapchat focuses on capturing 'moments' quickly; users take images and videos and send them instantly. The unique feature of Snapchat is that images disappear with seconds. Snapchat users can specify how many seconds they would like their images to be seen by the recipient(s). This can range from 1 to 10 seconds. After the chosen time, the image will 'disappear' from the recipient's view. However, this does not necessarily mean that images are permanently deleted. Images can be screen shot by other users or recorded using another device. Snapchat alerts users when a screenshot has been taken, however this is not always 100% accurate. Snapchat has a range of filters and fun effects that can be applied to images and videos. Snapchat users can use 'geofilters' – these are overlays that include graphics and picture effects that show where a person is in the world. This uses the phone's geo-location data. Images and videos can be sent directly to other users via Snapchat. They can also be downloaded and shared on other platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.

Friends

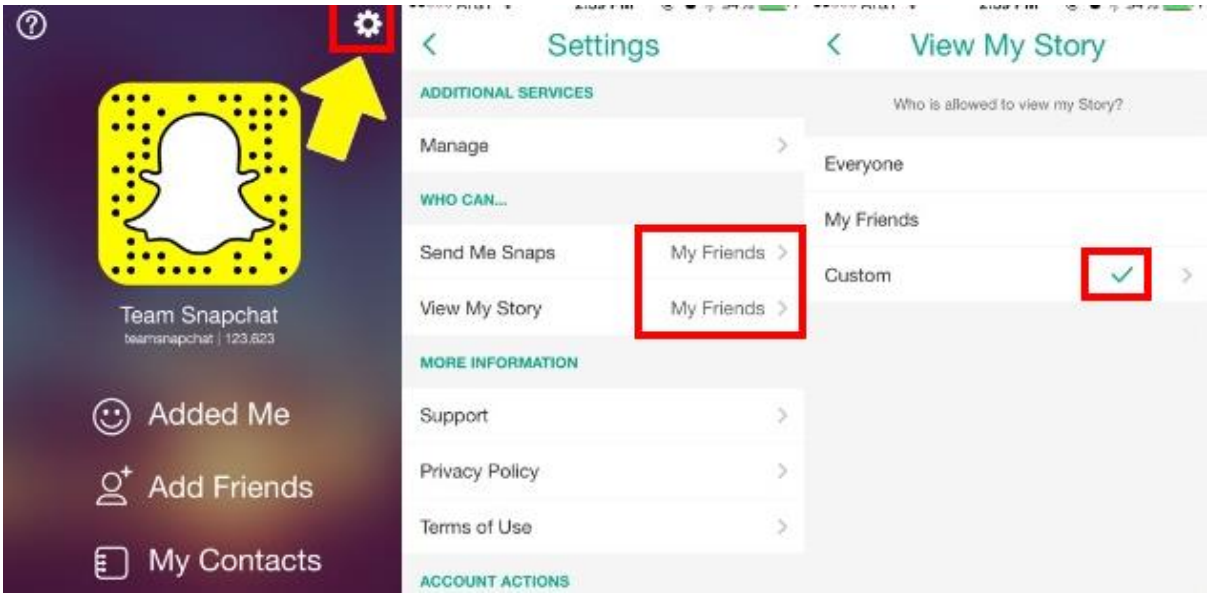
A user can choose to 'add friends' on Snapchat with whom they can send snaps and chat. Friends can be people a user knows in real life or people a user has never met.

Snapchat enables users to access their phone contact list to find contacts who are using Snapchat. Users may also add friends by searching for others users Snapchat Username. Users can also create a 'Snapcode'. This is a code that can be scanned by another user's phone to add them as friends. Snapchat also includes a feature called 'Add Nearby'. This uses geo-location data to find other users in geographic proximity to add as friends. Snapchat do not specify the distance required to be classed as "nearby". On their website, Snapchat state that this feature finds users in the "immediate vicinity". Snapchat also specify that both users must have enabled 'Add Nearby' to be visible to one another. If one user does not activate this setting, they will not be visible when others search 'Add Nearby'. A user can also use the Snapchat 'search' tool to search for names and organisations. This function will usually find celebrities and other popular users.

Snapchat uses the term 'friends' to refer to users that you have chosen to "add".



When you add a user as a 'friend', you may be able to view *their* Snapchat 'Story'. This is dependent on their privacy settings. A user *you* have added is automatically *your* 'friend' and will be able to send you snaps and view your Story. (Snapchat Stories are discussed in greater detail below). If you have added a user, the information you are able to see from them will depend on their privacy settings.



- For example, if you add a user and their settings specify that "**Everyone**" can "**View my story**", you will be able to view their story.
- Conversely, if their '**View my Story'** settings were specified as "**My friends**", then only people *they* actively added as friend can see their story.

Images and videos can be sent to a 'group chat' where up to 16 people can be added. All members of the group can send and view pictures; videos and messages at once. Groups are deleted after 24 hours, however, users have the option to save images and videos and chat. Each user in a group can choose to add other Snapchat users to the group. As with similar group messaging apps, a friend may add another user who is not a 'friend'. They will be able to see snaps and chats in the group.

Users can also call and message other users using Snapchat. Sending a message on Snapchat is known as sending a "chat". Chats between two users are deleted once both members of the conversation have left the chat screen. Snapchat does not have a comment thread feature that enables user to comment on specific images or videos as they are being viewed. However, users can send messages to other users directly.

Snapchat stories

Snapchat users can create 'stories'. These are collections of images and videos from a 24 hour time period. Stories can be shared with users who are 'friends' on Snapchat if a user has a 'private' profile. If a profile is not private, any other Snapchat user can view a story. Stories can be viewed an unlimited amount of times by other users and 'disappear' from view after 24 hours. Whilst watching 'friend's' story, a user can send a 'chat' or private message to the person who created the story. This is viewed only by the recipient.

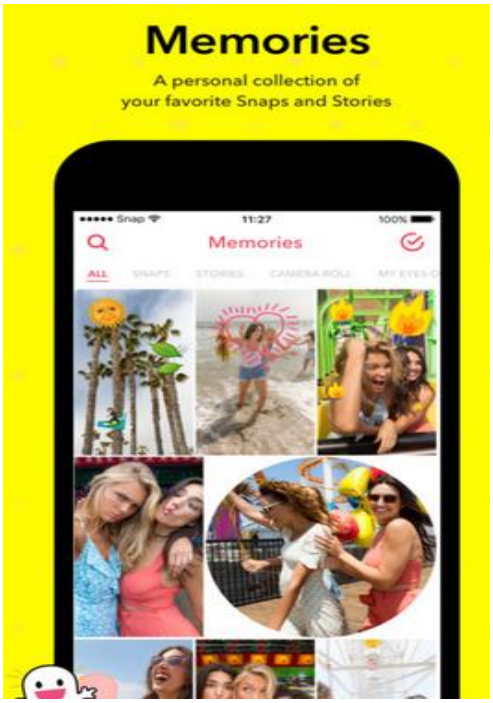
Live stories

Previously known as 'Our Stories', 'Live Stories' allow users to take images and videos and create a story with other Snapchat users based on their geographic location. For example, if a Snapchat user

is at an event such as a music festival, they can create content that will be added to a collective Snapchat 'story' relating to that event. The story is compiled by Snapchat and can only be created when a user's geo-location is enabled. Stories can be viewed by any Snapchat user even if a contributing user's profile is 'private'.

Snapchat Memories

Snapchat users can save images and videos to an online space called 'memories'. This is a personal archive available to each user to store their favourite images and videos. This can include snaps users have sent as well as images and videos they may not have sent. Memories can only be accessed and viewed by the account holder. Snapchat allows users to alter settings on their memories page by adding images and videos to a section called 'My Eyes only'. This means that photos are password protected and cannot be viewed on the memory section of a user's app.



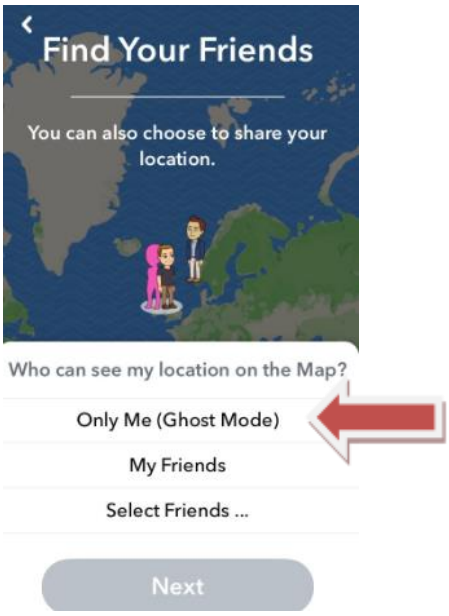
Snap Maps

'Snap Maps' use a device's location information to locate a user on a virtual map. A user is represented by a bitmoji- also known as an avatar- on the map at their precise location. Street names and buildings are visible.

When using Snap Maps for the first time, users are prompted by Snapchat to "Allow Snapchat to access location information". Next the user is prompted to choose the people they would like to see their location on the map. The options include: My friends, Only me ('Ghost Mode'), or Selected friends. Dependent on the settings chosen, a user's precise location will be visible to their selected audience on Snapchat.

It is important that young people understand exactly who can see their location on Snap Maps. Allowing all Snapchat friends (some of whom may be strangers) to see this information can present a risk to young people, as they will be able to see their exact location in real time. Have a conversation with your child about what they do online, who they share their location with, and ways they can

keep themselves safe. If they are meeting a friend in a busy place, encourage them to use a private message app or text to share personal information like location.



How much is it?

For all phone types, Snapchat is free to download . Snapchat uses an Internet connection using 4G or Wi-Fi to send and receive messages and images. As long as the user hasn't exceeded the data limit or is connected to a free Wi-Fi network, messaging over Snapchat is free. Sending and receiving images is also free.

Companies can pay Snapchat to advertise their products or services.

Does Snapchat have age restrictions?

Snapchat's Terms of Service state that young people under 13 years old are not able to create an account. Currently there is no age verification in place when signing up to the app. Children under the age of 13 could potentially sign up for an account without their parent's permission and give a false date of birth.

Snapchat requires information from all users. This includes their date of birth, email address, username and password. Users can choose to include a profile picture.

Should I be concerned about Snapchat?

The features of Snapchat can present potential risks to young people online. These features include:

- Connecting to other users they do not know
- Linking to other platforms
- Sharing of information and images
- Limited internal moderation

The potential risks of using Snapchat are typical of many social media services. As with all picture sharing social media, there is the possibility of young people viewing inappropriate, sexual or violent imagery that could worry or upset them. In their Community Guidelines, Snapchat specify that sexual or violent imagery is strictly prohibited. However, Snapchat also state that they do not monitor or moderate all content being shared via the app.

Like many other sites and apps, Snapchat is popular for both adults and children and there is concern that strangers can contact young people directly by sending images or messages or requesting to become 'friends'. Be aware that some young people share their Snapchat username on other social media platforms and this allows other users to request to follow them on Snapchat. Users can also add others using their phone number, therefore sharing a mobile number means they may be added on Snapchat.

The ephemeral nature of Snapchat is a fun feature but can mean that young people may be more inclined to take images on impulse that they might later regret. Images and videos can be screen shot or recorded with another device, meaning that they may become permanent.

It can be risky for a child or young person to share their location using apps. Encourage your child to keep their geo-location private by going into their app settings and disabling location for Snapchat.

As with all social media, caution is advised over young people's use of Snapchat. Conversations about what they share and who they talk to is advised as well as conversations about their digital footprint.

To **block** a friend , follow the steps below:

Blocking another user means they will no longer be able to view your Story, or send you Snaps or Chats.

1. Tap your 'Bitmoji' in the upper left hand corner of the Camera screen which will take you to your Profile screen.

2. Tap 'My Friends' on the Profile Screen.

3. Tap on their name.

4. Tap the below their name and select 'Block' to prevent them from sending you Snaps, Chats, or from viewing your Story.

Making a profile private:

By default, only 'Friends' that have been added on Snapchat can make direct contact or view a user's Story. This can be changed to a public profile. This is not advisable as it means anyone can view a user's images and videos. We would recommended young people choose a private profile.

If your child has changed their profile to public, here is how to make it private:

Tap in the top right-hand corner of the Profile screen.

1. Scroll down to the '**Who Can…**' section and tap an option.
2. Choose an option, then tap the back button to save your choice.

Options include...

- **Who Can Contact Me**: Choose who can contact you directly with Snaps, Chats, calls, etc.
- **Who Can View My Story**: Choose who can view your Story. Tap '**Custom**' if you'd like to block specific friends from seeing your Story.

Please note:

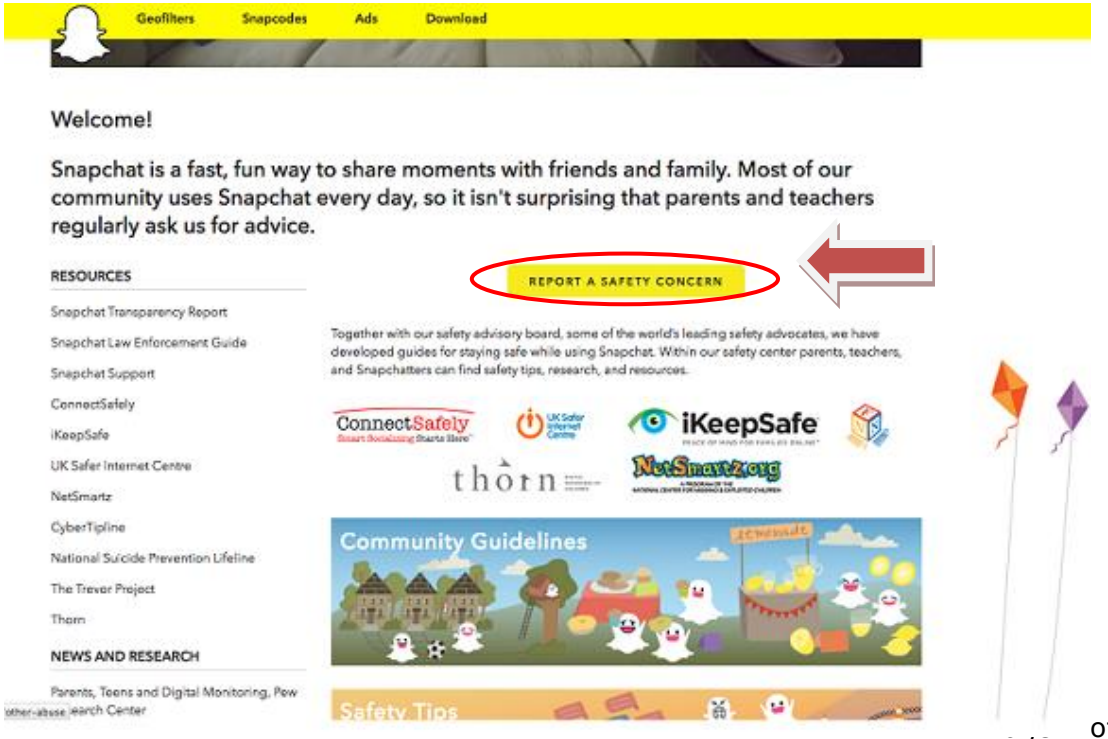
- Even if you choose to only be contacted by 'Friends,' anyone you're in a Group with will be able to communicate with you in Group Chat even if they are not on a friends list. To see who's in a Group before you chat or send images, press and hold on the name of the group in the Chat screen.
- If you choose 'Everyone' for 'Who Can Contact Me,' Snapchat users you haven't added will be able to send you Snaps and Chats.
- If you post a Snap to your Story, and then change your settings so only friends can see your Story, others may still be able to see the Snaps you posted before the change.
- Even if Snapchat have not notified you that an image has been screen shot; this may still have occurred. Third party apps have been created that allow users to download software that hide when they have screen shot an image or video.

Reporting a user:

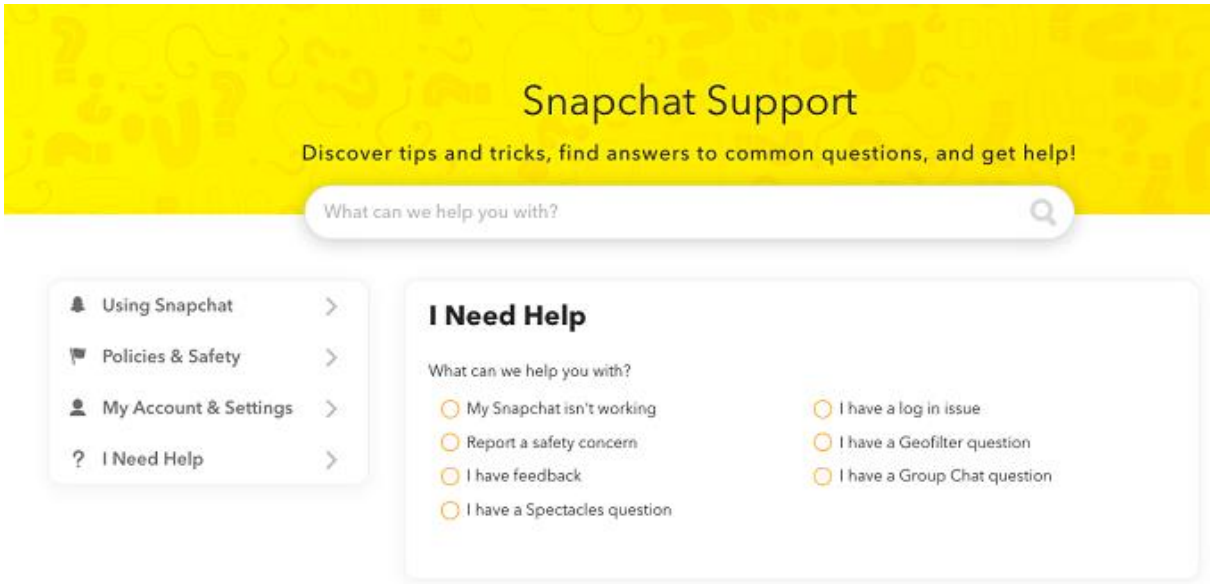
Profiles or content on Snapchat that do not follow its Community Guidelines can be reported directly to Snapchat. Community Guidelines can be found here:

1. To report a profile or content go to https://www.snapchat.com/safety

2. Click on 'Report a safety concern'



3. Follow the instructions to create a report.



If you have any concerns about grooming, sexual abuse or exploitation on Snapchat or on any online app or site, Report to CEOP (the National Crime Agency's Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command) at www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre.

Having regular conversations with your child about their online lives is an important part of keeping them safe online. For information about how to best start these conversations and guidance on other popular apps, visit our Thinkuknow parents and carers website www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents.

We endeavour to keep our parents guides as up-to-date as possible, however due to the changing nature of social media, the information and advice in this guide may well date over time. Information is correct as of May 2017.

A National Crime Agency command