Snapchat

Snapchat is a mobile app available to those aged 13 and older where users primarily send videos, photos, and messages to one another, or upload photos and videos to their "Story" which stay viewable for 24 hours. Photos and videos are temporary on Snapchat, meaning they can only be replayed once before they are no longer accessible, although chat messages between users can be saved. Snapchat users can also view their friends' live locations via "Snap maps", voice or video call, play games together, swipe through trending articles and news via the "Discover" page, and scroll through an endless series of short user-generated videos on the "Spotlight" page.

What are the safety concerns with Snapchat?

- **Child exploitation.** Snapchat does not condone child exploitation or child sexual abuse material on their platform and report instances of both to relevant authorities. However, there have been reported instances of offenders using Snapchat to groom minors and share child sexual abuse material online. It's important that children on Snapchat are encouraged to tell someone if they have upsetting experiences online, and that they know how to use the block and report features.

- **Malicious links.** There have been several cases where scammers create fake accounts or hack into users' accounts and send direct messages containing malicious links to the user's friends. Upon clicking the link, you may be diverted to a website that will expose your device to malware or attempt to obtain your personal information. Users should beware of suspicious messages that appear to be sent by legitimate friends, or unknown accounts that add them randomly.

- **Location-sharing.** Snapchat allows users to share their live location with friends and scroll around a 'Snap Map' to view their friends' locations. Although location-sharing is turned off by default, it's important that young snapchat users are careful with who they choose to share their location with if they do activate location sharing.

- **Inappropriate content.** The 'Discover' section allows users to flick through small snippets of news stories and trending articles that are not always appropriate for young users. The 'Spotlight' section allows Snapchat users to upload short videos and scroll through an endless stream of videos submitted by other users. Users can also submit their snaps to the Snap Map, which can be viewed by anyone and are not always appropriate. Spotlight content is moderated before it is approved and shared, however, no app's safety features are 100% fail-safe, so it is important your child knows how to use the report and block features if they see upsetting or offensive content. It is not possible to turn off Spotlight or Discover.

How do I stay safe using Snapchat?

- **Change privacy settings.** Snapchat's privacy settings dictate who has permission to contact you, see your location and view your story. These are set to friends only permission by default, however, you can either change these to everyone, meaning anyone who knows your username has permission, or you can set your settings to custom and individually select which friends have permission. To set your privacy settings to custom go to your Snapchat profile, tap the settings wheel in the top right corner, and scroll down to the "Who can…" section.

- **Set location to ghost mode.** Snapchat allows you to hide your location so that other Snapchat users can't see your live location on Snap Maps. To do this, go to Snap Maps, tap the settings wheel in the top right corner, and activate "Ghost mode". Alternatively, if you want to share your location only with specific friends, you can tap "Only these friends…" in the same settings section as Ghost mode and select which friends you want to share your location with.

- **Removing friends or blocking accounts.** Removing friends on Snapchat can, depending on your privacy settings, prevent them from contacting you, seeing your location, and viewing your story. You can also block individual users on Snapchat. When you block someone on Snapchat, they'll no longer be able to view your story and location, contact you, or search your Snapchat username. To remove or block someone, tap the three dots at the top of their profile, tap "Manage friendship", and tap either "Block" or "Remove friend".

How do I report online abuse on Snapchat?

- Report users. Report accounts by going to their Snapchat profile, tapping on the three dots at the top of their profile, tapping "Manage friendship", and "Report".

I want some more information about how to stay safe on Snapchat

If you want further information about Instagram or how to stay safe online, you can follow the links below:

- Snapchat's Staying Safe webpage
- Keep it real online
- Te Tari Taiwhenua, Department of Internal Affairs –
  Factsheet on 'Helping children stay safe when using smart devices'
- Netsafe's guide to Snapchat

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