

The 8 Worst Apps for Your Kids

Do you really know what your child is up to on the computer or smartphone? Technology, especially if you're a little behind the times, is deceptive; some of the worst apps and games appear as innocent ways to keep in touch with friends, but can turn into venues for inappropriate behavior.



According to a 2011 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, 95 percent of teens between 12 and 17 use the internet, 27 percent of this group uploads video, and a whopping 80 percent use social media sites like Facebook on phones and the computer.

Security apps are available to keep an eye on and limit web browsing, app and game downloading and computer/smartphone use, but to closely monitor your kid's online habits, it's a good idea to know what's out there. Keep your children safe by avoiding eight of the worst apps for your kids.

- **Puff or Blow Skirt.** Beware Peeping Toms! Puff lacks full nudity, but your kids can still blow a lady's dress up ... literally. This app is available across all phone platforms, though each type may call it something different. Once downloaded, the user can blow into the microphone or use a swiping motion to lift the skirts of girls in pictures. While most are wearing underwear, it still sends the wrong message. The best way to prevent this download (or even keep your kids from browsing and seeing this title) is to make sure your parental controls are up to speed.
- **Poof by Cydia.** With one touch, *Poof* makes apps disappear before parents' prying eyes, allowing young users of "jailbroken" iPhones to virtually hide apps they don't want you to see. All your little tech genius needs to do is open *Poof* and select which app she wants hidden, and you'll never know it's there.
- **SnapChat.** This iPhone app allows users to send photos that will "self destruct" within 10 seconds, encouraging kids to feel more comfortable "sexting" with peers. Once the recipient opens the pic, the timer starts. The picture destroys itself after the time runs out. This means that your kid can send a potentially damaging picture to a friend or someone else, and it won't stay on the recipient's phone. This app gives kids a false sense of security sending inappropriate pics; however, damage can still be done within a specified time frame. Talk to your child about the dangers of sending risky photos, and keep an eye out for *SnapChat* on her smartphone.
- **KiK Messenger.** This kicky app for all types of smartphones is a mini social network. Similar to iChat or Google Chat, users can talk to multiple people, upload pics and files and even send built-in greeting cards or sketched pictures. Seems harmless, right? Wrong. While KiK is a great way for responsible users to keep in touch, based on reviews in the Google Playstore, it's turning out to have more to do with young teens flirting and sexting than just keeping in touch with friends. The reviews read like dating ads, with users looking to get to know more people. Like Facebook or Twitter, it's impossible to verify someone's identity through the world wide web. Bottom line: avoid this potentially dangerous app and talk to your kid about the risk of online predators.
- **Samurai Vs. Zombies Defense.** Yes, zombies are all the rage right now, dragging their legs and trying to eat brains on TV shows, in movies and fiction books. They've even made it to the app world, where would-be heroes try to rid the world of the "zombie plague," and it gets fairly gruesome. This app, for OSX 10.7, combines samurais with zombies, and is rated by the App Store for ages nine and up for "frequent/intense cartoon and fantasy violence." If your zombie hunter is young, opt for a more kid-friendly game instead.
- **9GAG.** No kids allowed! Another way for users to spread sarcastic, degrading and potentially hurtful pictures or posts 9GAG is a free app/social media site that focuses on uploaded images with captions and text. These images run from Disney cartoon characters spouting abbreviated profanities to random pictures of pets. Granted, there are many harmless posts on the site; however, just scrolling through the daily favorites posted on the site will expose your innocent kiddo to crude humor, sexually suggestive material and offensive behavior. Definitely pass.
- **Frontline Commando.** Is your kid ready for frontline action? Definitely not! Rated for ages 12 and up by the App Store, this free game for OSX users offers realistic and intense wartime violence in vivid 3D, first-person shooter perspective. The heroic character is the last surviving commando in an attack against a dictator, and he has to fight his way through an endless supply of enemies to avenge his comrades. The blood and violent effects are fairly realistic, making it an app you don't want your kids using.
- **iFunny.** This app lets users create comic strips using photos and captions, and post or send them to friends. Seemingly innocuous, this app (rated for ages 17 and over) can actually have a downside—your kid runs the risk of exposure to humor she's not ready for, and (perhaps more importantly) she can use the *iFunny* platform to bully (or be bullied by) fellow students. Once a comic strip is created, it can make its way to social networks, or it can be saved to phones and computers by other users, essentially spreading the info indiscriminately to whoever wants to keep it.