

Cotham School

Online Safety Newsletter

Academic Year:
2025/2026

Term: 4
Date: 02/03/2026



Newsletter Topic:

1. What are: Smartphone Risks
2. Social Media Focus: Snapchat - Delete Account and Access to Privacy Controls

Children benefit from smartphone access, but it also exposes them to real risks.

Mobile phones: what should you be aware of?

Giving a child a smartphone can bring several risks, including:

- Exposure to unsuitable or harmful content
- Spending too much time on screens, which can affect sleep and mental wellbeing
- Contact from strangers or grooming attempts
- Cyberbullying from peers or others online
- Accidental or deliberate spending through apps, in-game purchases, or scams

How do phones affect mental health?

Mobile phones can benefit children, but they also pose risks, and the impact depends on age, usage, and what they access.

Positive effects

- ✓ Staying connected with friends and family, which can reduce loneliness.
- ✓ Access to information and support, including mental-health resources and coping advice.
- ✓ Convenience for communication, learning, and entertainment.

Negative effects

- ✗ Screen overuse, which can contribute to anxiety, low mood, and poor sleep.
- ✗ Cyberbullying, which can cause emotional distress.
- ✗ Less physical activity, increasing health risks that can affect wellbeing.
- ✗ Sleep disruption from using phones late at night.
- ✗ Fear of missing out (FOMO) driven by social media.
- ✗ Low self-esteem from comparing themselves to idealised online images.
- ✗ Reduced face-to-face interaction, limiting social-skill development.
- ✗ Privacy worries, which can create stress.

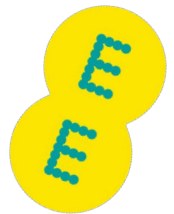
Source: [Compan-uk.org](https://www.compan-uk.org)

Most children won't experience all these issues, and many use phones in balanced, healthy ways. Adults can help by setting boundaries, talking openly about online experiences, and supporting responsible use. If a child's mental health seems affected, it's important to seek guidance from a qualified professional.

EE's Online Safety Hub

EE has created age-based guidance to help families support healthy digital habits:

- Under 11s: best suited to basic, non-smart mobile phones
- Ages 11-13: if using a smartphone, parental controls and limited access to social media are advised
- Ages 13-16: parental controls and appropriate restrictions are still recommended



Full guidance can be found here:

<https://ee.co.uk/internet-online-safety>

Smartphone Free Childhood: could you delay giving your child a smartphone?

This initiative encourages all parents and carers within a class or year group to agree not to provide smartphones until a certain age. The idea is to reduce peer pressure and create a shared approach.

<https://www.smartphonefreechildhood.org/>

Choosing a device

When you decide your child is ready for a phone, Which? offers a helpful overview of suitable first phones, including both simple "dumb" phones and beginner-friendly smartphones:

<https://www.which.co.uk/reviews/mobile-phones/article/buying-a-first-mobile-phone-best-dumb-phones-and-smartphones-for-kids-aA03C3Y8aTzr>



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Social Media: Snapchat

Snapchat is a multimedia messaging app developed by Snap Inc. It allows users to send photos, videos, and messages (called “Snaps”) that disappear after being viewed. The app is known for its focus on ephemeral content, creative filters, and augmented reality (AR) features.



Age Requirements: 13+.

Key Features:

- Snaps
- Stories
- Chats
- Filters
- Discover Page
- Snap Maps
- Memories
- Streaks

Safety and Privacy Features:

- View and location sharing control
- Report and block
- Ghost mode - hide location
- Parental control tools
- 24h data deletion
- 2FA security
- AI Moderation
- Safety center resources.

How to: Delete Account and Access Privacy Controls

Deactivating or deleting a Snapchat account?

To deactivate or delete your Snapchat account, follow the provided steps. Your account will be deactivated for 30 days, allowing reactivation. After another 30 days, it will be permanently deleted. You can also remove saved Memories, shared content with My AI, Spotlight submissions, and more.

Deactivating or Delete on Android:

1. Log in to the Snapchat accounts portal
2. Tap ‘Delete My Account’
3. Input your password
4. Tap ‘Continue’ to confirm account deactivation/deletion



Deactivating or Delete on iOS:

1. Tap the ⚙️ button in the Profile screen to open Settings
2. Scroll down to ‘Account Actions’
3. Tap ‘Delete Account’
4. Log in to the Snapchat accounts portal
5. Tap ‘Delete My Account’
6. Input your password
7. Tap ‘Continue’ to confirm account deactivation/deletion



How do I change my privacy settings on Snapchat?

By default, only ‘Friends’ you’ve added on Snapchat can contact you directly or view your Story. To change privacy settings:

1. Tap the ⚙️ button in the Profile screen to open Settings
2. Scroll down to the ‘Privacy Controls’ section and tap an option
3. Choose an option, then tap the back button to save your choice



Privacy settings options

- **Who Can Contact Me:** Set who can reach out via Snaps, Chats, and Calls.
- **Send Me Notifications:** Choose notifications from everyone or just friends.
- **Who Can View My Story:** Control who sees your Story, with a custom block option.
- **Public Profile:** Adjust My Story privacy settings in your profile.
- **Who Can See My Location:** Manage location visibility on Snap Map.
- **Who Can Use My Cameos Selfie:** Decide who can use your Cameos selfie in two-person Cameos.
- **Who Can See Me in Find Friends:** Control visibility in Find Friends; changes take up to 72 hours.
- **Activity Indicator:** Choose if others can see your recent Snapchat activity.

Things to remember

- If you choose ‘My Friends’, group members can still chat with you.
- You won’t see Snaps from non-friends unless you add them back.
- Selecting ‘Everyone’ allows any Snapchat user to send Snaps and Chats.
- Changing Story settings won’t hide previously posted Snaps.

Tip: You can receive Snaps from ‘Everyone’ but only get notifications from friends by adjusting settings in Snapchat > Notifications.

