

Online Safety News

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Disappearing Messages, 4 Apps you need to know about

Disappearing messages on social media platforms pose significant risks and challenges for parents and carers monitoring their child's online interactions. These are the top 5 Apps used by children that make this possible.

Snapchat: Chats are defaulted to delete 24 hours after viewing. You can go into settings and change this to delete right after viewing or to never delete. Group chats work a little differently, as they're only deleted after 24 hours once everyone has viewed them. Snapchat has parental controls *but* none of them apply to disappearing messages.

WhatsApp: Not set to disappear by default but it's still easy enough to change this in settings. Users can set messages to disappear after 24 hours, seven days, or 90 days. Similar to Snapchat, users can keep a message even if it's set to disappear. But interestingly, senders have the option to "upkeep" a message if someone else tries to keep it. Pictures and videos are automatically saved to your photos – so it may disappear in the chat but still exist in the photo library. An important reminder to children about not sending *anything* online that they aren't prepared for others to see.

Instagram has 'vanish mode' which allows users to send disappearing messages, photos, videos, and more in Instagram chats. Things disappear whenever someone leaves the chat or vanish mode is turned off, however. In contrast to Snapchat and WhatsApp, users don't have the option to save disappearing messages (but remind children that anything can always be screenshotted).

iMessage: Not an app and technically it doesn't have disappearing messages as a feature BUT they do have an "Undo send" feature and as this is a popular one with children it's worth being aware of. This feature can be used in the same way as disappearing messages – sending messages and then unsending them within the two-minute limit. Currently, there is no way to disable this feature on iPhone, nor is there any way for parents to manage it using Family Sharing. Again – everything can be screenshotted!



Poppy Playtime

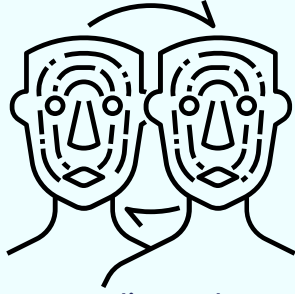
This game has been designed to appeal to young children however **it is a horror/puzzle game which contains graphics that might not be suitable for your child**. The game isn't gory but it does use toys in frightening ways which could make young children scared.

The game does not appear to have any age restrictions however the developers have recommended for players age 8+.

Children may be playing it or watching videos on Youtube or playing versions in Roblox. Please check out the game yourself before allowing access to your child.

This video on YouTube gives more information on Poppy Playtime.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1-RqyuX_18&t=38s

What is a Deepfake?



Deepfakes are videos or audio recordings that manipulate a person's likeness. They then appear to do/say something they never did. Some of these videos and images are getting so good that they can be hard to spot even for adults.

Children can struggle to spot fake videos and audio and with AI tools becoming more accessible, more people might have the ability to create deepfakes and cause more harm. It's something we will need to talk to children about, certainly before the age when they get social media.

While sometimes used in entertainment, deepfakes can also spread misinformation or cause harm. When talking to your children about deepfakes, emphasize the importance of critical thinking and verifying information.

Encourage them to ask questions like: **"Where did this video come from?"** and **"Why was it made?"** If the content is a deepfake or obviously altered, use the opportunity to speak to your child about the impact this may have on the person involved. **"How do you think they feel about this?"** **"What might happen to them if people see this and believe it's real?"**

This approach helps them understand the need for caution online and promotes a healthy skepticism about the media they consume, which is an important skill for any child online to learn.

Internet Matters have more information on how to discuss this with your child here: <https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/what-is-a-deepfake/#deepfake-safety>

Or check out this resource at BBC Bitesize <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zkrmmfr>



Unknown number... How to stop Spam texts and calls

Children can be particularly vulnerable to these annoying and potentially dangerous texts. You can **BLOCK** them but remember they may use different numbers to keep trying.

Enable Built-in Phone Filters

This automatically sorts texts from non-contact senders into a separate folder. Remember though, that it filters every number that's not a contact – whether it's a new friend or just spam, so remember to check it occasionally. Using phone filters can be a very effective method in blocking spam texts from getting to your child's phone.

On iPhone

1. Open the Settings app.
2. Scroll down for a bit and then tap Messages.
3. Toggle on Filter unknown senders.

On Android

1. Open the Phone app.
2. Tap the three dots, then tap Settings.
3. Enable Caller ID & Spam.

Podcasts for Kids



From short stories to science, podcasts can be a great way to keep your children entertained and a break from screens. Here's 6 that have been rated highly for children under 12.

- **Best overall** – You're Dead To Me: Free, [Bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk)
- **Best for answering big questions** – But Why: Free, [Npr.org](https://www.npr.org)
- **Best for celebrating extraordinary women** – Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls: Free, [Rebelgirls.com](https://www.rebelgirls.com)
- **Best mindfulness podcast** – Peace out: Free, [Bedtime.fm](https://www.bedtime.fm)
- **Best storytelling podcast** – The Story Pirates Podcast: Free, [Storypirates.com](https://www.storypirates.com)
- **Best for aspiring scientists** – Brains On!: Free, [Brainson.org](https://www.brainson.org)