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## Snapchat and Other Messaging Apps That Let Teens Share (Iffy) Secrets

Capturing and posting casual moments might lead to oversharing and other consequences.

Kelly Schryver October 14, 2014 Categories: Facebook, Instagram, and Social



You probably never thought you'd see the day when [Facebook wasn't the center of teens' universe](#). But keeping up with Facebook friends through ad-filled newsfeeds and lengthy profiles, especially given the fact that everyone knows your name, is starting to feel tiresome to many teens.

[Facebook is still a go-to place for many things](#), such as wishing someone a happy birthday or stalking a crush. However, newer social apps make it easier, faster, and more fun to capture and share fleeting moments -- sometimes anonymously. These temporary and anonymous-messaging apps provide an environment that feels more appropriate to the random, silly, saucy, and experimental sides of the average teenager.

Perhaps most importantly to teens, these apps can feel consequence-free. [/social-media](#) But of course they're not. Data never really disappears, and anonymity carries big risks. If you don't recognize the apps your kid is currently obsessing over, here's what you need to know:

### Temporary Apps

Temporary apps allow people to send messages and images that self-destruct after a set window of time. Teens can use these apps to more carefully manage their digital trails -- so long as they don't share things they wouldn't normally send otherwise.

**Snapchat:** A messaging app that lets users put a time limit on the pictures and videos they send before they disappear.

**Why it's popular:** Snapchat's creators intended the app's fleeting images to be a way for teens to share fun, light moments without the risk of having them go public. And that's what most teens use it for: sending goofy or embarrassing photos to one another. Teens may pay more attention to Snapchats, knowing they'll disappear in a matter of seconds.

**What parents need to know:**

- It's not true that Snapchats go away forever. Data is data: Whenever anything is sent online, it never truly goes away. (For example, the person on the receiving end can easily take a screenshot of the image before it disappears.) Snapchats can even be recovered -- unaffiliated third-party services like Snapsaved (**which was recently hacked**) give users the chance to save any Snapchatted pic.
- **It can make sexting seem OK.** The seemingly risk-free messaging might encourage users to share pictures containing inappropriate content.

**Slingshot:** Facebook's answer to Snapchat. The twist is that before you can view a photo or video you've received, you'll have to send the sender a shot of your own. After you've viewed it, the shot disappears.

**Why it's popular:** The video or photo options paired with the ability to type or draw on the shots create an easy way to share brief moments and fun, creative messages.

**What parents need to know:**

- Although the app comes from Facebook, you're not required to have a Facebook account to use it; you can send and receive shots with people who aren't your Facebook friends.
- Anyone who knows your teen's phone number or Slingshot username can send photos and videos to your teen. Users register for the app with their Facebook account or a mobile phone number, and the app will search your contacts for friends who have the app.

- Unless you decline use of location services, your city, date, and time will appear each time you send anything from Slingshot.

**LINE:** A multifaceted text, video, and voice-messaging app that also integrates social media elements like games and group chats.

**Why it's popular:** Teens are drawn to LINE not only because it's a bit of an all-in-one mobile hub, but also because it offers a lot of teen-friendly elements, like a selection of over 10,000 stickers and wacky emoticons, and LINE Play, an avatar-based social network. The free texting and video calls don't hurt either.

**What parents need to know:**

- LINE includes a feature called "Hidden Chat," which is similar to Snapchat's disappearing messages, but with a few more options. Users can choose how long they'd like their message to last before it vanishes; after 2 seconds or up to a week. These messages can also include location info, pics, and video. While LINE states that their servers are secure, as with Snapchat, you can't be too careful.
- In-app purchases are a big part of the LINE experience: want to use that set of super-cute cat emojis? It'll cost you. Paying for games and other features within LINE can add up, and in order to keep communication free, the recipient must also be a LINE user, meaning your friends have to sign up as well.
- LINE's terms of use state that "minors" need parental permission before signing up, but there's no process in place to monitor or track that information.
- **Ask.fm:** A social site that lets kids ask questions and answer those posted by other users -- sometimes anonymously.

**Why it's popular:** Although there are some friendly interactions on Ask.fm -- Q&As about favorite foods or crushes, for example -- there are lots of mean comments and some creepy sexual posts. This iffy content is part of the site's appeal for teens.

**What parents need to know:**

- Bullying is a major concern. The British news website MailOnline reported that the site has been linked to the suicides of several teens. [Talk to your teens about cyberbullying](#) and how anonymity can encourage mean behavior.
- Anonymous answers are optional. Users can decide whether to allow anonymous posts and can remove their answers from streaming to decrease their profile's visibility. If teens do use the site, they'd be best turning off anonymous answers and keeping themselves out of the live stream.

- Q&As can appear on Facebook. Syncing with Facebook means that a much wider audience can see those Q&As' behavior.

*Web Editor Polly Conway contributed to this article.*