



## What is Kik?

Kik is a private messaging app that allows you to send others messages, photos, videos and webpages, using a Wi-Fi connection instead of a mobile phone number – it logs IP addresses which the company uses to determine location. Kik is only for people aged 13 years and older.

## What does it look like?



## Main Concerns for Parents

# kik.



### It's easy for people to be anonymous

What makes Kik unique to most other private messaging apps is the fact that it doesn't require a phone number as it works through Wi-Fi instead. Instead, Kik uses usernames to identify people. By using a username instead of a phone number, you're not sharing your personal information (like your phone number and email address) with others on Kik, but on the flipside, this makes it much easier for people to remain anonymous or to create a fake persona.

### Sexting

Due to the easy-to-use online browser within the Kik app, as well as the general ease of sharing photos, sexting has been reported on the app. These messages can be screen-captured or copied at the press of a button, which could lead to further dangers, such as blackmail and cyberbullying. It is illegal to make, possess, download, store and share sexual images, photos and videos of a person under the age of 18. This also includes any sexual images, photos and videos that a child may have taken of themselves. However, if a young person is found creating or sharing images, the police can choose to record that a crime has been committed but that taking formal action isn't in the public interest.

### High risk of accidentally viewing pornography

Kik has been associated with 'porn-bots'. These are automated programs, not actively controlled by real people, that attempt to lure users onto porn websites by using suggestive and often personalised messages. It is quite likely in this scenario, that a real person may try and have sexual conversations with your child which could lead to them sending over nude or pornographic images, whether your child wants it or not.

### Child predators could use Kik

There is the danger with Kik's anonymity feature that some people may use Kik with the intention of targeting children. Typically, this is a subtle and a potentially dangerous individual who will initially portray themselves as a friend who 'understands' a child. They may also lie about their age and it's possible that your child could be manipulated by a stranger in to doing regrettable or illegal activities and maybe even meeting them in real life.

### 'Chat Now'

Chat Now is an app that works in conjunction with Kik and allows people to talk to strangers based on similar interests. Talking to someone who you don't actually know is always a risk in itself but a feature like this may also influence what a young person's perceptions of what a 'friend' is.

### Personal or compromising usernames

As Kik works with usernames and not phone numbers some people may search for clues as to who someone is in real life based on their name. For example, if your child uses their real name or something similar, strangers could potentially find out their identity and even start looking for them on other social media platforms.

# KIK: Tips for Parents



## Don't reveal personal information (through username)

When setting up a Kik account, ensure that your child knows the importance of a username and why it shouldn't contain ANY clues as to who they are in real life. Also make sure that your child knows never to send personal information on messages or in any other way when using the app.

## Don't talk to strangers

If your child knows not to talk to anyone they don't know in real life, the risks of using Kik are drastically lowered. An easy way to ensure your child sticks to this is by telling them not to use 'Chat Now'. Alternatively, if any stranger happens to send your child a message, teach them to ignore it.

## Let your child know they can talk to you if they see anything upsetting

If your child sees something disturbing, pornographic, deviant or otherwise troubling, they may be left confused and in need of somebody to explain it to them. As such, tell your child that you are always there to help them if they need it and if they start acting differently to normal, calmly ask them why.

## Find genuine friends

The Kik app includes an optional feature that your child can turn on to help find real friends on Kik. The feature works by checking for accounts in Kik that match an email address or phone number stored in contacts (on a smartphone). If the app finds a match, it will notify both your child and their friend with a Kik message.

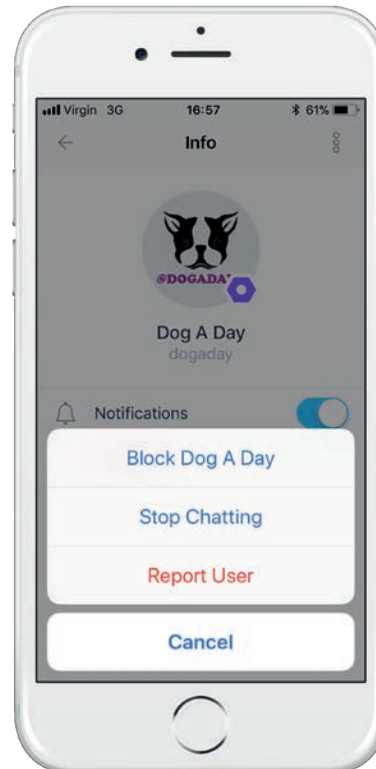
## Show how to block unwanted contacts

Kik's 'Block' feature lets users block all contact with another user, without revealing to the other user that they've been blocked. The blocked user's name will no longer appear in contacts in Kik. To block someone from talking to you:

- Tap their Display Name at the top of the chat beside the >
- Tap the More icon
- Tap Block name
- Tap Block

An alternate method is:

- Tap Settings
- Select Privacy
- Select Block List
- Tap +
- Select the person you want to block
- Tap Block to confirm



## Mute or leaving a chat

If someone has said something inappropriate to your child through Video Chat, they can mute the user or leave the Video Chat. Tap on the person's Video Chat bubble and a mute icon will appear. When a child mutes themselves, their microphone will be disabled and nobody else in the chat will be able to hear them.

## Avoiding unexpected images

Kik censors images from strangers to limit lewd content being shared by surprise. The app will blur all photos in messages when users who have never interacted before contact each other for the first time. Users can only share unblurred images after they have both approved each other.

## Using a valid email

According to Kik, it is really important for users to provide a valid and accessible email address when registering their account. This will help to make sure your child is able to receive important emails from the service, such as a link to reset their password, when they need them.

## Don't share username on social media

Sharing usernames on social media channels, such as Twitter, Instagram or Facebook, will make it visible to people they might not know - and they'll be able to message your child.

## Reporting spammers

Some users of Kik have reported that they receive sexually-explicit automated messages over the app - this is when automated spam bots have been created to distribute explicit images and texts using the service. Your child can use the 'Report' feature to report spam. Once reported, there is the option to keep or remove the chat from a conversation list. If conversations are saved, Kik will automatically block the spam account but save the chat history.