

WhatsApp

Parent Guide

Everything you need to know about the social media app

Age rating

16+

What is it?

WhatsApp is a **free, instant messaging app**.

It offers **direct messaging, voice call, video call and group chats of up to 256 people**. You can also set **statuses**. There is a web version – **WhatsApp Web** – that you can use on a desktop or laptop.

WhatsApp has an **age rating of 16+**. There is **no strict age verification** so keep in mind that younger children could sign up.

What are the risks?

WhatsApp is **end-to-end encrypted**. This means that **messages can only be accessed by the sender and the recipient**. This increases **security and privacy**, but also makes it more difficult for law-enforcement to access **any abusive or harassing messages**.

Like all messaging apps, there is a chance that your child **could receive hurtful or distressing messages**.

If your child is in a **group chat**, anybody in that chat will be able to see their messages, even if they're not in their contacts. If they have **blocked** someone who is in the chat, that person will **still be able to message them within the group chat**.

Keep in mind that any messages your child sends on WhatsApp via their phone **will also be visible on the web version**. If they've signed in to WhatsApp web on a computer, **particularly a shared device**, they'll need to remember to sign out.

Are there any safety settings?

You can **block** another user from contacting you directly (though as mentioned they can still do so in a group chat). Go to the **three dots at the top of the conversation**, select **'more'** and **'block'**. To report a user, click the same three dots, select **'more'**, and select **'report'**.

Because WhatsApp is end-to-end encrypted, explain to your child that if they do receive any mean or upsetting messages, they should **take screenshots**.

What else should I know?

WhatsApp is one of **the most popular messaging apps in the world**. It's free and easy to use, with the opportunity for big group chats.

Make sure that your child **fully understands the blocking and reporting functions**, and offer them a **supportive space to come to** if they have any worries about the app.