Parent Guide to Apps

Apps, or applications, are a big thing on our smartphones, tablets, and even newer laptops. It seems that every operating system has an "App Store", such as Android's Google Play or Microsoft's Windows Store. These app stores allow us to click and download apps on a whim, with access to anything including (definitely not limited to) games, social networking, photo/video sharing, and news. What apps and sites most popular will vary from kid to kid- so talk to your child to find out what apps they are using, and go in with confidence--- here's an overview of some of the most popular apps that have come up in classrooms around Franklin County:

Cell Phone/Tablet App Stores:
The three major mobile operating systems are Apple's iOS, Google's Android, and Microsoft's Windows Phone.
>   **Apple**- Iphones/Ipads/Ipod Touch*. App store*: Itunes Apple Store
>   **Androids**- Many smartphones, like Samsung Galaxy. *App store*: Google Play
>   **Microsoft**- Microsoft surface, other devices using Microsoft/Windows. *App store*: Windows Store

Kids can download a variety of apps through these stores, many for free. The following are most popular/noteworthy:

SnapChat- also called ProSnap (Windows), SnapChat is a picture texting app that allows users to send photos with short comments on it that will appear in the receiver's inbox for up to 10 seconds, then "disappear". The catch: the receiver can screenshot the image and save it. Also, SnapChat policy is vague on how long the image can exist in the Snapchat and the receiver's server. Alternatives to Snapchat are popping up, such as Poke, Wire, and Wickr.

Kik- alternative texting app. Texts don't go through your cell phone provider, so you can't see the texts received/sent via a cell phone bill. Other alternative texting apps: WhatsApp, TextNow, TextFree and Viber

Facebook and Facebook Messenger- this app puts Facebook right on the device's homescreen, allowing easy access. The Messenger app provides direct, quick, and easy access to your facebook messages, which can serve as an alternate form of texting

Twitter- just like Facebook, there's an option for private Twitter messaging allowing users to send/receive images privately through their Twitter App

Instagram- again, the app allows users to send/receive photos through private messages

Tinder- we haven't heard too much about this one in the Franklin County area, but it seems to be increasing in popularity. Tinder connects users to a bunch of photos of people, which you can "like" or swipe for the next photo. If a person whose photo you "liked" also "likes" your photo, you will find out that you two are matched…and can then proceed to chat, meet, or whatever else comes next. There are similar apps on Facebook.

<u>**What You Can Do:**</u>
Talk to your child about what apps they have, what they do, and a safe way to use them. Tell them your concerns about their privacy and digital footprint.
Be the role model-make sure they aren't finding questionable posts/images on your accounts
Block Apps, or to require permission to download apps.
>   For Apple/iOS: http://support.apple.com/kb/HT4213
>   For Androids/Google Play: https://support.google.com/googleplay/answer/1075738?hl=en
>   For Windows/Microsoft: http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows7/products/features/parental-controls
>   (guide applies to windows 7, if you have a different edition just search in toolbar on top left "windows 8 parental controls"

Parent Guide to Websites

We all know what websites are. But are we aware of the sites our kids are on? There are too many to choose from. The internet has endless opportunities and resources- which is wonderful, but comes with its own set of concerns. Much of what kids do online is safe and fun, but there are a few sites to keep in mind when looking at your child's online history.

Facebook/Twitter/Instagram/Ask.fm: There are countless options for social networking, but these are a few of the most popular. These sites are a fun way to chat with friends, but have potential for abuse. They are home to much of the cyberbullying, and can also result in inappropriate images being shared. Furthermore, it's addicting! "Facebook Stalking", or spending hours online looking at news feeds and friends' photos, can become an obsession. Try to be sure there's a healthy balance between time connected (cell phones, internet, video games, tv) and time away.

Omegle/Chat Roullette: These sites are downright scary. The entire premise of these sites is to video chat with strangers, and much of the video content is inappropriate. Kids are curious, so they check these sites out. Be ready to talk to them about the inappropriate and possibly scary people that may be using these sites to talk to kids and teens.

Youtube/Vine: These sites have tons of videos- funny, informative, entertaining, you name it. With that, there are inappropriate ones. Vine is famous for its 7 second videos that anyone can submit…sometimes there is nudity or other inappropriate content. Youtube videos can be mean, embarrassing, and/or inappropriate as well. Watch for mean comments below many of the videos. Also keep in mind that your child may be *sharing* content as well as viewing.

What you can do:

"Friend" Them. Check out their Facebook/Twitter/other social media profiles. Be their "friend" on Facebook. But keep in mind- they can limit what you see by simply choosing the option to "block" you from seeing certain images/posts. So in that case- know their passwords so that you can keep up to date.

Google has a SafeSearch option, which you can turn on to help prevent adult content from showing up in Google searches: https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/510?hl=en

Speaking of Google, search your child's name! It usually connects to the sites that your child has profiles on. Another option is using Pipl.com to see where your child may have profiles or images online. Many times, minors' information won't pop up on here…but, if your child is older, or lying about their age, it may.

Establish a Balance between time connected (T.V., video games, internet, texting) and time away from all the devices. Encourage other activities: going outside, arts/crafts, hobbies, or board games---do they still exist? ☺

Be a Model for your children on healthy, safe internet use. If the rule is no texting at the dinner table- make sure you put your phone away too. If you don't want your children to post inappropriate or mean messages online, be sure you're careful of your comments as well.

Be Aware. As best you can, be aware of what your child is doing online. This means talk, talk, talk. Ask them questions, check out their browser history, and know the numbers on their cell phone bill. They will run across inappropriate content at some point, if they haven't already. Help them understand how to process it and to be careful of what they post, as it can all be traced back to them in the future (think summer jobs, college, etc).

Keep Yourself Updated on what's popular these days. Internet-safety.yoursphere.com is a great site to keep updated on current apps, sites, and online safety tips. Many popular news sites have "tech" sections, such as Yahoo and CNN. You can also ask those that know the most….your children☺

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me:
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