TIKTOK

MATURE CONTENT

On the iOS store, TikTok is listed as 12+. On the Google Play Store it is rated as Parental guidance recommended. When signing up for the app, it’s possible to lie about your age without any form of verification. As children scroll through their feed, most of the videos they’re likely to come across are lighthearted or funny takes on dance routines which are assigned to make people laugh. However there has been a slew of videos which have been reported for featuring drug and alcohol abuse, self harm and sexual content, including young teens dressing overtly sexually and behaving suggestively. Given the deluge of material uploaded to TikTok every day, it’s impossible to moderate everything and it can be quite easy to come across explicit content on the ‘for you’ feed when logging into the platform.

INAPPROPRIATE MUSIC

TikTok revolves around creating music videos through lip-syncing and dancing. Inevitably, some of the music featured by users will contain explicit or suggestive lyrics. Given the undeniably young user base, there is a risk that lighthearted lyric-take to imitate the explicit language they hear or the suggestive actions they see when watching other users’ videos on the app.

ONLINE PREDATORS

As a social network, TikTok makes it easy to connect with other users. This includes the ability to comment on and react to other user’s videos, follow their profile and download their content. Be aware that by default, any user can comment on your child’s video if their account is set to public. Most interactions are harmless enough but as an app, TikTok is prone to predators because of the abundance of younger users.

ADDICTIVE NATURE

Social media is designed to be addictive and TikTok is no different. It can be fun and hugely entertaining. However, it is also because of this that it can be hard to put down. In addition to the short, punchy nature of the looping video format, the app’s ability to keep you guessing what will come on screen next makes it easy to turn a five-minute visit into a 45-minute visit.

TIKTOK FAME

TikTok is in very image focused and there is a notable preoccupation with appearing cool and attractive. Many teenagers now attempt to go viral and become what’s known in-app as ‘TikTok famous’. TikTok (and its predecessor musical.ly) has spawned its own celebrities – social media stars Loren Gray and Jacob Sartorius have been catapulted to fame through their initial popularity on the app. Obviously, all budding influencers looking to become the next big thing will be disappointed, but this may have the knock on effect of making them go more and more drastic lengths to get noticed.

IN-APP PURCHASES

Aside from the content, there’s also the option to purchase in-app extras called ‘TikTok coins’. Prices range from £0.99 for 100 coins to an eye-watering £93.99 for 10,000 coins. TikTok coins are used to purchase different emojis to reward content creators that a user finds funny or entertaining. In the iOS version of the app you can disable the option to buy TikTok coins but this sadly doesn’t seem to be a feature in the Android version.

TALK ABOUT ONLINE DANGERS

Assuming your child is above the age limit to use the app, make sure you take the time to talk to them about what they are seeing on the app. Have a dialogue, get them to give you their opinion on what is appropriate and model the correct behaviour for them. Go over with them why they shouldn’t give out private information or identifiable photos and be aware that by default, any user can comment on your child’s video if their account is set to public. Most interactions are harmless enough but as an app, TikTok is prone to predators because of the abundance of younger users.

LEARN HOW TO REPORT AND BLOCK INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

With the proper privacy settings in place, TikTok can be a safe space for your child to express themselves. However, just in case something does manage to slip through, TikTok allows users to report offensive and concerning content within the app. You can also block individual users by going on their profile.

EXPLORE AND LEARN YOURSELF

Understanding and learning the app yourself is a must. This way your child can get their daily dose of entertainment. However, it is also because of this addictive nature that it can be hard to put down. In addition to the short, punchy nature of the looping video format, the app’s ability to keep you guessing what will come on screen next makes it easy to turn a five-minute visit into a 45-minute visit.

USE PRIVACY SETTINGS

Undoubtedly, the easiest way to safeguard your child on TikTok is to make sure their account is set to private. This means only those users your child approves can view, like or follow their content. Setting the account to private may clash with your child’s goal of social media superstardom, but it is the only way to ensure their privacy. Setting the account to private may clash with your child’s goal of social media superstardom, but it is the only way to ensure their privacy. Setting the account to private may clash with your child’s goal of social media superstardom, but it is the only way to ensure their privacy.

ENABLE RESTRICTED MODE

In the digital wellbeing section there’s the ability to turn on restricted mode using a PIN. Restricted mode filters out content that is not age appropriate although it should be noted that this isn’t always 100% fool proof. When enabling restricted mode, parents should still be vigilant to what their child is watching and take note that the algorithm moderating content is not infallible.

MODERATE SCREEN TIME

As entertaining as TikTok is, you can help your child moderate their time on the app by making use of the digital wellbeing section. Under the screen time management option, you can limit the daily allotted time allowed on the app in increments ranging from 40 to 120 minutes. You can also lock the difference behind a PIN number which has to be inputted in order to then exceed the daily time limit. This way your child can get their daily dose of memes without wasting away the day.