

# Messaging apps

## Parent Guide

How are they different to texting?  
And are they safe?

### What are messaging apps?

Messaging apps are **standalone platforms** that enable users to **direct message each other**.

They are typically **free to use**, and have **customisable** features such as stories, GIFs, emojis, group chats, voice and video calling.

Popular platforms include [WhatsApp](#), Signal, Telegram and [Facebook Messenger](#).

### How are messaging apps different to texting?

Messaging apps differ to texting because messages can be sent **using a WiFi signal** and therefore don't always use up mobile data.

There are usually **more options to customise your messaging experience** in ways that texting doesn't offer.

### What are the risks?

Most messaging apps have an **age rating of at least 13+** – although services such as **WhatsApp and Telegram** that have an age rating of 16+. But these have **no robust age verification** – meaning **younger children can easily use them**.

**End-to-end encryption** is very common among messaging apps. This makes it difficult

for the app to intercept messages that contain abusive or harmful content.

On some services, group chats can contain over 200 people meaning your child could be at risk of being added to **groups with people they don't know**.

### What can I do?

Discuss the importance of **not sharing contact details** and other personal information with **people your child doesn't know**.

### What else should I know?

If your child wants to use a messaging app, **explore the reporting and blocking tools** together, and reassure them that **they can always come to you** if they feel worried or upset about something.

Finally, explain that if they **feel overwhelmed by messages** or have been **added to a group they don't want to be a part of** they can **take their time to reply to messages** or **leave the chat** they're in.