

TOP 5 QUESTIONS PARENTS ASK ABOUT KIK

1. What is Kik and why do teens love it?

Kik is a chat platform that connects teens with friends and the entertainment, games, brands, and media they love. Kik users can chat privately in one-to-one conversations, as well as with groups in group chats. The company also offers video chat for both one-to-one and group chats.

Teens love Kik because it's an "in the moment" experience, without the profile curation fatigue they can feel on other apps, where their photos, videos or status updates are "judged" in the form of likes, shares or comments, and "live on" until removed. Teens worry less about creating a public permanent record of posts and pictures that can affect them later in life. Teens also like that they can be "anonymous" on Kik as they don't need to publicly disclose personal information (more on that later). It's also free to use.

2. Does Kik have a minimum age?

Yes, the minimum age to register for a Kik account is 13. Kik requires a birthday upon sign up, and if the birthday indicates that the user is under 13, they can't create an account.

3. What are the pros and cons of anonymity on Kik?

Kik is considered "anonymous" because people sign up with a username that's not publicly linked to a phone number or real name. Some adults worry that this anonymous environment encourages bad or risky

behavior. While anonymity can sometimes lead people to falsely feel that they can't be held accountable for their actions, it also offers privacy and protection. Teens are able to connect on sensitive issues such as sexuality, religion, politics, problems at school or home, and both physical and mental health issues without the fear of shame or judgment. And while users can be anonymous from each other, they can be held accountable and banned for violating Kik's Community Standards. It's also important to note that a Kik username cannot be changed, which means that a user can't change their username to avoid consequences for mean or inappropriate behavior. For more, see ConnectSafely's Tips for Safe and Civil Use of Anonymous Apps.

4. What are the risks of using Kik?

All communication platforms have risks if users aren't careful about how they protect their personal information. There's also always risk that users will misuse the application, bully, harass others, or send unwanted messages. Teaching teens to respect themselves and each other in both physical and online spaces will go a long way toward creating positive and safe communities, including those on Kik.

5. How can I help keep my teen safe when using Kik?

It's a good idea for parents to have ongoing conversations with teens about how they use Kik and other apps. You can chat with your teen about Kik's blocking, reporting, and new chats features to help your teen always control their privacy and who they're chatting with. Make it a conversation, not a lecture, by asking them to explain what Kik is and how to use it safely. Review this guide together and discuss how your teen can apply some of its lessons. Go over basic online safety tips such as not getting together with people they meet online (at least not without others present) and how to respond to bullying and other unwanted behavior. Remind your teen that how they act on Kik and other messaging and social media apps in general is a reflection of them and that they can be held responsible for their actions online.