

Parenting at the speed of light

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Snapchat....we have a problem



If you have allowed your primary school student or young teen a snapchat account, here's something you need to be aware of.

One of the search functions of Snapchat is providing too much information about their users. If the location services for the app are turned on a very concerning security problem is revealed.

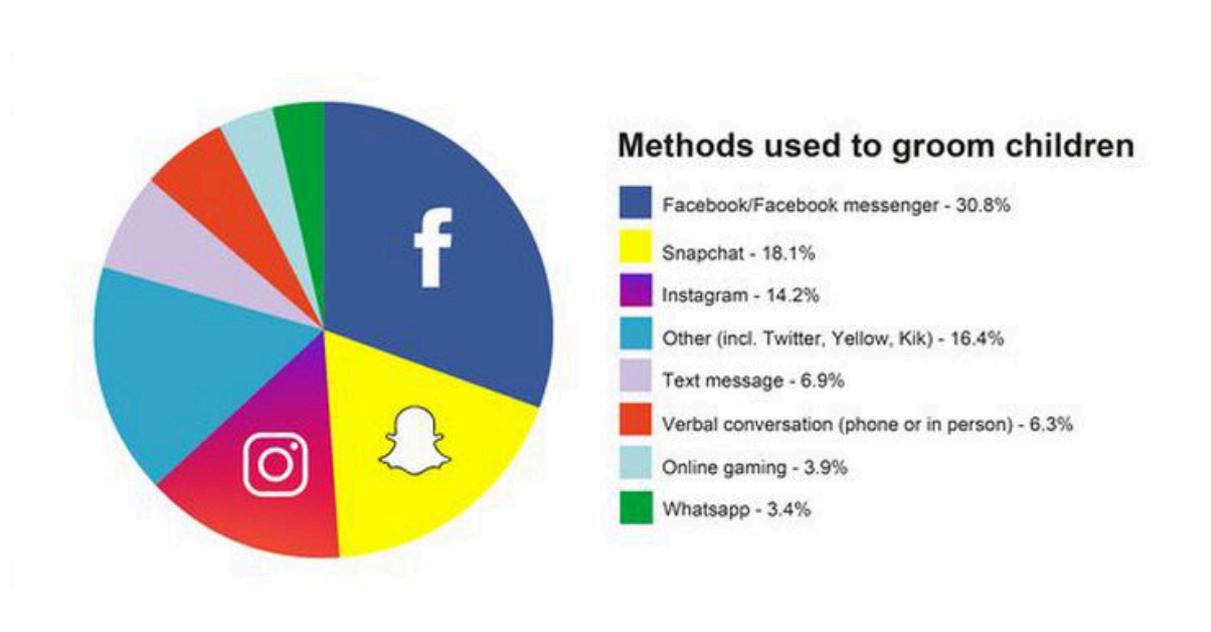
Snapchat has a very clever user retention strategy behind it. They lured in a whole generation based on the fact that their snaps would disappear after a short amount of time, so it became a second language for teenagers. A large percentage of kids say they use Snapchat because their parents don't. Also, if you turn off location services for snapchat you start to disable some of the photo filters so kids won't turn off location services for Snapchat.

And there lies a BIG personal privacy and security issue that you and your children are not aware of and should be.

Enter a school name or a suburb into the search feature on Snapchat and the app will deliver to you all of posts being made in proximity to the location. It will also suggest other schools (with other Snapchat account holders). Often this list will include the names of account holder, and provides the individual searching locations with the option to add the account holder to their contacts.

This raises two issues.

1. It provides evidence that numbers of students are using snapchat in and around school – often in defiance of the schools’ mobile devices usage policy.
2. Complete strangers are able to target your child’s Snapchat profile, using the school they attend as a way to find them. This issue is particularly disturbing.



Consider this possible scenario if you are not concerned by this information.

A predator doesn't know the names or other regular locations of children attending any of the schools in the area that they may be, but simply by searching the school name in the Snapchat search feature, they are able to find regular users of Snapchat at these schools that are close to them.

Courtesy of Snapchat they are now able to add the accounts of any child they find, and may now happily follow their snaps, record or screen shot them.....and watch for other locations that appear regularly in a child’s Snapchat feed, such as their home or regular place for sporting activity. They can also interact with the child through their account, and become “friends” with them on any other social media account.

What can you do to minimize risk?

- Respect the age restrictions of 13+
- Build trust with your child by explaining why you insist the account be set to private.
- Ensure that Ghost Mode is enabled on the Snap Map, so account holder information is hidden.
- Turn the location services for the app off on the device.
- Regularly review with your child who interacts with their account.
- Ask your child to respect the schools mobile phone policy.

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