

6

TEEN DATING APPS PARENTS SHOULD KNOW

YELLOW

A smartphone app advertised for ages 13+ that allows teens to make new friends with a swipe-right, swipe-left format for liking or not liking someone.

Beware: Often described as "Tinder for Teens," Yellow does not have age verification and is accused of allegedly being used by sexual predators to groom innocent youth. Members of government and organizations in U.S., U.K. and Australia are concerned about predators using the app to chat with kids and U.K.'s NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) wants the app to enforce mandatory age verification procedures.

SPOTAFRIEND

Uses GPS locators to allow teens and pre-teens to "swipe" on profiles, get pictures, and connect with nearby strangers. Professes not to be a teen dating app but rather a new way to make friends.

Beware: Google Play & iTunes give it ages 17+ rating, but @SpotaFriendTeen describes it as an "app alternative for people ages 13-19." Parents should be aware that the SpotaFriend.com site blogs and content include provocative "more than friend" topics such as "10 Condom Secrets" and "How to Seduce a Girl Online."

MYLOL

This app is aimed at teenagers for the purposes of social networking and dating. The user's profile info can include pictures, sexual orientation, quiz questions, videos and interests. Mylol users must be at least 13 years of age and users over the age of 19 are forbidden from joining.

Beware: Common Sense Media website gives the app a 1-star rating, saying, "Parents need to know...there are too many adults, too many explicit photos, and too much personal info being exchanged for MyLOL to be a safe social site for teens."

HOTORNOT

Rating app lets people judge the attractiveness of others based on a series of photos, tapping a heart sign or an "X" to rank them. Users log in to see what others think of them too. If two users think the other is "hot," they can exchange messages.

Beware: "If you find out your teenager is using HOTORNOT, have a talk with them to let them know that beauty isn't a superficial thing," says Julie Spira, founder of CyberDatingExpert.com and author, "The Perils of Cyber-Dating." Spira adds, "Beauty, it comes from within, so encourage your teens to develop friendships outside of the app, so they don't find themselves with someone older with the intention of being more than just friends."

MEETME

MeetMe is a popular online flirting, entertainment, and social networking app and website, formerly called MyYearbook. Approximately 90% of its traffic comes from mobile and has more than one million total daily active users.

Beware: Parents have called MeetMe a "creepy social network that features racy photos and suggestive talk." In 2014, A San Francisco city attorney sued MeetMe for "lax privacy protections give sexual predators a high-tech tool to exploit kids under 18 in California and around the country." Registration requires users include access to their phones' geo-locator for match-ups on-the-go.

SKOUT

This mobile "flirting" app uses a phone's GPS to help users connect to people nearby.

Beware: In 2012, Skout came under fire as a danger to teens and they briefly suspended their app to tighten safety protocols. Now posts are more closely monitored, and only a teen's general region is available instead of an exact location. Teens can't send pictures in private messages, but age verification is still not in place. "Compared to some social media targeting teens, Skout is more PG-13 than NC-17," says one parent, "probably due to increased moderation. Still, it's not perfectly safe, and parents and teens might want to communicate about the potential dangers of any meet-up app."

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