

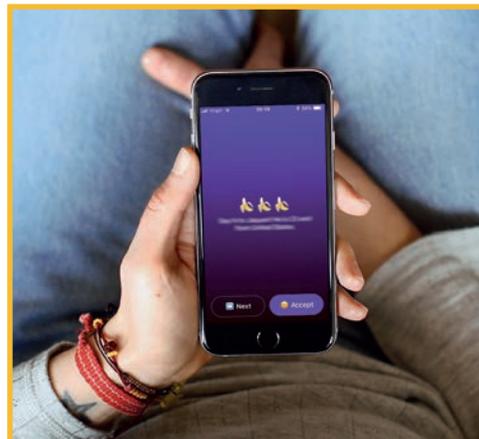
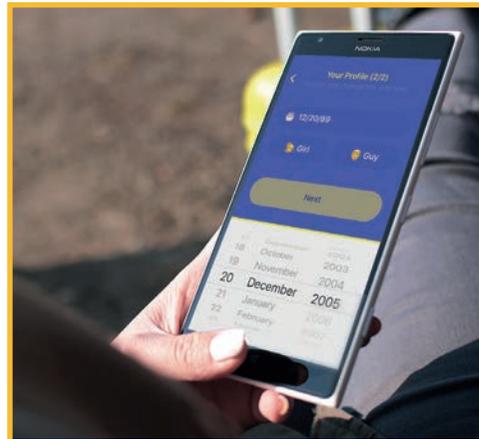


What is Monkey?

Monkey is a free video-chat app for iOS devices that lets teenagers chat to a random person from around the world in a 15 seconds call. If they like talking to one another they can decide to extend their chat time using mobile messaging app Snapchat.

Each user must tap 'time' to keep chatting - if only one taps time, the call will disconnect when the 15 seconds is up. Monkey is available for anyone aged over 13 years although in its terms and conditions it advises that under 18s must have permission from a parent or legal guardian.

What does it look like?



Main Concerns for Parents

Monkey



Interaction with strangers

Monkey actively encourages teenagers to chat with strangers and there is no age verification process. Chatting with strangers via Monkey involves many of the same risks of chatting with strangers in the real world.

Inappropriate content

The app was designed by teenagers as an alternative to video-chat site Chatroulette but without the sexually explicit content. Yet, because Monkey allows people to communicate via video, there is great potential for there to be content you'd rather your child didn't see. A BBC reporter encountered "people lying about their age, making sexual remarks, sharing pornography and masturbating" while researching the app in 2017.

Privacy

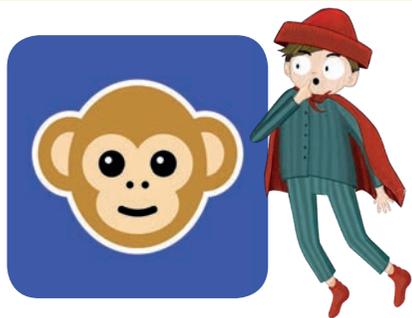
Personal information is collected and can be shared with third parties. The app states in its Privacy Policy that any content can be used for any reason with any third party, including photos, text, messages, posts, html, URLs, pictures, video and other content.

Oversharing

Children often do not understand the risks involved in giving out too much personal information to people online. They may also be less protective of personal details, such as their address.

Exposing your child's location

Even if your child doesn't directly draw attention to their location or identity in their videos, clips which include landmarks of the area, or their school uniform, can allow the viewer to discover exactly where photos were taken when posted publicly online.



Understand the sign-up process

Monkey uses Facebook Account Kit so new users can sign in with just a phone number - no passwords are necessary. You get a code sent to your mobile phone to verify an account. Account Kit doesn't need a Facebook account for you to log into an app, however Facebook will 'receive information about the device you're using as well as other information that app developers may choose to share'. The app is also an extension for Snapchat, so you will also need a Snapchat user name.

Chat to people with shared interests

Your teen can find people with similar interests by clicking on the Tree icon to find other users categorised by interests, such as Dancing, Singing or Cars, as well as locations, including the UK. Teenagers are often more confident expressing themselves online than a traditional face to face conversation but it's worth reminding them that if they ever feel uncomfortable about things being said they can end the conversation and confide in you.

Monitor your child closely

Despite the fact that many teenagers use Monkey, they may encounter content that simply isn't designed or appropriate for their age group. If you allow your child as young as 13 to use Monkey, it probably isn't wise to allow them to use it alone - try to be close by to help them react quicker to uncomfortable situations.

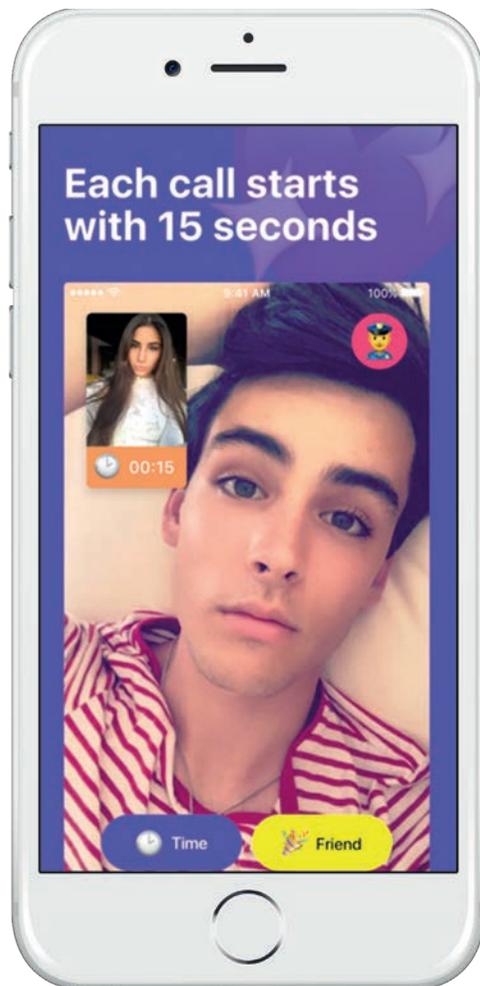
Talk to your child about the risks

Chat to your child about the risks and ramifications of having random conversations with random people. Recognise that to your teenager, Monkey is an amazing way to communicate with others, meet new people and friends, but explain that video calls and messages aren't as private as they may think and can easily be recorded

or stored. Because conversations are live they also can't control what the other person says or does.

Don't give out personal information

While there is no need to terrify your child with horror stories, you'll need to convey to them the importance of keeping private information to themselves. It is important that children don't give away personal details, such as their full name, age, address, or phone number to strangers.



Don't arrange meetings

Your child should never agree to meet up with someone they only know online. No matter how friendly they might seem or how well they think they know them, they are still a stranger.

Report people

Monkey says it has a 'See No, Hear No, Speak No' policy that prohibits bullying and inappropriate content. If your child sees something inappropriate on Monkey, he or she can tap the report button to have it reviewed within minutes by the app's moderation team. The report button can be used to both block and report a user at any time.

Be supportive

If your child sees something disturbing, pornographic, deviant or otherwise troubling, they may be left confused and in need of somebody to explain it to them. As such, tell your child that you are always there to help them if they need it and if they start acting differently to normal, calmly ask them why.

Consider others

Explain to your child that they must not share anything or say anything during video chats that are likely to harass, upset, embarrass, alarm, inconvenience or annoy any person. Or share content that could endanger the safety or wellbeing of others.

Talk about sexting

In the UK it is an offence to make, distribute, possess or show any indecent images of anyone aged under 18, even if the content was created with the consent of that young person. Sexting can also leave children feeling ashamed, guilty, embarrassed or anxious.