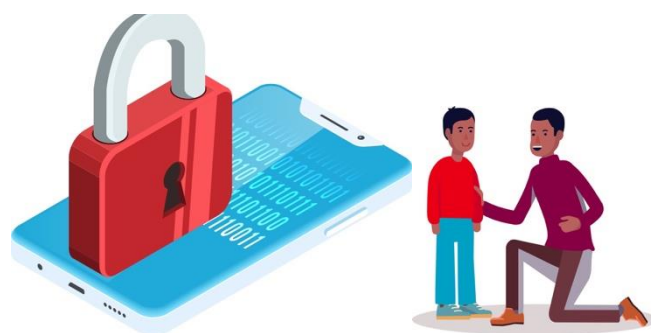TREND MICRO | cares

Six Tips to Protect Your Family's Privacy and Security on Video Chat Apps

Humans are social creatures by nature. We thrive on conversations, shared experiences, and social connections. However, with the ongoing growth of COVID-19 across the globe, those opportunities have drastically changed. Video chatting is our present and our future, and while it has many benefits, there are some risks. Here are six tips to protect your family's privacy and security on video chat apps:

1. Protect Your Privacy:

- Review and use privacy settings, only invite people you know to a chat.
- Require a password to join (if available).
- Set up a waiting room so you can approve attendees before joining the chat (if available).
- Lock your chats to prevent outsiders from joining.
- Use headphones to keep things private from your own family.

2. Protect Personal Information:

- Pick an app with end-to-end encryption to secure your video chats.
- Use a strong password and 2-factor authentication.
- Download any app updates often.
- Never share information during the chat that you want kept private.
- When using business video chat apps, use a unique meeting ID and password for each meeting.
- Disable file sharing or the chat function if you are hosting a video chat with large groups or the public.
- Use up-to-date security software to protect yourself from malicious links or emails from the app vendor.

3. Protect Yourself:

- Don't allow strangers to join your video chats.
- Encourage kids to limit invitations or ask each other permission before adding others to a video chat.
- Turn off location tracking in app (if possible).
- Encourage kids to tell you if a stranger is trying to invite them to a video chat.
- Report unwanted contact from strangers through the app. Contact local law enforcement and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at 1-800-THELOST.

4. Report Inappropriate Behaviors:

- Speak with your kids about bullying, harassment, or other troubling behavior online.
- Encourage your kids to come to you if someone is being unkind to them or others during chats.
- Show kids how to report behaviors that are disturbing or violate the rules through the app.

5. Respect Others and Their Privacy:

- Video communication is a two-way street– kindness and compassion are always paramount.
- Do not record or stream your chat and share them elsewhere–especially without others' consent. This is a big violation of privacy.
- If others choose to hide their video image or use a background, respect their decision.

6. Set Time Limits:

- Respect your own and other peoples' time.
- Remember the 30/30 rule to protect your eyes: Look away from the screen every 30 minutes and focus on something far away for 30 seconds.
- Get up and walk around after each chat to get the blood flowing again.

Check out this list of popular video chatting apps and click on each to find out more. Maximum users are the number allowed through video chat (and also reflect the free versions of business

Discord
Video and audio chat app, primarily used by gaming communities.

Maximum users: 25

Facebook Messenger
Popular messaging app that allows text and video calls.

Maximum users: 50

FaceTime
Apple video chat app that works on iOS devices only.

Maximum users: 32

Google Duo
Video chat app that works on iOS and Android devices.

Maximum users: 12

Google Meet
Available free to the public in early May. (previously named Hangouts Meet)

Maximum users: 100

Houseparty
Social video chat app. Offers games that can be played between users.

Maximum users: 8

Instagram
Popular social media app offers video chat between other users.

Maximum users: 6

LINE
Messaging app allows for text, voice, and video chats.

Maximum users: 4

Microsoft Teams
Designed for business—free and paid versions available.

Maximum users: 50

Skype
Allows text, video, and audio communication.

Maximum users: 50

Snapchat
Popular social media app offers video, text, and photo chatting between other users.

Maximum users: 16

WhatsApp
Popular consumer messaging app offers text, voice, and video chats. Has end-to-end encryption.

Maximum users: 4

Zoom
Designed for business use—free version has attendee and time limits.

Maximum users: 100

Video chat apps will continue to be one of the most important technologies in our lives. Use these tips to learn how to use video chat apps wisely and teach your kids to do the same! Let's safely stay connected to those we miss.