

Digital World Travel

Just, as we cannot guarantee risk free travel on the highways, the air, or by sea, we cannot guarantee 100% risk free travel in the ever-expanding Digital World.

However, we can try to help you limit the risks!

There is much publicity in the media about how dangerous Facebook is for underage users, but have you ever considered that TikTok could be just as bad, if not worse!

With 1.65 billion downloads to date, TikTok is currently the hottest social media site for tweens and teens.

The good, the bad, and the truly ugly!
It's all there on TikTok.



Kate's Safe Travel Tips

While our kids are hitting download, parents have questions: What is it? Where'd it come from? And, most importantly, is it safe?

While it may seem like it came out of nowhere, the app actually began in 2014. TikTok is a free social media app designed for creating and sharing short music videos. It replaced Musical.ly that shut down in August 2018 having all of its 100 million users transferred to the TikTok app.

TikTok is a site that allows the over 13 aged user, according to their rules, to upload and share original videos. It's a popular place for children and adults to go to see the latest silly Internet video that everyone's talking about.

TikTok has become a world-wide sensation. It's an open platform where people of different ages and cultures can upload clips to showcase their talent, their collections, funny videos or their rants and rambles.

It seems as though many people have found a love for TikTok, sadly this includes very young children.

These days, clips of children can be found all over TikTok, some of the videos go viral, receiving millions of hits, and can even jumpstart a career or two. However, there's a lot of mature content on TikTok and it has easy to use inbuilt features where users can also comment on clips they watch. Because it's such a simple process to comment on any clip, sadly the comments on even the most innocent of clips can be cruel, hurtful and at worst inappropriate.

What worries me about TikTok is the openness of the children in many of the clips. They innocently or inadvertently give away personal information. I have seen clips with young children's faces fully visible and in some clips they stated their names.

Even if they didn't state their names, their information such as age, name, and location could be viewed by clicking their user name and following them, this then allows access to their profile. Information on a profile could be viewed by anyone in the world, anywhere! The scariest thing of all is that when children utilise TikTok they make it easy for predators and web bullies to stalk and taunt them. Chat rooms were once the platform to taunt, bully, and leer children over the web, but it seems as though TikTok is a more sophisticated way to do these things, as users can actually see their target and plan from there! The question that comes to my mind is... are parents aware of what their children are posting for the entire world to see?

The other risk of TikTok is exposure to inappropriate material. TikTok can expose your children to a huge range of human behavior and activities. Sure there are many completely innocent clips, many of them even educational, but be aware there are also plenty of "iffy" clips. With thousands of videos uploaded every hour, it is easy for your children to lose their way on the website and stumble upon some inappropriate and illicit content. If your children do come across the latter, you should talk to them about what they've seen.

Talk to them about safety measures, remind your children to protect their identities. **No-no's** for clips include images of car license plate numbers, images of your house, street names, their bedrooms, bathrooms, or their school, school uniforms. Make sure that none of their "tags" (*search identifiers*) reveal their real names, locations, schools, or anything else that could lead people to your door.

Bottom line! TikTok can be a fabulously creative medium and a place where individuals can showcase their lives. But the app has had some problems, widely publicised in the media such as illegally collecting data on users under 13, notoriously inappropriate comments, and awkward settings that can leave you with unwanted followers. Still, its viral "challenges," creative tools, and just-plain-fun features mean your kids are probably going to want it!

But it's only as responsible as the person uploading or commenting on the clips.

The reality is that this world is just too scary for young children to broadcast themselves so freely!

A parent's guide to TikTok:

<https://www.common sense media.org/blog/parents-ultimate-guide-to-tiktok>

Safe Travel ☺

Kate Dole

ICT Coordinator