

TO START

Privacy of children

TikTok or Bytedance is currently the proud recipient of the largest EVER civil penalty in the USA for violating the online privacy of children.

Those words should be enough. India banned it (and now has a special set of guidelines for users). Indonesia banned it, and now the USA has given it a kick in the proverbial.

But what did the app do, part cularly in America to earn this reward?

In the USA, there is a piece of legislat on called COPPA or the Children's Online Privacy Protect on Act 1998. Part of this legislat on is the requirement that companies that intend to collect personal informat on MUST obtain parental consent for individuals under 13.

Prior to rebranding Musical.ly had been aware that a large proport on of its users were under 13 as they had received thousands of complaints from parents.

The company had done nothing to address this issue either as Musical.ly or TikTok.

What was found during the Federal invest ga L et as& forma A that w

These same users took to Twit er to complain. And this showed very, very clearly that many of the suspended under 13 years accounts belonged to ACTUAL ADULTS. (or at the least older teens).

Um..what?

More Problems Part two.

Branching out

Where Musicall.ly was largely focused on lip syncing videos – TikTok has splintered into numerous direct ons from its karaoke roots.

The app is full of 15 second dips covering – well a wide variety of genres – physical comedy, dancing, gymnast cs, monologues, lip-syncs - with the common theme being some kind of audio track laid down over the dip. This can be a song or a voiceover. There are popular songs, voice overs, filters, emoji's and comments, hashtags and likes and dislikes – similar to many social media applications.

But.

The content has gone a lit le wild west lately. The broadening from simple karaoke is leaving some toxic (and frankly astonishingly horrible) video up on the app.

Watch without an account

You do not need a personal TikTok account to view the content of the app. You can download the app without becoming part of the community. Watch anything that rolls up on the app.

This means a child may view the public accounts of strangers doing absolutely anything on TikTok, without a parent having imposed any filters or restrict ons on the app. You can't censor the content your child may be exposed to.

You can't set anything. Your child can watch anything they want, without having an account.

NOTE - this is an opt on a number of children are taking, to avoid being restricted by parents.

Inaccurate ages used both by older and younger users

The age restrict ons according a number of sources varies from 12+ to over 16+ -depending on which internet parent ng forums you may seek advice from, but TikTok itself insis nu A A A

Default Public set ng for all accounts

An account, when established is automat cally a public one. A child may not realise this when set ng up their prof le, or deliberately choose not to install the privacy opt ons.

Anyone at all may view the content of a public account, and unt I the privacy funct on is switched on they cont nue to be able to do this.

While there is a feature that can limit followers to only approved ones – when the essent all point of an app is to collect likes and gain popularity – what child will really stick to this?

Private accounts on a sharing app

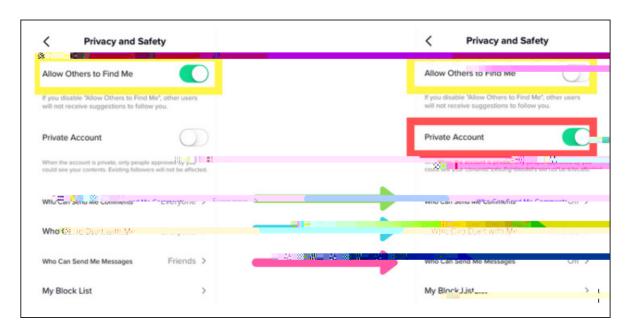
These are dif cult to insist on and it is really impossible to expect a child to use this app in a privacy bubble.

You are absolutely kidding yourself if you think y	our child's	private a	ccoun	t will remain that	way, u	nless they only use it
when you are around, and yw	Х	Ιt	S	o le used this w	Χ.	

Here's how to turn on the privacy set ngs, and the wellness funct on.

Privacy Set ngs

Within the app itself. This is the screen you need to navigate.



From the website



Wellness

One reputable aspect of the Tik Tok app is the "Digital Wellbeing" set ng.

This means a child cannot turn the app on by themselves without receiving a 4 digit passcode, sent to a previously nominated mobile phone number – usually a parents (again, more data is being provided here from another individual). Further on this choice is the Screen t me management mode, which will limit a user to two hours per day. A passcode is again required to extend the t me a person may use the app. This is, admit edly a good way for a parent to control the screen t me of their child.

The Restricted modality is also available in this sect on – thought the enormous volume of content uploaded to this app is proving troublesome for moderators and this select on is by no means fool-proof.



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