Gooseberry Parent

Skype

What is Skype?

A free, online app for audio and video calling, as well as instant messaging. Skype can be downloaded to any digital mobile device and it is free to call and message other Skype accounts. Calls made to mobile phones or landlines are charged through a debit system where users can add credit to their accounts. Skype is often used by friends and families to communicate over long distances.

Key Features of Skype to be aware of

- To use Skype, download the app to a digital device and create an account. Accounts are restricted to users aged 13 and over and require an email address. This will not prevent a user registering who is under the recommended age.
- Internet use is needed to use Skype.
- Skype is free of charge to call other Skype accounts. If calling a landline or mobile number, however, the user must pay a subscription fee.
- Skype can be used to make one to one or conference calls of up to 25 people.
- Skype can be used for educational purposes, such as online tutoring, as well as social and family communication.
- The use of your device's microphone and camera are required to make video calls.
- For children's accounts, Skype allows only people in the child's contact list to contact them.
- Age, date of birth and gender are all hidden in the profiles of children's account and are not visible to other users.
- Children's accounts cannot be found in general Skype searches, unless their Skype address or exact username is entered in the search tool.
- You can add a profile picture if you choose to, but it is not a requirement.

Enjoying Skype safely and managing the risks

- **Communicate your expectations** – As a parent, it is your responsibility to make clear what is and is not acceptable online behaviour. You need to accept that allowing your child access to online apps like these, requires trust and clear boundaries, for their own wellbeing.

- **Signing Up** – Encourage your child to keep log in details and passwords secure and share them with you.

- **Passwords –** Skype does have a facility to password protect your account, so encourage your child to sign in and out of the account**. Insist on managing the password.**

- **User Names** – Encourage your child to choose an original and creative username that avoids giving away their own.

- **Adding Contacts** – Ensure that all contacts in your child's contact list are known and trusted in real life. Encourage them to remove any contacts that they do not know from their list.

- **Video Calls** – Remind your child to ensure the person they are video-calling is known to them in real life. Verify that their Skype account belongs to them before making any calls.

- Encourage your child to reject any calls from unknown persons and inform you of these. Likewise, if they accidentally begin a call, encourage them to hang up immediately and inform you.

- If a request is received to add a contact, this can be easily blocked and deleted.

- **Location Settings** – Encourage your child to turn off location settings so that they cannot be traced.

- **Privacy Settings** – In the privacy settings section of your child's account, ensure they select 'contacts' next to the 'Allow calls from' setting. Ensure 'chat history' is saved so that you may review their chats if needed.

- **Sharing Information** – Though their profiles will be hidden, encourage your child to share as little personal and other identifying information on their Skype profiles, as their account could be found through searches for exact names and email addresses.

- **Blocking**– Encourage your child to block any unknown or unwanted user. To block a user, click on their contact name and choose the block option in the menu.

- **Reporting** - To report abuse, encourage your child to use the report feature in the app's settings.

- **Consider** securing the webcam with a cover or alternatively encourage and promote positive habits by turning off and disconnecting any webcams that may be plugged in.

- **Having the difficult conversation** – Educate your child in the correct way to communicate online. Avoid writing anything inappropriate or entering any 'wrong' conversations. Explain why your child should not send rude pictures. Talk this through with them and explain the possible consequences and how much trouble they can get into both legally and personally.

- **Profile Picture** – Make sure you are comfortable with the picture they use, if you wouldn't put it on your social media, it shouldn't be on theirs!

- **Model positive and safe online behaviour** – Safe behaviour online starts with us as adults. Following basic safety suggestions and demonstrating these will help your child to follow in your footsteps. You also have a better chance of staying safer online yourself.

- **Do your homework** – Take time to read Privacy Policies and Terms of Use to find out how app developers use personal information. You can also learn about acceptable use of the app and find advice on securing online accounts and set privacy settings on devices.

- **Download and use the app** – Having a go yourself can help you understand how the app works and how to secure an account.

- **Making an informed decision** – You are a parent and you will know your child enough to decide on allowing them to use Skype or any other social networking app. Skype is designed to be a fun and appealing app and it is not difficult to see why it is so popular. By following the steps outlined above you have a better opportunity to ensure that your child is protected online.

Stay in touch with family and friends using Skype…but do it safely!