

Online Safety News

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AI Chatbots & Companions

In simple terms, AI is technology that can learn from information and perform tasks and respond in ways that can feel human. One of the most common ways children may encounter AI is through **chatbots**.

What are chatbots?



Chatbots are AI tools designed to hold conversations. They can answer questions, help with revision, write text, give advice, generate images or simply chat. Teenagers may actively seek them out or encounter them through apps, browsers, social media platforms or schoolwork.

Many chatbots are **free, easy to access and available 24/7**, often without meaningful age checks.

Why does this matter?

Potential risks include:

- ! Inaccurate, misleading or age-inappropriate information
- ! Advice around emotions, relationships or mental health that isn't safe or appropriate
- ! Over-reliance on AI for homework, revision or decision-making

How can parents help keep children safer?



- ✓ **Start conversations**, not interrogations – ask how and why your teen uses AI tools
- ✓ **Discuss boundaries** around homework, revision and problem-solving
- ✓ **Reinforce privacy awareness**, especially around sharing personal information
- ✓ **Encourage balance** between AI support and independent thinking
- ✓ **Make it clear** that worries, emotions or serious questions should always go to a trusted adult, not an AI tool

The NSPCC has further information and support available: [Artificial intelligence safety tips for parents | NSPCC](#)



- ! Sharing personal thoughts or data without understanding privacy implications
- ! Chatbots being treated as a trusted “voice” or emotional support

Chatbots can sound confident and convincing – but they are not people, don't always get things right, and are not designed to safeguard children.

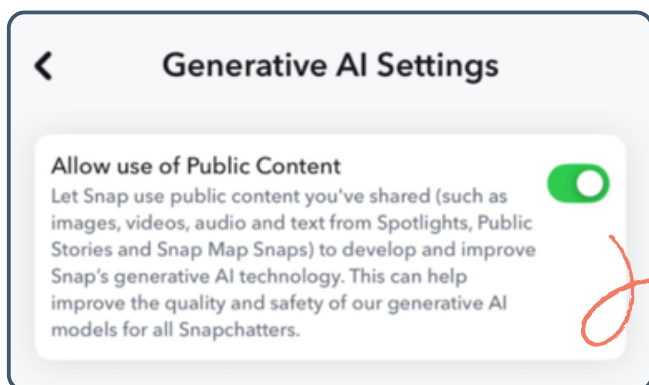


Snapchat AI Setting Parents Need to Know About

As more social media platforms introduce AI, they all rely on one key thing: **data**. In many cases, that data can include children's content – especially anything posted publicly.

On Snapchat (13+) a setting is switched on by default that may allow public photos, videos, voice notes and text to be used to train its AI tools. Most parents – and many young people – aren't aware this setting exists, and it's easy to miss.

Hidden inside Snapchat's privacy menu is an option called "Allow Use of Public Content."



When this is turned on and it is by default, Snapchat can use anything your young person shares publicly such as:

- Public Stories
- Spotlight videos
- Snap Map updates
- Other public posts

This public content can then be fed into the platform's generative AI systems to help improve features within the app.

Would you prefer to listen to the content of this newsletter? You can do that by clicking [HERE](#) →



How to Check and Turn Off the Setting



If you want to review this together with your child, it only takes a minute.



Open Snapchat → Settings → My Privacy and Data → Generative AI Settings → Toggle off "Allow Use of Public Content."

Location Settings & Tracking

Have you ever wondered why certain apps suddenly start recommending local people, events, or content to your child?

It's usually location data. Many adults don't realise how many apps ask for location access, even when it isn't necessary.

A quick audit removes digital footprints, reduces unwanted recommendations and contact attempts and fewer risks if something gets hacked.

Here's how to do that

On iPhone, go to:

Settings → Privacy & Security → Location Services

Tap each app and change it to:

'While Using' or 'Never'

On Android, go to:

Settings → Location → App Location Permissions

Tap each app and change it to:

'Allow only while using the app' or 'Don't allow'

Some devices might show "Location" under 'Security & Privacy.' Totally normal.