TikTok Family Safety Toolkit

TikTok | **netsafe**
netsafe.org.nz

Welcome

It's important that your teen is having a fun and safe digital experience, which is why we want to provide you and your teen with comprehensive digital parenting tips and a range of tools.

As we continue to nurture our growing and diverse global community, new tools and initiatives will be put in place to support a positive and safe app environment. This TikTok Family Safety Toolkit has been developed in collaboration with Netsafe, Aotearoa New Zealand's online safety organisation, to provide a comprehensive digital parenting guide aligned with it's existing seven step Online Safety Parent Toolkit.

This TikTok Family Safety Toolkit provides the **Top 10 Digital Parenting Tips** which you can easily follow with your teen. These tips can apply to all apps your teen might use, not just TikTok. Here, we provide multiple options for you to support your teen in navigating TikTok safely and give practical guidance on how to implement these tips using TikTok Family Safety Tools.

We encourage you to take time to explore these tips with your teen and dive into the app together to learn about the TikTok features and settings that can help them customise their experience. It will not only help protect your teen from cyber-risks, but also empower them to be good digital citizens and foster trust within your family.

For more information on TikTok's safety tools and resources, visit tiktok.com/safety or see our safety videos at tiktok.com/@tiktoktips.

Contents

What is TikTok?

TikTok is a short-form video platform that offers in-app editing, effects, and sounds to help users develop imaginative short videos and creative content. Our mission is to inspire creativity and bring joy. TikTok enables everyone to be a creator and encourages users to share their passion and creative expression through their videos. TikTok has a 12+ rating in the App Store and Google Play store.

How to Use TikTok Family Safety Toolkit

It's easy for parents to feel intimidated or "out of the loop" when it comes to TikTok or any new app. But relax, you don't have to be a technology expert. **This TikTok Family Safety Toolkit can guide as you help your teen use TikTok or any other app safely and responsibly.**

Please remember that digital parenting is not about parents having control over their teen's use of technology. Rather, it's about parents empowering their teens to be **good digital citizens** who can minimise the risks and maximise the potential of the digital world.

Netsafe has developed a seven step Online Safety Parent Toolkit to give every parent access to the support they need to teach their kids how to access digital opportunities and reduce harm. It helps overcome any perceived or real technology knowledge gap between what parents know and what their child knows – or thinks they know. The seven step framework helps parents to:

1. **Understand** potential risks, challenges and sometimes illegal behaviours
2. **Learn** about their tamariki's activities
3. **Explore** for themselves the technology their child uses
4. **Agree** and set expectations as a family on what to do online
5. **Teach** basic online safety concepts
6. **Model** the behaviours they want to see their child use
7. **Plan** what to do if things go wrong

To start using the Toolkit, turn on **Family Pairing**[Tool1]! This feature links a parent's TikTok account to their teen's, and once enabled, the parent can directly manage key safety controls for their teen's account. These parental controls work best when used openly and honestly. Let your teen know that you are using TikTok Family Safety Tools and why you are using them. It will help build better trust and communication between you and your teen.

Tips!
Keep the lines of communication with your teen as open as possible and have ongoing conversations about their digital lives.

• Try downloading the app, explore it on your own, and make a video with your teen!

• Understanding how the app works and experiencing it first-hand are a great start to creating common topics between you and your teen.

• Creating and collaborating with your teen will help you understand what they love about the app and open the door to productive conversation about what it means to use TikTok safely.

• Stay open to what they have to say. Remember that communication is a two-way street. Parents can learn from their teens who are often digitally savvier than they are about how to use the apps. In return, parents can show empathy and support for their teen's digital life.

Top 10 Digital Parenting Tips

As with all apps your teen may use, it's helpful for you and your teen to know the following digital parenting principles. We hope you can use the tips below to set guidelines for their safe and responsible use of TikTok.

☐ Tip 1: Check Your Child's Tech Readiness

Parents should have a clear policy on when their child can actively and independently engage in the digital world, such as getting their own mobile device or opening their own social media accounts. Netsafe's **Family Safe Online Treaty** enables parents to have ongoing conversations about the ways to stay safe, what it means to your family and where your child will go in case something goes wrong online.

Make sure that your child uses the apps when they are older than the app's intended age limit. For instance, TikTok is intended for users 13 and over, and we've given it a 12+ app store rating. Children younger than 13 cannot be part of our community. Moreover, before your child becomes active online, you should teach them the basics of online safety.

- **Netsafe resources:** Netsafe's **Five tips to have your child thrive** are some of the best tools you can provide. Just like before jumping into the water, you first learn how to swim.
- **TikTok Task: Enable device-level parental controls.** [Tool1]
  You can use device-based parental controls provided by Google and Apple to block the app from an underage child's phone. See the instructions for iOS or Android for more information on parental controls (or "restrictions") and how to enable them.

☐ Tip 2: Agree on Family Tech Boundaries

Parents are encouraged to create a family code to agree on **when and where** you and your teen can access and use digital devices. Healthy digital habits and family rituals maintain a variety of activities while keeping media use in moderation.

You can start with setting device-free zones or times such as not using devices during meals, and not having personal media in bedrooms. Moreover, the agreement covers **what** content (e.g., apps, websites, games, videos) your teen can watch, use, and play. This plan needs to be age-appropriate and mutually agreeable with clear consequences for breaking them. Parents need to consider making some 'rules for parents' too — and stick to them! Model the behaviour that you would like to see.

*   **Netsafe resources:** Your teen and you should read about **digital footprints**, **what to do if something upsets them** and **mobile games and in-app purchases**.

*   **TikTok Task: Limit the content you see.** [Tool 4]

If you or your teen come across a video or content that is beyond your agreed tech boundaries, you can simply long-press on that video and tap "Not Interested" to see less of that sort of video in the future. At the account level, enabling "Restricted Mode" is an option that limits the appearance of content that may not be appropriate for all audiences. Restricted Mode can always be adjusted if you'd like to disable it as your teen gets older.

You may watch a **TikTok safety video - 'Not Interested'** which shows users exactly how they can control the content they see.

☐ Tip 3: Set Smart Limit on Screen Time

Just like healthy eating habits are required for your physical health, you need healthy digital habits for your better well-being and overall health. With a mutual agreement on the time your teen spends on the apps each day, you can help your teen develop self-control and time management skills in using their apps. In some instances, teens use digital media (e.g., watching videos, or playing games) to try to get away or distract themselves from emotional or relational difficulties. Instead of this behaviour, parents can help their teens to reflect on how they spend their screen time, take responsibility for their emotional state, and find more positive ways of coping than distraction.

*   **Netsafe resources:** Your teen should read about **managing time online**

*   **TikTok Task: Set a Screen Time Management feature.** [Tool 3]

As part of our Digital Wellbeing offerings, this feature functions with a passcode and can be enabled for various time limits of up to 2 hours. At the device level, screen time can also be managed directly through parental controls in Android and iOS device settings.

In addition, TikTok has partnered with top creators to make short videos that appear right in the app and encourage users to keep tabs on their screen time. They are fun videos and they use the upbeat tone our users love while offering a suggestion to take a break and do something offline, like reading a book. You may watch **the video on our Screen Time Management tool**.

☐ Tip 4: Talk about Online-Bullying

According to Netsafe research, one in five young people in New Zealand is bullied online every year. This is why it is important for parents to engage in an open, honest, and non-judgmental conversation about online bullying with their teens. Parents should keep the lines of communication open while asking about their teen's online experiences, the kinds of things they see online and talk about with friends, or whether they are having any issues with peers and others. Parents should also ask specifically about bullying and if they or a friend of theirs have had any experience.

- If you think that your teen is being bullied online, review the messages with them in a supportive and empathetic way while letting them know that you won't take away access to their devices. Assure and remind your teen that you are always supportive of them and that you will find solutions together.
- If you think your teen is bullying others, you should have a conversation with them about their current behaviour. Encourage them to be honest about their behaviour and take responsibility for it. Help them understand that their behaviour creates their online persona and that there would be negative consequences when they treat others badly. Moreover, guide them through a series of questions that will help them realize the potential harm caused by their behaviour and help them reflect and articulate the corresponding responsibilities of being a digital citizen.

The Harmful Digital Communications Act was created to help people in New Zealand who are being targeted online by others. It lays out 10 communication principles that guide how to communicate on the internet. Some types of bullying are covered by this law. Netsafe can help you understand more about the law and how it may apply to your situation.

- **Netsafe resources:** Your teen should read about **online bullying**, **banter versus bullying** and **helping a friend being bullied**

The [TikTok Safety Center](#) includes useful information on bullying prevention. Together, you and your teen can read about the different types and harm caused by bullying, and read tips on how best to respond to bullying online.

- **TikTok Task: Control your comment section.** [Tool7] [Tool 9] [Tool 10]

  Whether an account is private or public, your teen has the power to decide whether they want to allow comments on their videos. Teens above the age of 16 can allow comments from everyone, only their followers, or restrict them altogether, while teens between the ages of 13 and 15 can allow comments from only their followers or restrict them altogether. This can be set either at the account level, or adjusted for each individual video they create. Even with comments on, your teen can set a custom list of keywords that will be automatically blocked from any comments on their videos. Your teen can also easily report comments by simply long pressing the video and following the steps outlined in the pop-up.

- You may also watch the following TikTok safety videos about online bullying:
  - [Remove all hate speech and harassment](#)
  - [Go ahead, block the haters](#)
  - [Noisy audience? Choose who can comment on your videos](#)
  - [Have a say in what gets said. Add keyword filters to your comments](#)

☐ Tip 5: Talk about Privacy

It is critical that your teen understands online privacy as a fundamental human right. Talk to your teen about the value of their personal information. For instance, parents can use a metaphor that their personal information is like money. They need to value, own, and protect it. Parents should advise their teen to be careful about what they share online, and how to be selective with the information they do share. It is important for your teen to know that what they post can last forever, go viral, and be almost impossible to take back. Teach them [digital footprint management and online safety skills](#) to prevent potential privacy invasion, hacking, and/or social engineering by oversharing your personal information. You can help set strict privacy settings on the apps that your teen is using. Encourage them to stay updated by keeping up with new technology and different ways to manage their privacy.

- **Netsafe resources**: Your teen should read [managing your CV digital footprint](#) and [how to improve your online privacy](#).
- **TikTok Task: Set your teen's account to private.** [Tool 5]

The default setting for all registered accounts between the ages of 13 and 15 is private. For all other users, a TikTok account starts as public by default, but you can easily change into a private account through the privacy and safety settings. A private account means you can approve or deny follower requests, and only users you've approved can see your content.

☐ Tip 6: Talk about Unwanted Contacts and Content

The way we receive and share information and content has become more integrated than ever before. Especially for teens, they learn through videos, receive news through online friends on social media sites, and meet new people while playing online games. Thus, risky content (e.g., violent or inappropriate content for teens, hate speech, and others), and risky contact (e.g., unwanted sexual contact, online grooming, exploitation, and radicalisation) are interconnected and must be discussed with your teen.

It is important for parents to talk with your teen about their favorite apps, games, or websites and discuss how they use them and who they meet there. You need to remind your teen that people are not always who they claim to be online. Discuss with your teen who can contact them or how to limit unwanted contact in the app settings. For instance, you should proactively talk to your teen about their restrictions on accepting friend requests from people they may not know and who can view their information and tag them in photos or share posts. You can also alert your teen to the potential dangers of meeting people in person who they do not know in real life. Nonetheless, you should reassure your teen that you are doing everything possible to keep them safe and that they can always come to you no matter what.

If you co-view/co-play with your teen, you should use this opportunity to discuss and share your family values by using media content as a natural springboard for discussion. Actively ask your teen's opinions on the content and help them to think about its subliminal messages and agendas. Discuss difficult issues such as relationships, sex, and aggression more naturally when it comes up in the media.

- **Netsafe Resources**: Your teen should read **safe online relationships**, **catfish or real** and **what to do if something upsets you**.
- **TikTok Task: Report anything that violates our guidelines.**[Tool 7]

TikTok is a community that embraces creativity and values support and positivity, and that code of conduct is outlined in our Community Guidelines. If your teen sees anything that they believe violates these guidelines, they can report content or a profile directly from the app.

☐ Tip 7: Talk about Sexting

Research in New Zealand suggests that the rates of young people sharing nude images of themselves are relatively low (just four percent of young people aged between 14-17 surveyed had done so). Many teens tend to think of sharing intimate images as fun or flirty without understanding how things can go wrong and what the potential legal issues are. They need to know that once content is shared online, it is almost impossible to get it back or to control how it is shared, and that the consequences can be serious and long-lasting. If you think your teen is involved in sexting, first, you need to try to understand the full story and calmly check what they have already shared or spread. You must then act fast to minimise the risk of harm.

- **Netsafe Resources:** Your teen should read **The Bare Facts**, **what is image based abuse** and **nudes**.

- **TikTok Task: Set messaging preferences.**[Tool 6]

Messaging can be a great way to trade creative ideas with other users, but on TikTok, only your teen's followers can send them a direct message (DM). Your teen can unfollow or block a user to curtail an individual's ability to send a DM, or disable messaging entirely from their privacy settings. To protect teens from potential sexual exploitation via private messaging, no images can be sent via DMs on TikTok. However, teens should beware of content that leads them off TikTok and brings them to other messaging apps that allow sharing of imagery, which may place them at higher risk.

You can also watch a **TikTok Safety Video, 'Enabling Messaging Controls'** to learn how to set messaging preferences.

☐ Tip 8: Talk about Dis / Mis-Information

We're living in the digital age, and some say, the misinformation age. You need to talk to your teen about 'fake news,' or dis-/mis- information that is designed to look like trustworthy news and information, and how quickly it can spread on social media. You must encourage your teen to think critically about what they see online (e.g., what the purpose or hidden agenda of that online information might be), and remind them to fact-check information sources and to do their own independent searches on issues. You can also talk to your teen about online influencers and product placements that they might see, and discuss how these messages might be affecting them (e.g., how bodies "should" look and what they can do to "improve" their appearance).

Be truthful about what you know and what you don't know. You can get your teen to question online information - why things are depicted how they are, whose point of view is shown and whose is not shown, what the motivations of the writers may be, what the effects of viewing these types of portrayals may be, etc. This will help your teen learn how to evaluate media messages more critically.

- **Netsafe resources:** Your teen should read **how to spot fake news** and put their knowledge to the test at **fakenewstrainer.co.nz**.
- **TikTok Task: Watch the "Be Informed" videos with your teen.**

The TikTok 'Be Informed' series of videos helps you and your teen be critical with the information you consume online.

- **'Verify the Source'** encourages you to check and evaluate sources of information.
- **'Double-check dubious graphics and learn to do a little investigating for yourself'** teaches you to always question graphics that are the basis of big claims.
- **'Question Your Bias'** teaches you that your strong viewpoints might sometimes be the products of biases they hold, and you should consider this while understanding that others may hold different perspectives.
- **'When to Share vs When to Report'** encourages you to stop and think before sharing, verify the information and to block accounts or content that are spreading misinformation.
- **'Fact vs Opinion'** helps you determine whether statements are expressing truths or beliefs and encourages you to conduct research and verify claims.

☐ Tip 9: Connect with Support Networks

You can develop a good support and protection network around your teen. It begins with having consistent digital parenting plans and support among all caregivers within your household (e.g., your partner, grandparents, child carer, etc). Your teen can get help from "cool" family members with emotional support. You should proactively work with their school teachers in relation to the online schooling and cyber-protection of your teen. Moreover, if you notice your teen talking about or showing any sign of serious behaviour changes (e.g., acting sad, isolated, or withdrawn, reacting angrily to being interrupted, or showing anxiety and/or depression) or they are involved in a cyber-risk situation, you need to consider seeking external help including school counsellors, psychologists, the police, or other professional experts as necessary.

- **Connect to Netsafe:** Netsafe is available seven days a week to help keep people safe online. Whether you're dealing with online bullying, a suspicious request or want advice for your family, Netsafe can help.
    - Call tollfree on 0508 NETSAFE
    - Email **help@netsafe.org.nz**
    - Text 'Netsafe' to 4282
    - Report online at **netsafe.org.nz/report**
- **TikTok Task: Decide who can follow you.**[Tool 6]

Even if your teen has a private account, they can manage who follows their account by removing followers or blocking users at any time, for any reason. Removing a follower will curtail that user's ability to send your teen a direct message, while blocking a user will also stop them from interacting with or viewing your teen's content at all.

☐ Tip 10: Make Videos Together

TikTok is fun and easy to use. Join in on a trend or have fun with everyday moments together. Creating fun content with your teen can be a great way to get involved, to learn about their interests, and to understand each other with empathy. This is also a great way to talk to your teen about what types of content are appropriate or inappropriate to create.

- **TikTok Task: Make and restrict Duets and Stitch**[Tool 8]

Duets can be a fun way to create videos with another user, but your teen has the control to decide who can make duets with them or react to their content. They can set their preferences just once at the account level and have those settings apply to all their videos, or choose to selectively enable or disable Duets and Stitch for just a particular video. You can make duets & stitch with your teen and try various restricted features. Duet and Stitch are only available on content created by users aged 16 and over.

# Top 10 TikTok Family Safety Tools

Tool 1: Family Pairing

As part of our ongoing commitment to providing users with features and resources to have the best experience on TikTok, we have introduced Family Pairing to help parents and guardians keep their teen safe.

Family Pairing links a parent's TikTok account to their teen's and once enabled, **the parent can directly manage key safety controls for their teen's account. We encourage parents to discuss the Family Pairing features with their teens, and explain why they choose to enable them.**

Below is a list of the included features:
- Setting an account to private
- Comment on Videos
- Direct Messages
- Search
- Video Downloads
- Duet and React
- Stitch
- Who can view your 'hearted' videos
- Screen Time Management
- Restricted Mode
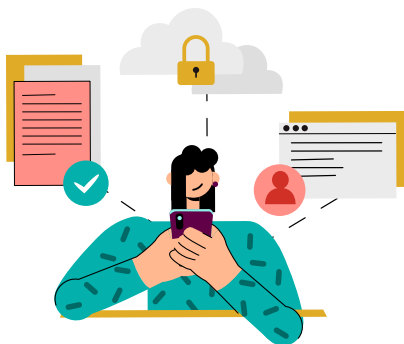
Tool 2: Direct Messages

Parents can control whether their teen has Direct Messages enabled. Also known as DMs, this feature is a form of private communication between users that is only visible to the sender and recipient. Direct messages are *only eligible* to registered account users who are ages 16 and over on TikTok.

While the vast majority of DMs are between friends, both child sexual abuse material (CSAM) and grooming behavior have been linked to image sharing in

direct messages. We have taken an industry-leading, enhanced safety approach and have never allowed sharing of images in direct messages.

Other risks include cyberbullying or other forms of negative communication. If you choose to enable **Direct Messages, you may limit them to *Friends*** (people you follow, who follow you back) instead of keeping it open to *Everyone* on TikTok.

Tool 3: Screen Time Management

Control how long your teen can spend on TikTok each day.
In addition, TikTok has partnered with top creators to make short videos that appear right in the app and encourage users to keep tabs on their screen time. These fun videos use the upbeat tone our users love while offering a suggestion to take a break and do something offline, like read a book.

Tool 4: Restricted Mode

Limit the appearance of content that may not be appropriate for all audiences.
Even without Family Pairing enabled, parents can help their teen **set Restricted Mode** by visiting the app's **Digital Wellbeing controls** at any time.

Tool 5: Private Accounts

We have **built-in app level controls** to manage your teen's connections on the platform. A public account means that any TikTok user can view your videos and post comments, reactions, or duets to engage with the content you've created and shared — but **you can easily change this in your Privacy Settings. If you switch to a private account you can approve or deny follower requests, and only users you've approved as followers can see your content.**

The default privacy setting for all registered accounts between the ages of 13-15 is private. A private account means that while other TikTok users can search for you, they must request and be approved as a friend in order to contact or see your content. If you approve the request, that person will be able to view your videos.
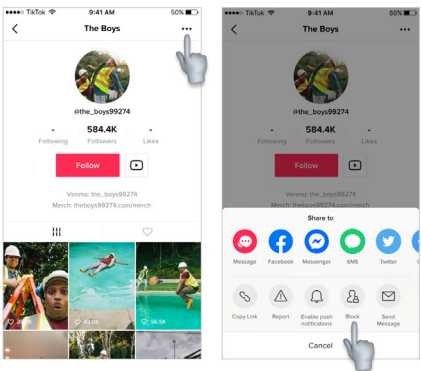
*See visual instructions on the next page.*
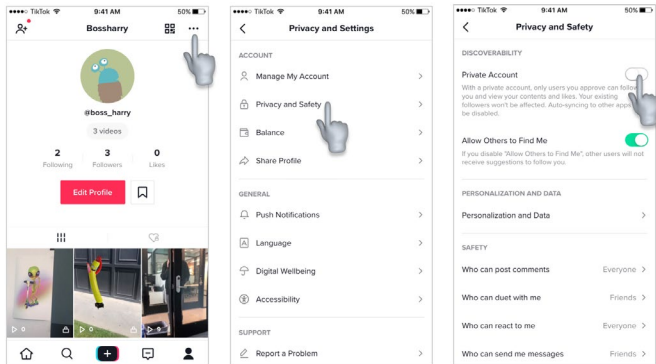
Tool 6: Blocking a User

TikTok allows you to keep any users from interacting with you or your content for any reason. By blocking a user, they will not be able to view your content or send them messages.

Tool 7: Reporting Content, Accounts or Comments

If you see something that might violate our Community Guidelines, please **report it** so our moderation team can review and take appropriate action. You can report a specific video, livestream, user, or comment right within the app itself.

To report, simply long press the video. A pop-up will appear. Select Report and follow the steps outlined.
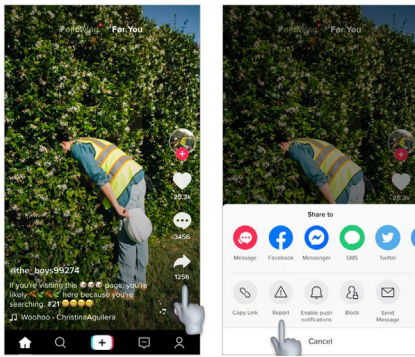
# Tool 8: Restricting Duets and Stitch

We're building a global community where users can create and share authentically, discover the world around them, and connect with others across the globe. We're also committed to keeping this community safe.

A *Duet* is a video feature on TikTok. Enabling *Duets* means that another TikTok user can use your video content to create split screen video using the same audio. *React* is similar to a *Duet*, but instead of a split screen, this has a picture in picture display. The new video will be owned by the *Duet* or *React* creator (not the original creator).

A *Stitch* is a TikTok feature that allows a creator to reinterpret and add to another user's content. It allows users the ability to clip and integrate scenes from another user's video into their own.

Duets and *Stitch* can be fun ways to create videos with another user, but you're in control: **your teen has the option to decide who can make duets with or react to their content.** It's easy to set this just once at the account level and have their chosen setting apply to all their videos – but your teen can choose to selectively enable or disable duets for just a particular video, too.

Duet and *Stitch* are only available for content created by users ages 16 and over.
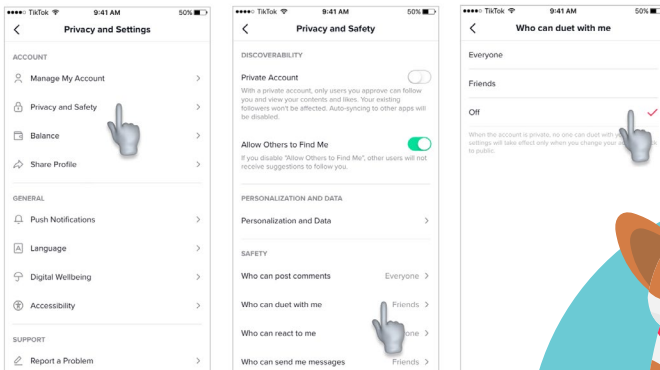
Tool 9: Comment Restrictions

TikTok helps connect a rich and diverse community, where people are free to express their personal views but your teen can control whether and whom they allow comments from. Teens above the age of 16 can choose, *Everyone*, *Friends* (people you follow, who follow you back) or turn off comments entirely, while teens between the ages of 13-15 can choose between Friends or turn off comments entirely. Regardless of the option they choose, we ask all our users to respect different voices and opinions.
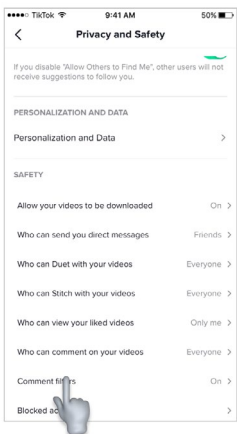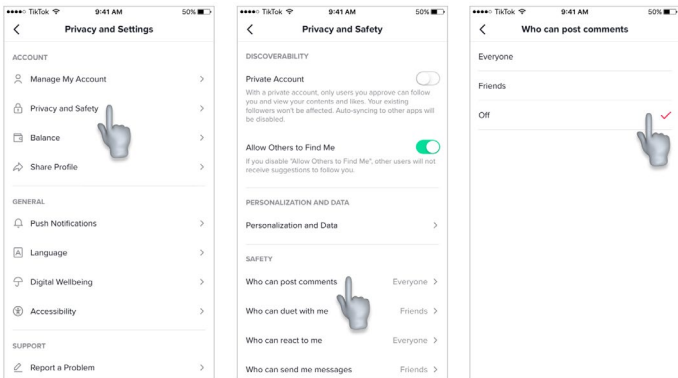
Tool 10: Filter Comments

In addition to comment controls, TikTok also has comment filters. This feature allows your teen to input the red flag language they choose. The words or phrases your teen selects will not be visible in comments on their content.

Age Limits in TikTok

13 Year-Old: Connections

We want our users (13 and up) to have their best experience online, which means being able to create and have fun while feeling safe and comfortable. All users can control who can see their content and interact with them on TikTok.

16 Year-Old: Livestream and Direct Messages

Livestream is a fun feature that creators use to connect with their community in real time. Creators must be at least 16 years old to be eligible to host a livestream, and if they have maintained the appropriate number of followers.

Direct Messages, also known as DMs, is a form of private communication between users that is only visible to the sender and recipient. Direct messages are only eligible to registered accounts users who are 16 and older on TikTok.

18 Year-Old: Virtual Gifting

Virtual gifting allows users to send monetary gifts to creators during a livestream, and it's one way users can show their support for and reward their favorite creators. To prevent misuse, users must be at least 18 years old in order to send or receive a virtual gift.

While users must be 16 and older to host a live stream - only users aged 18 and over are eligible to purchase, send, or receive virtual gifts. All virtual gift purchases are facilitated through the App Store or Google Play, and an individual user's settings around in-app purchases can be managed and adjusted at any time through the **App Store** or **Google Play** directly.

Parents can prevent **App Store** or **Google Play** store purchases directly by enabling device-level parental controls.

Community Guidelines

TikTok is an inclusive platform built upon the foundation of creative expression. We encourage users to celebrate what makes them unique, within a community that does the same. We deeply value that our users come from a huge breadth of nationalities and cultures, and we take into account the cultural norms and local regulations of the markets we operate in.

*Our code of conduct is outlined in our Community Guidelines at: **tiktok.com/safety/resources/new-community-guidelines**. To learn more, visit **tiktok.com/safety**.*

TikTok Glossary

Challenge
As part of a challenge, a well-known brand or creator uses a video to call on the community to personally interpret a specific topic, dance, or song.

Creator
TikTok creators may not be household names (yet), but they are creative innovators from all walks of life, and from all over the world.

Discover
The Discover page is the central location for all things trending on TikTok. From creators on the rise to hashtag trends and top sounds, this is the place to see what's popular.

Duet
Duet is TikTok's collaboration tool. It allows users to create with others through side by side videos.

Stitch
Stitch is a TikTok feature that allows a creator to reinterpret and add to another user's content. It allows users the ability to clip and integrate scenes from another user's video into their own.

Effect
TikTok's digital effects are interactive and advanced features that can add a fun twist to any video.