WhatsApp

What's Up with WhatsApp?

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a messaging app available on both smartphones and computers.This app is used in place of texting to avoid overusing cell data and is often used to talk to both friends and strangers online. WhatsApp is run through an Internet connection, so it's easy to access from anywhere. The app is available to sync across devices so that multiple devices can access the same account.Users can send texts, pictures, videos, and even documents to others. They can also make phone and video calls through WhatsApp, making WhatsApp almost like its own phone service.
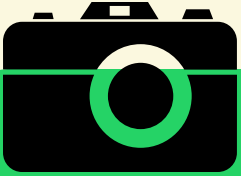
ENCRYPTION

What is Encryption?

Encryption is a process that involves turning text chats into codes that are unreadable by someone who doesn't have a key to break the code.

WhatsApp Encryption

WhatsApp encrypts its messages so that no one, not even WhatsApp, can read the messages sent between people. The messages are only stored on the account of the person sending them and the account of the person receiving them. Encryption is used as a tool to attract users who don't want other people to be able to read their messages.

What Else is There to Worry About?

- Can be accessed on any device that can connect to the Internet

- Videos, pictures, and texts that may contain inappropriate images

- Can connect to Facebook

- Need to be 16 years or older to use, but not enforced

- Can take pictures in-app, so inappropriate pictures can be taken that may not show up in the user's photos

- No real limit on adult content (people can be banned for it, but WhatsApp can't read the messages...)

- Users can share their location through the app

-Other users can see someone's last sent and received messages on their profile

Saving Grace?

WhatsApp, in an effort to protect users from being contacted by people they don't know, only allows for people to contact each other if they are already contacts based upon phone numbers or Facebook friends.

BUT...

This doesn't always stop people from talking to people they don't know. Many predators have become attuned to the idea of coming in contact with their victims over Facebook or other social media services and then asking the victim to switch over to WhatsApp. Once in WhatsApp, there would no longer be records of their conversations.

GROOMING

"Grooming" is the term that describes what predators do to gain the trust of a child. These people will try to make a child feel loved so that the child will want to be around the predator and start distrusting their parents.

SIGNS OF GROOMING

Check if your child is:
- Receiving gifts
- Calling unknown numbers
- Rejecting family and friends
- Getting upset when not online
- Minimizing the screen

NetSmartz Workshop

Ways to Protect Your Child

Turn off the location feature to protect your child from other users seeing where they are.

Check your child's privacy settings so to assure that minimal people can see your child's profile page and that the share settings are only limited to their contacts.

Discuss with your child who they're contacting and what they're talking about.

Be aware of your child's Facebook friends because these Facebook friends may try to contact your child on WhatsApp.

If your child doesn't meet the age restriction of 16 years old, discourage your child from using WhatsApp.

INTERESTING LINKS

NetSmartz — "Messaging, Video Chat, and Email"

https://www.netsmartz.org/MessagingVideoChatEmail

"Staying Safe on WhatsApp"

https://faq.whatsapp.com/en/general/21197244

"Everything A Parent Needs to Know About WhatsApp"

https://www.teensafe.com/blog/everything-a-parent-needs-to-know-about-whatsapp/