



What is Facebook Messenger?

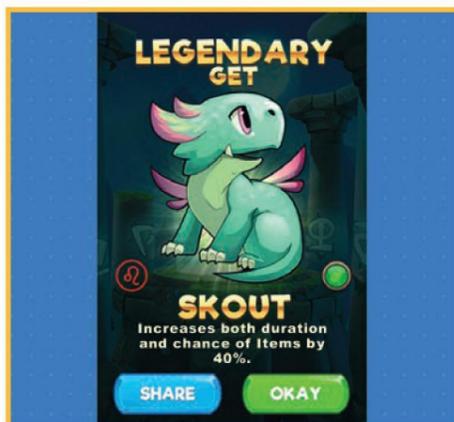
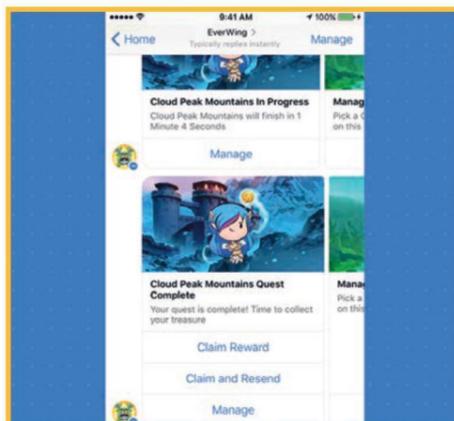
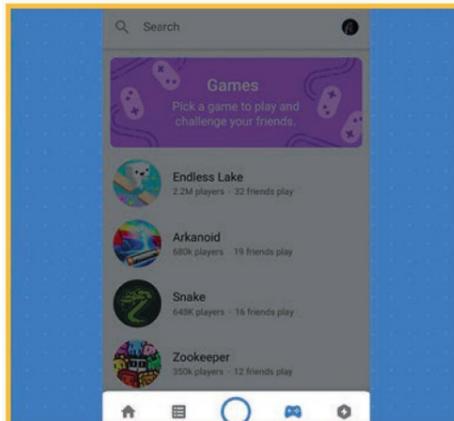
Facebook Messenger is a popular instant messenger service which is commonly used to chat to friends and family. Within the app, you can create group chats, send photos, videos, calendar invitations, play games and much more.

What does it look like?



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This is not a definitive guide. Please always check with any app's support information to see if your security and privacy concerns are addressed.



Main Concerns for Parents

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

Syncing contacts and phone address books

Did you know that Facebook Messenger can automatically upload contacts from your phone or other devices? While this may be convenient for some, for others (especially children) it is a subtle albeit prevalent breach of privacy, blurring the line between what is private and what is not, giving Facebook information that would otherwise be separate from the app.

Photo and video sharing: Exposing your child's location

Sharing photos and videos can be one of the most enjoyable aspects of Facebook Messenger! Even though your child may not directly point out their location when sending a photo on Messenger, photos which include landmarks of the area, or their school uniform, can allow the viewer to discover exactly where a photo was taken.

'Private' photos/videos becoming public

Although Facebook Messenger isn't technically 'public', files shared in a 'private' chat between friends can easily be copied or screenshotted before ending up in public places. It is important that children are aware that once a photo is sent through Messenger, it is out of their hands.

Cyberbullying

Compared to Facebook, Facebook Messenger is seen as a more secretive platform as only those in the conversation can see the discussion/photos shared. This, unfortunately, makes it an easier platform for teasing or humiliation with photos making their way around school or other social groups.

Group chats and nicknames

Facebook Messenger allows you to create group chats where you can send messages, pictures, videos, voice messages, play games, share your location and much more. Users can also create nicknames within a group chat for themselves and anyone else involved in the chat. While this can be quite fun, it can potentially be upsetting for a child if somebody in that group decides to change their nickname to something hurtful. It is important that your child feels comfortable in speaking to you or another responsible adult if this happens.

Identity theft / Catfishing

From fake social media profiles with a stolen picture of your child, leaked into the public to malicious marketing/advertising companies using these images without permission.

In-app purchases

While Facebook Messenger is a free app, other aspects of it, such as the services that run in conjunction with it, are not. The most common example of this are the games available on the app. More specifically, the 'in-app purchases' available within these games, which provide players with the option to pay for extra features, such as extra lives, power ups, etc. This could be seen as an unofficial form of gambling, using the loophole that the apps are merely 'games' to legally target under 18s. Another example of in-app purchases on Facebook Messenger are the stickers. While the majority of these are free, you can also purchase sticker packs to use within chats.

Privacy

When downloading the Messenger app, you may be shocked to see just how many 'requirements' the app claims to need. It 'requires' your web history, 'your identity' and even the ability to 'read your text messages' to name a few. It is important to read these terms and conditions and understand what the app is doing with the data.

FACEBOOK MESSENGER: Tips for Parents



Turning off 'Sync Contacts'

There are potential risks associated when 'Syncing Contacts' with your Messenger account, so we recommend turning this feature off. If your child has already synced contacts to their Messenger app, simply head to the 'settings' button on the top right of the screen on the app (this will be their profile picture). Scroll down to 'people'. Here, there will be a small switch that says, 'Sync Contacts'. Tap to turn the feature off.

Sharing photos/videos safely

Among the risks, it's important to remember that there ARE ways to share photos/videos safely. The following points are a great way to start:

- Ensure that your child is only sharing pictures with friends or family who they actually know and trust in real life.
- Ask those who your child talks to not to share photos/videos they receive from your child with anyone else without permission.
- Make sure that your child knows not to share any messages they receive from others without permission.
- Teach your child not to share any photos/videos of anyone else (their friends or family) without permission.
- Ensure that your child doesn't include any compromising objects, landmarks or clothing in photos/videos in regard to their location (school uniform, street signs, etc).
- Ask your child to show you any photos/videos before they send them.
- Before sending a photo/video, ensure that your child asks themselves, could it embarrass them or anyone else? Could it be taken out of context? Could it harm their (or anyone else's) reputation in the future? If the answer to any of these questions is, 'yes', don't post it.

Disable GPS

Go into 'settings' on your phone. Depending on your device, there will be a section called 'location' or 'location services'. Here, you will be able to turn off GPS on your phone/your child's phone to prevent them sharing their location.

Remove card information

Talk to your child about in-app purchases and explain that they shouldn't be used without permission from a parent or guardian. To protect you and your child from making unwanted in-app purchases follow these steps on the Facebook Messenger app:

- With the app open, click on the profile image in the top right scroll down to 'payments'.
- Click on the 'account settings' window.
- Press 'remove' on each of the available payment methods.

Enable 'Secret Conversations'

A secret conversation in Facebook Messenger is encrypted end-to-end, which means the messages are intended just for you and the other person—not anyone else, including Facebook. To enable secret conversations:

- Press your profile picture when the app is open.
- Press on the 'secret conversations' switch.
- When composing a message, (the pen and pencil button) tap 'secret' in the upper-right hand corner, add your recipients and (if you want to) add a timer with the stopwatch icon. This will make messages disappear after a certain amount of time.

Blocking and reporting

When using Facebook Messenger, there is a risk of your child getting into tricky or uncomfortable situations when talking to someone; either somebody they know or even a stranger. If such instances occur, firstly it is important that your child feels comfortable to tell a responsible adult. Secondly, if you feel that the conversation is inappropriate, you should advise to report and block the user, stopping any further contact with them through the app.

How do you block people?

- On iPhone/iPad, open a conversation with the individual, tap their name at the top of the screen and press 'Block' and then 'next'.
- On Android, open a conversation with the individual, tap the circle icon with an 'i' inside, click 'Block' and finally, 'Block all messages'.

In some cases, simply blocking people isn't enough and reporting them may be in order. According to Facebook's Community Standards, the following are classed as unacceptable:

- Bullying or Harassment
- Direct Threats
- Sexual Violence and Exploitation

If your child's situation fits into these Standards, fill out this form to report a threatening message: https://www.facebook.com/help/contact/497274833784151?helpref=faq_content

How do you report a conversation?

When the conversation is open, click on the 'i' in the top right. Then click on the three dots in the corner of the conversation.

Here you will have the option to 'Report a problem'. You can add in information about what you have found inappropriate in the conversation and then send this to Facebook.

Location Services

Facebook Messenger has the functionality to track your location, using your device's GPS. This is more commonly used for things such as planning a route somewhere, but as you can imagine, it can have some scary consequences. Thankfully, this feature, by default, is initially turned off.

To learn how to switch location services on/off, do the following:

1. On Android, tap 'Settings' before clicking on 'Security and Location' and then 'Location'. Finally, toggle the 'Location Services' switch to turn it on/off.
2. On iOS, tap 'Settings' before clicking on 'Privacy' and 'Location Services'. Then, toggle the 'Location Services' switch to your preference.
3. If you have iOS version 8.0+, visit your device's home screen, tap 'Settings', 'Privacy' and then, 'Location Services'. Find and click on 'Facebook' on your list of apps, tap 'While Using the App' and restart your device.