



## Staying Safe Online

# The Willows Guide to WhatsApp



WhatsApp says the **minimum age of use is 16**, however younger children can easily use this app.

### What are the risks?

- There's a risk of bullying, particularly in group chats
- There's a risk of seeing content of a sexual nature, or showing violence and hatred
- There's a threat to safety if your child shares their live location, particularly with people they don't know in person
- They may receive spam or hoax messages
- In group chats, any users who aren't in your child's contacts can see messages they post in the group, and your child will be able to see messages they post

Remind your child to talk to you about the things they have seen online, and try to remain calm and reassuring - one of the main reasons children will be reluctant to report online incidents is a fear of 'getting into trouble'.

Remember, if you have concerns about the content your child has seen online, you can report it to one of CEOP's child protection advisors. [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)

### As with all online activities, we recommend the SMART approach

**S**ecret: Do not share personal information about yourself on WhatsApp, such as sharing your location or passwords.

**M**eeting: Do not arrange to meet someone from WhatsApp.

**A**ccepting: Only open WhatsApp links from people you know.

**R**eliable: Know that not everything you see on WhatsApp is trustworthy or true.

**T**ell: Report anything you see on WhatsApp that makes you feel uncomfortable.

### Settings

Setting up parental control on WhatsApp is quite simple and parents can easily set up parental control to track their child's WhatsApp activity for their safety. You can change numerous settings within the app to have better control over WhatsApp on your child's phone.

#### **#1. Block content**

The most important part of parental control is ensuring that your child is protected from unsuitable content shared on the app. Here's how to block unwanted content on the app:

**Step 1.** Open **WhatsApp** on your child's phone.

**Step 2.** Go to **Settings/ three dots** at the top right corner

**Step 3.** Select **Account** and click **Privacy**.

**Step 4.** Tap **Block** and select all the contacts you want to block on your child's phone.

You can also report a specific user sharing unsuitable content with your child, by following these steps:

**Step 1.** Open the particular chat in **WhatsApp**.

**Step 2.** Click on the user's name to open **Contact Info**.

**Step 3.** Scroll down and select **Block**.

**Step 4.** Tap **Block** again in the confirmation pop-up to block them.

By blocking someone, you stop messages and calls from them. However, both users can still see each other's messages in group chats, and they can be unblocked any time.

Similarly, you can also report them to WhatsApp and their account might be suspended or permanently banned if WhatsApp notices rule violations. Here's how to report someone on your child's WhatsApp:

**Step 1.** Open the chat in **WhatsApp**.

**Step 2.** Click the contact name to open **Contact Info**.

**Step 3.** Tap **Report Contact** and select **Report and Block**.

This will send the last five messages to WhatsApp to analyze for rule violations and action is taken if the person was sending hate speech or spam messages. Report and Block restricts the person from messaging or calling your child on WhatsApp.

## #2. Turn off live location

Your child may be sharing their live location with their contacts and not even know about it. If your child's live location is turned on, use parental controls for WhatsApp to hide it:

**Step 1.** Open **WhatsApp** on their phone and click **Settings/ three dots** in the top right corner.

**Step 2.** Go to **Accounts** and select **Privacy**.

**Step 3.** Tap **Live Location** and select contacts you do not want to see the Live Location.

This will ensure that no one except the allowed contacts can access your child's live location to protect them from potential harm.

## #3. Deactivate read receipts

Turning off read receipts is only a blessing for adults who wish to not respond to a message immediately after they view it, they also save your child from the anxiety of replying immediately after they have seen the messages. Turning off read receipts is quite straightforward.

**Step 1.** Open **WhatsApp** on their phone and select **Settings**.

**Step 2.** Choose **Account**.

**Step 3.** Tap **Privacy** and toggle the button next to read receipts.

#### #4. Hide profile picture & last seen

Like Live Location, you can also decide you can see your child's profile picture and last seen and online status. It prevents potential predators from guessing their age through the profile picture.

*When you want to hide your child's profile picture and last seen and online status, you can choose from four options:*

**Everyone:** All WhatsApp users can see their WhatsApp profile picture or last seen.

**My contacts:** Only the contacts saved in their phone can view the display picture or last seen.

**My contacts except:** You can select contacts that can see the profile picture or last seen.

**Nobody:** No one (whether they are a saved contact or not) can see your child's WhatsApp profile picture or last seen.

Follow these steps to turn off visible information like your child's profile picture and last seen and online status:

**Step 1.** Open **WhatsApp** on your child's phone and go to **Settings**.

**Step 2.** Select **Account** from the menu.

**Step 3.** Choose **Privacy** and change the settings you want.

You can also manage other settings in the same section, such as About and Status; select who you want to see these details and restrict others.

#### #5. Disable media downloads

Often, we miss messages on WhatsApp and find a video or image in our gallery, making us wonder, "Where did this come from?" Your child might also come across inappropriate content via downloaded media in their phone. You can disable media downloads from WhatsApp to prevent exposure to unsuitable content.

**Step 1.** Go to **Settings** in WhatsApp.

**Step 2.** Open **Chats**.

**Step 3.** Toggle '**Media Visibility**' for Android and '**Save to Camera Roll**' for iOS devices.

#### #6. Disallow being added to group chats

If you have a curious child, you might find them talking to random people in a random WhatsApp group chat. They might not realize it, but this can be dangerous. To avoid being in this situation, it is best to disallow random people to add your child's number to group chats. You can select who can add them to group chats and allow trusted contacts only.

**Step 1.** In **WhatsApp**, go to **Settings**.

**Step 2.** Select **Privacy** and tap **Groups**.

**Step 3.** Select from options like '**Everyone**,' '**My contacts**,' or '**My contacts except**.'