SNAPCHAT 101

Social Media 101

What is Snapchat?
Snapchat is a popular messaging app where users share videos and photos (or 'snaps') that disappear as soon as they're viewed.

Users build up 'snapstreaks' between friends by sending snaps to each other for three or more days in a row. Emojis are given to friends based on how often they snap each other – Super BFFs, for example, have been each others' number 1 best friend for three months in a row. Users can also play games with their friends in the app and chat as they play.

On Snap Map, users can choose to share their real-time location with their friends – the Map also shows Snaps published by Snapchat broadcasting news and events from around the world.

Like Instagram, Snapchat allows users to publish photos and videos to their "Story" – these can be seen by all followers, lasting for 24 hours before disappearing.

The Stories tab will show users content from their friends and content that's popular/that Snapchat's algorithm thinks the user will like. Spotlight is designed to turn Snapchat users into stars – anyone 18+ can post there and all users can view the content. On Discover, users can find Snaps from media outlets, TV shows, brands and influencers. Spotlight, Discover and Snapchat's search feature are all personalised based on users' data and behaviour.

Snapchat also has an AI chatbot all users can access.

How can I see what's on Snapchat?
To explore Snapchat, you need to download the app and create your own account.

What is the age limit for Snapchat and what does this mean for how young people use the app?
Snapchat is for people aged 13 and older, but it does not verify users' age. By default, users under 18 have their contact settings set to friends and phone contacts only (and can't change these to allow strangers to contact them). Location sharing is also turned off by default (although they can turn this on, but can only share their location with friends).

What parental controls does Snapchat have?
Snapchat has a tool called Family Center that you can set up with your young person. You need to have your own Snapchat account to enable this. Download the app, create your account, then follow these instructions. Your young person has to agree to add you as a friend and turn this on for this tool to work.

With Family Center enabled, you can see who your young person has sent things to in the past seven days (but you can't see the contents of those messages), see their friends, limit some content in the Stories and Spotlight tabs and report accounts you are worried about.

What other things do I need to be aware of to keep my young person safe on Snapchat?
Get to know Snapchat's privacy and account settings, and make sure you're both comfortable with the settings on your young person's account. Who's on their friend list? Are they sharing their location? Are they in group chats with people they don't know? Make sure your young person knows how to block people (you can report all of an individual's accounts and future accounts they may set up) and report harmful content and behaviour.

Explore Snapchat together, ask them what things they like about it, make sure you understand enough about the platform to judge whether they're safe on it and take action if they're not, and have fun together on it. Be there and stay involved with their online life, and make sure they know they can come to you if they're ever feeling uncomfortable or unsafe.

What can my young person do if the Snapchat algorithm is sending them content that is harmful or inappropriate? They can:

- Clear data shared with My AI – it's not clear whether this will impact content shared by Snapchat, but it's worth a try. (Note Snapchat says it can take up to 30 days for this data to be deleted).
- Hide channels in Discover they don't want to see by tapping and holding videos from channels they don't like, then selecting 'hide'. This teaches the algorithm not to show similar content in the future.
- Reporting harmful or inappropriate content.

- Remember many of the stories they see on the Discover section are ads – adjust the topics Snapchat shows by going to their account, settings, ads, lifestyle and interests and selecting/de-selecting topics.
- Interact more with content they do enjoy (subscribe to creators they like, favourite content) so the algorithm shows them more content like that.