

# TIKTOK 101

## Social Media 101

### What is TikTok?

TikTok is a popular social media platform where people make, watch, and share short videos called "TikToks." It's growing fast, especially among young users. Most people use it to watch videos they like, even if they don't know the creators.

TikTok prioritises the "For You Page" (FYP), a personalised feed created by TikTok's algorithm. It shows videos the algorithm thinks users will enjoy based on their activity, location, interactions, and trends. You don't have to follow someone to see their videos on your FYP.

TikTok users can apply filters and games to their TikToks. The platform is known for viral challenges and trends, often involving dances and story-telling. Creators can also connect with their audiences through live-streaming. Some users just use TikTok to watch videos, others actively take part and post their own content. As with many social media platforms, young people are likely to have more than one TikTok account.

### How can I see what's on TikTok?

While you can look at TikToks on your computer/mobile browser, the only way to share/like/comment and see other TikTok activity is to create an account and download the app to your phone or tablet.



### What is the age limit for TikTok and what does this mean for how young people use the app?

TikTok is for users 12 and older. Users under 13 can watch TikToks but not post or comment. Only followers can comment on the videos of users 13-16, and users under 16 can't send direct messages. TikTok gives everyone under 18 a 60-minute daily screen time limit, and they have to use a passcode to override it (users do set their own passcodes). These safety measures rely on users providing their correct age when they create their accounts.



### **What parental controls does TikTok have?**

TikTok has a tool called Family Pairing that links your own TikTok account to your young person's.

With Family Pairing, you can:

- Adjust your young person's privacy settings
- Add hashtags and key words to filter out videos you don't want your young person to see (be aware your young person can see what hashtags and filters you have excluded and these only work if a creator has included that text in the video or its description)
- Customise the daily screentime limit (and see how much time your young person spends on TikTok during the day and night, and how many times they open the app)
- Schedule times to mute notifications
- Control who can send direct messages to your young person
- Decide who can comment on their videos

The best way to use Family Pairing is in partnership with your young person, and with their full consent. They need to learn how to use TikTok safely and responsibly, to grow up and use the internet as adults without being harmed. Encourage them to explore social media with you as their guide and support.

To set up Family Pairing, make sure you have your own account. Then, open TikTok on both phones, tap menu (the three parallel lines). Scroll down to family pairing and sync accounts following the instructions TikTok provides.

### **How can I see what videos my young person has been watching/what they've been commenting?**

TikTok stores watched videos for seven days. On the TikTok app, tap Profile, menu (the three parallel lines), Settings and privacy, Activity Centre, watch history. You can also see their comment and search history in the same place (this is stored for longer than seven days). Have a think about why you need to look at this before you go into it, and unless there is real danger, don't do this without your young person's consent and participation.

## What other things do I need to be aware of to keep my young person safe on TikTok?

Get to know TikTok's privacy and account settings, and make sure you're both comfortable with the settings on your young person's account. Depending on their age and level of responsibility on social media, this might mean having a completely private account, reviewing who they follow and/or their followers and who can comment on their videos, who can duet with them, who can send them messages or what kinds of videos are sent to their FYP. You can review most of these in the "Settings and Privacy" tab on their profile. Make sure your young person knows how to block people and report harmful content and behaviour.

Explore TikTok with them, ask about videos they enjoy, 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.

## The TikTok algorithm is sending my young person harmful or inappropriate videos. What can they do?

### They can:

- Unfollow or block creators who share harmful videos (report them if they breach TikTok's terms of service or New Zealand law).
- Filter out key words or hashtags that cause them distress or harm. Remember: these will only be blocked if the creator uses them in the description or video. Go to profile, menu, Settings and Privacy, content preferences, Filter video key words.
- Tell TikTok they don't like a video by holding down the screen and selecting 'not interested' on the menu.
- Refresh their For You Page (FYP) by going to your profile, menu, Settings and Privacy, then "Content Preferences," and choosing "Refresh your For You feed." Keep in mind this won't delete your data, and old topics may return.
- Engage more with TikToks they enjoy and actively look for videos on topics they're interested in. This will inform the algorithm on what content will be shown.
- Turn on restricted mode. This feature means TikTok won't show them content that it thinks has 'mature or complex themes'.
- Create a new account. This might be hard if they have followers they don't want to lose. But if their FYP is making them feel bad, it's something to think about.

