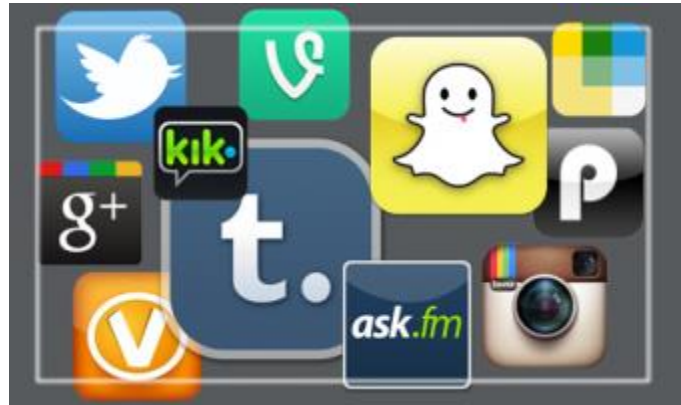


11 Sites and Apps Kids Are Heading to After Facebook

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Advice for teachers and parents

Kelly Schryver talks about the use of social networking sites by teenagers, but the use of some sites by younger children is becoming more common... Teachers and parents of all aged children need to be mindful of their use of social media.



Remember [MySpace](#)? Not so long ago, practically every teen in the world was on it -- and then [many left for Facebook](#). Now, [as Facebook's popularity is starting to wane](#), you might be wondering what the new "it" social network is. But the days of a one-stop shop for all social networking needs are over. Instead, teens are dividing their attention between an array of apps and tools that let them write, share, video chat, and even shop for the latest trends.

You don't need to know the ins and outs of every app and site that's "hot" right now (and frankly, if you did, they wouldn't be trendy anymore). But knowing the basics -- what they are, why they're popular, and the problems that can crop up when they're not used responsibly -- can make the difference between a positive and negative experience for your students.

11 Social Media Tools Parents and Teachers Need to Know About Now

Ctrl+Click below to go direct to information about the social networking site you are interested in.

[Twitter](#)
[Instagram](#)
[Snapchat](#)
[Tumblr](#)
[Google+](#)
[Vine](#)
[Wanelo](#)
[Kik Messenger](#)
[Oovoo](#)
[Pheed](#)
[Ask.fm](#)

1. [Twitter](#) is a microblogging site that allows users to post brief, 140-character messages -- called "tweets" -- and follow other users' activities.

Why it's popular

Teens like using it to share quick tidbits about their lives with friends. It's also great for keeping up with what's going on in the world -- breaking news, celebrity gossip, etc.

What parents and teachers need to know:

- **Public tweets are the norm for teens.** Though you can choose to keep your tweets private, most teens report having public accounts ([Pew Internet & American Life Project](#), 2013). Talk to kids about what they post and how a post can spread far and fast.
- **Updates appear immediately.** Even though you can remove tweets, your followers can still read what you wrote until it's gone. This can get kids in trouble if they say something in the heat of the moment.
- **It's a promotional tool for celebs.** Twitter reels teens in with behind-the-scenes access to celebrities' lives, adding a whole new dimension to celebrity worship. You may want to point out how much marketing strategy goes into the tweets of those they admire.

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2. [Instagram](#) is a platform that lets users snap, edit, and share photos and 15-second videos -- either publicly or with a network of followers.

Why it's popular

Instagram unites the most popular features of social media sites: sharing, seeing, and commenting on photos. Instagram also lets you apply fun filters and effects to your photos, making them look high quality and artistic.

What parents and teachers need to know:

- **Teens are on the lookout for "Likes."** Similar to Facebook, teens may measure the "success" of their photos -- even their self-worth -- by the number of likes or comments they receive. Posting a photo or video can be problematic if teens post it to validate their popularity.
- **Public photos are the default.** Photos and videos shared on Instagram are public and may have location information unless privacy settings are adjusted. Hashtags can make photos even more visible to communities beyond a teen's followers.
- **Mature content can slip in.** The terms of service specify that users should be at least 13 years old and shouldn't post partially nude or sexually suggestive photos -- but they don't address violence, swear words, or drugs.

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3. [Snapchat](#) is a messaging app that lets users put a time limit on the pictures and videos they send before they disappear.

Why it's popular

Snapchat's creators intended the app's fleeting images to be a way for teens to share fun, light moments without the risk of having them go public. And that's what most teens use it for: sending goofy or embarrassing photos to one another. Snapchats also seem to send and load much "faster" than email or text.

What parents need to know

- **Many schools have yet to block it**, which is one reason why teens like it so much ([Pew Internet & American Life Project](#), 2013).
- **It's a myth that Snapchats go away forever.** Data is data: Whenever an image is sent, it never truly goes away. (For example, the person on the receiving end can take a screenshot of the image before it disappears.) Snapchats can even be recovered.
- **It can make sexting seem OK.** The seemingly risk-free messaging might encourage users to share pictures containing inappropriate content.

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4. [Tumblr](#) is like a cross between a blog and Twitter: It's a streaming scrapbook of text, photos, and/or videos and audio clips. Users create and follow short blogs, or "tumblelogs," that can be seen by anyone online (if made public).

Why it's popular

Many teens have tumblrs for personal use -- sharing photos, videos, musings, and things they find funny with their friends. Tumblelogs with funny memes and gifs often go viral online, as well (case in point: "[Texts from Hillary](#)").

What parents and teachers need to know:

- **Porn is easy to find.** This online hangout is hip and creative but sometimes raunchy. Pornographic images and videos, depictions of violence, self-harm, drug use, and offensive language are easily searchable.
- **Privacy can be guarded, but only through an awkward workaround.** The first profile a member creates is public and viewable by anyone on the Internet. Members who desire full privacy have to create a *second* profile, which they're able to password protect.
- **Posts are often copied and shared.** Reblogging on Tumblr is similar to re-tweeting: A post that's reblogged from one tumblelog then appears on another. Many teens like -- and in fact, want -- their posts reblogged.

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5. [Google+](#) is Google's social network, which is now open to teens. It has attempted to improve on [Facebook's friend concept](#) -- using "circles" that give users more control about what they share with whom.

Why it's popular

Teens aren't wild about Google+ yet. But many feel that their parents are more accepting of it because they associate it with schoolwork. One popular aspect of Google+ is the addition of real-time [video chats in Hangouts](#) (virtual gatherings with approved friends).

What parents and teachers need to know:

- **Teens can limit who sees certain posts by using "circles."** Friends, acquaintances, and the general public can all be placed in different circles. If you're friends with your kid on Google+, know that you may be in a different "circle" than their friends (and therefore seeing different information).
- **Google+ takes teens' safety seriously.** Google+ created age-appropriate privacy default settings for any users whose registration information shows them to be teens. It also automatically reminds them about who may be seeing their posts (if they're posting on public or extended circles).
- **Data tracking and targeting are concerns.** Google+ activity (what you post and search for and who you connect with) is shared across Google services including Gmail and YouTube. This information is used for targeting ads to the user. Users can't opt out of this type of sharing across Google services.

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6. [Vine](#) is a social media app that lets users post and watch looping six-second video clips. This Twitter-owned service has developed a unique community of people who post videos that are often creative and funny -- and sometimes thought-provoking.

Why it's popular

Videos run the gamut from stop-motion clips of puzzles doing and undoing themselves to six-second skits showing how a teen wakes up on a school day vs. a day during summer. Teens usually use Vine to create and share silly videos of themselves and/or their friends and family.

What parents and teachers need to know:

- **It's full of inappropriate videos.** In three minutes of random searching, we came across a clip full of full-frontal male nudity, a woman in a fishnet shirt with her breasts exposed, and people blowing marijuana smoke into each other's mouths. There's a lot of funny, clever expression on Vine, but much of it isn't appropriate for kids.
- **There are significant privacy concerns.** The videos you post, the accounts you follow, and the comments you make on videos are all public by default. But you *can* adjust your settings to protect your posts; only followers will see them, and you have to approve new followers.

- **Parents or teachers can be star performers (without knowing).** If your students film you being goofy or silly, you may want to talk about whether they plan to share it.

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7. Wanelo (Want, Need, Love) combines shopping, fashion blogging, and social networking all in one. It's very popular among teens, allowing them to discover, share, and buy products they like.

Why it's popular

Teens keep up with the latest styles by browsing Wanelo's "trending" feed, which aggregates the items that are most popular across the site. They can also cultivate their own style through the "My Feed" function, which displays content from the users, brands, and stores they follow.

What parents and teachers need to know:

- **If you like it, you can buy it.** Users can purchase almost anything they see on Wanelo by clicking through to products' original sites. As one user tweeted, "#Wanelo you can have all of my money! #obsessed."
- **Brand names are prominent.** Upon registering, users are required to follow at least three "stores" (for example, Forever21 or Marc Jacobs) and at least three "people" (many are other everyday people in Wanelo's network, but there are also publications like *Seventeen* magazine).
- **There's plenty of mature clothing.** You may not love what kids find and put on their wish lists.

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8. Kik Messenger is an app-based alternative to standard texting that kids use for social networking. It's free to use but has lots of ads.

Why it's popular

It's fast and has no message limits, character limits, or fees if you just use the basic features, making it decidedly more fun in many ways than SMS texting.

What parents and teachers need to know:

- **It's too easy to "copy all."** Kik's ability to link to other Kik-enabled apps within itself is a way to drive "app adoption" (purchases) from its users for developers. The app also encourages new registrants to invite everyone in their phone's address book to join Kik, since users can only message those who also have the app.
- **There's some stranger danger.** An app named *OinkText*, linked to Kik, allows communication with strangers who share their Kik usernames to find

people to chat with. There's also a Kik community blog where users can submit photos of themselves and screenshots of messages (sometimes displaying users' full names) to contests.

- **It uses real names.** Teens' usernames identify them on Kik, so they shouldn't use their full real name as their username.

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9. Oovoo is a free video, voice, and messaging app. Users can have group chats with up to 12 people for free. (The premium version removes ads from the service.)

Why it's popular

Teens mostly use Oovoo to hang out with friends. Many log on after school and keep it up while doing homework. Oovoo can be great for group studying and it makes it easy for kids to receive "face to face" homework help from classmates.

What parents and teachers need to know:

- **You can only chat with approved friends.** Users can only communicate with those on their approved "contact list," which can help ease safety concerns.
- **It can be distracting.** Because the service makes video chatting so affordable and accessible, it can also be addicting. [A conversation with kids about multitasking](#) may be in order.
- **Kids still prefer in-person communication.** Though apps like Oovoo make it easier than ever to video chat with friends, [research shows that kids still value face-to-face conversations over online ones](#) -- especially when it comes to sensitive topics. Still, they sometimes find it hard to log off when all of their friends are on.

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10. Pheed is best described as a hybrid of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube -- except that you can require others to pay a premium to access your personal channel.

Why it's popular

Pheed's multimedia "all in one" offering seems to be capturing teens' attention the most. Some teens also like the fact that they have more control over ownership and copyright, since Pheed allows its users to watermark their original content.

What parents and teachers need to know:

- **It's hot!** According to Forbes, Pheed has swiftly become the No. 1 free social app in the App Store, thanks in large part to teens. Time will tell whether

artists and celebrities will jump on the bandwagon and start using Pheed to promote themselves and charge their fans to view what they post.

- **Users can make money.** Users can charge others a subscription fee to access their content, ranging from \$1.99 to \$34.99 per view, or the same price range per month. Note that a cut of all proceeds goes to Pheed.
- **Privacy updates are in the works.** Kids should be aware that their posts are currently public by default and therefore searchable online.

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11. [Ask.fm](#) is a social site that lets kids ask questions and answer those posted by other users -- sometimes anonymously.

Why it's popular

Although there are some friendly interactions on Ask.fm -- Q&As about favorite foods or crushes, for example -- there are lots of mean comments and some creepy sexual posts. This iffy content is part of the site's appeal for teens.

What parents and teachers need to know:

- **Bullying is a major concern.** [The British news website MailOnline reported that the site has been linked to the suicides of several teens.](#) [Talk to your teens about cyberbullying](#) and how anonymity can encourage mean behavior.
- **Anonymous answers are optional.** Users can decide whether to allow anonymous posts and can remove their answers from streaming to decrease their profile's visibility. If teens do use the site, they'd be best turning off anonymous answers and keeping themselves out of the live stream.
- **Q&As can appear on Facebook.** Syncing with Facebook means that a much wider audience can see those Q&As.

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So how do we deal with this proliferation of social media tools? If children are using them respectfully, appropriately, and with a little guidance, they should be fine.

Parents and teachers need to remember that the use of social media is like fashion – ever changing. That means:

- *keeping up with current trends in the school community*
- *being aware of potential pitfalls*
- *building relevant information about e-safety into the curriculum*
- *keeping communication about social networking open and non-judgemental*
- *encouraging children to discuss anything that disturbs them immediately with a trusted adult, cyberbuddy, mentor, etc.*

Jane Finch December 2013

