Apps & Online Platforms

Options to Interact with Children & Young Adults

Apps and Platforms: A Range of Options

CASA of Franklin County understands that 2020 has been a unique challenge and we continue to look for creative ways to interact with our children online.

CASA GALs come from different generations, careers, and backgrounds. We know not everyone is a technical wiz and that new online tools can be difficult to learn and use, so CASA created this handy user-guide. Most are entirely free, and others are a monthly subscription.

While CASA cannot provide funding for specific apps at this time, we still wanted to include a range of options to show GALs what is possible, as some features in paid apps can be replicated by the GAL in free apps.

Notices and Disclaimers:

While CASA of Franklin County has created this Apps & Platforms user guide, we are not endorsing or recommending any one program over another: every GAL uses different tools and has different virtual comfort levels.

Additionally, CASA of Franklin County, National CASA/GAL Association for Children, Ohio CASA, Franklin County Board of Commissioners, or Franklin County Court of Common Pleas are not proponents of, and do not recommend or endorse these Apps & Platforms.

If a GAL wishes to interact with the child(ren) they work with on these platforms, they must first seek the permission of the child(ren)'s custodian and notice to the caregiver.

As with all use of personal devices, the GAL remains responsible for ensuring that GAL communications are confidential. GALs may not record virtual interactions with children and must ensure that location and security settings are calculated to maintain confidentiality.

Messenger Kids

Accessibility:

- While kids use Messenger Kids, parents can connect with them using their Messenger app.
- JusTalk Kids allows kids to video call and message using Wi-Fi so they don't need a phone number.
- App is available on IOS & Android

Price: Free

Features:

- Messenger Kids is a free video calling and messaging app for smartphones and tablets
- fun-filled features like filters and stickers.
- Approved adults can easily message and video chat with their kids via the Messenger app — no additional app download is needed.

Age Range: 6-12 y/o

Messenger Kids, Cont.

Security:

- Kids can block and report as well, and doing so will notify their parents.
- " Person In Charge" Account is registered and constructed by the assistance of an adult. All login information is connected to adult account.
- Kids will not receive friend requests, calls or messages from strangers. All of your children's personal information (including conversations) is encrypted and completely safe.

WhatsApp

Accessibility:

- App is available on IOS & Android
- WiFi Accessible
- Easily contact others from other Countries without fee

Price: Free

*Payments

Payments on WhatsApp, which are available in select countries, enable transfers between accounts at financial institutions. Card and bank numbers are stored encrypted and in a highly-secured network. However, because financial institutions can't process transactions without receiving information related to these payments, these payments aren't end-to-end encrypted.

Features:

- Texting, Video, Emjois, & Photos
- Speak Freely
- WhatsApp Calling lets you speak privately to your friends and family, even if they're in another country.
- Messages that Stay with You
- End-to-end encrypted messages are stored on your device and not WhatsApp servers after they are delivered.

Age Range: 13+

WhatsApp, Cont.

Security:

- You're in control
- WhatsApp wants to make sure you know what's happening with your messages. If you don't want to receive messages from a person or business, you can always block them directly from the chat or delete them from your contact list. We want to make sure you understand how your messages are being handled and have the options you need to make the right decisions for you.
- Business Messaging
- Every WhatsApp message is protected by the same Signal encryption protocol that secures messages before they leave your device. When you message a WhatsApp business account, your message is delivered securely to the destination chosen by the business
- Personal Messaging
- WhatsApp's end-to-end encryption is used when you message another person using WhatsApp Messenger. End-to-end encryption ensures only you and the person you're communicating with can read or listen to what is sent, and nobody in between, not even WhatsApp.

PlayKids

Accessibility:

- App is available on IOS & Android
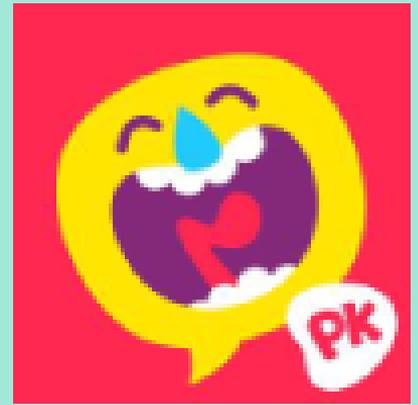- WiFi Accessible

Price: Free

Features:

- Children can decorate photos and send emojis to friends and family. It mimics similar features to the likes of Instagram to make it feel like the real thing.
- Approved adults can easily message and video chat with their kids via the Messenger app

Age Range: 6-14 y/o

PlayKids, Cont.

Security:

- To set up the child's account parents are required to go through age-verification.
- Parents have access to the account on their phones as well to keep an eye on what is being shared in real time
- " Person In Charge" Account is registered and constructed by the assistance of an adult. All login information is connected to adult account. Thus resulting in none of the child's information being needed.
- "Contact" Any Person in the contact must be approved by parent. Then they are given access to be in contact with child.

Group Me

Accessibility:

- App is available on IOS & Android
- WiFi Accessible
- Easily contact others from other Countries without fee
- Similar to regular texting
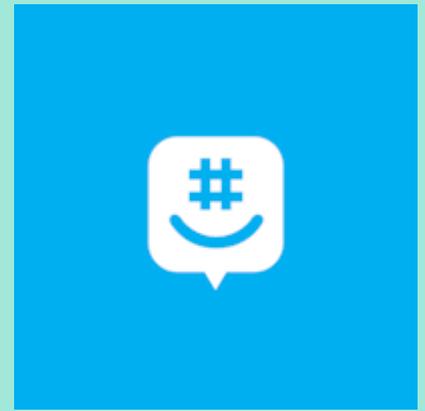- Often used for Group necessity

Price: Free

Features:

- Simple usage for sending photography and texting/messaging

Age Range: 13+

Group Me, Cont.

Security:

- GroupMe never shares your personal information with others. Your phone number and email address are always kept private from other group members. When you are in a group, the only details you can see about another group member are their avatar and their name.
- All privacy settings and security measures are done through partnership with Microsoft Office
- Less restrictive and often used by older age groups

Fennec

Accessibility:

- Allows kids to video call and message using Wi-Fi so they don't need a phone number.
- App is available on IOS & Android

Price: Free

 * Noted: A child version Smartwatch is often offered with the App for additional fees

Features:

- Read it Aloud Feature(Options to voice message or have the message read to the child allowed)
- Drawing Board
- fun-filled features like filters and stickers.
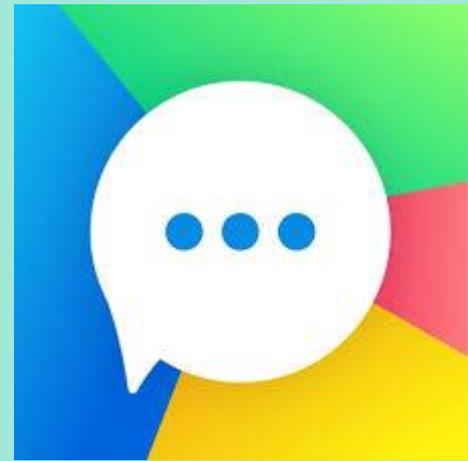
Age Range: 4+

Fennec, Cont.

Security:

- Usage control

Worried that your kids may be chatting after bedtime? The Time Restrictions feature lets you limit the time when your kids can chat. For example, you can set up a time restriction from 11 PM to 6 AM; during this time, your child will not be allowed to access chat rooms and will be shown as unavailable for their friends.

- Protect your conversations.

Your personal information is protected by secured networks. We do not sell or distribute your personal identifiable information to any other parties. In addition, all sensitive information you supply is encrypted via Secure Socket Layer (SSL) technology.
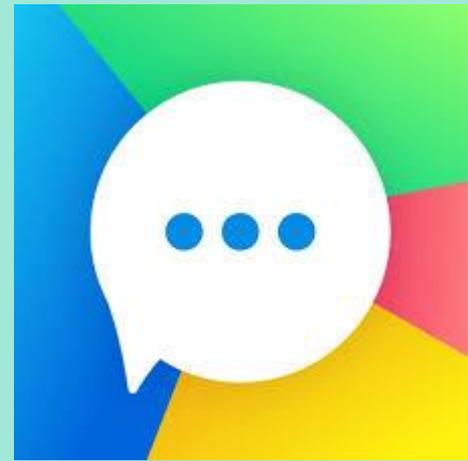
Fennec, Cont.

Security:

- Block predators and unnecessary advertisements.

Strangers can not friend or talk to your kids. Any friend requests to your kids need your approval first.

You can add or delete contacts from your child's friend list when needed.

- View conversations and avoid bullying

Not all kids know what appropriate internet behavior is. When necessary, you can turn on the View Conversation feature to view your kid's conversations. Help your kids voice their concerns, protect their privacy, avoid internet bullying, and guide them towards proper Internet community behavior. We help you work with your children to create a positive social networking experience.

Zoom

Accessibility:

- App is available on IOS & Android
- WiFi Accessible

Price: Free for one-on-one calls

*Note: The website has option to purchase different variations of the app depending on the purpose of use. These variations can add an additional price to the App

Listed below is the website link to some prices
https://zoom.us/pricing/zoom-phone

Features: Meetings and Chat. HD video, audio, collaboration & chat.

- Rooms and Workspaces. Power up your conference rooms with video.
- Video Webinars. Full-featured, easy-to-use, engaging webinars.
- App Marketplace. Integrations and bots to use with Zoom.

Age Range: 16+ for Personal usage. There is protective program designed to allow for in school usage due to COVID-19.

Children under 16 must seek parental guidance, approval, and supervision before using this app.

Zoom: How to Play Games

Games are not automatically built into Zoom. The user (you) must be creative and think outside of the box. Thankfully, the whole world has used this for about a year, so there are plenty

Check out the ZoomJam Submissions Archive to recreate these games or get your creative juices flowing!

- Visit https://zoomjam.org/?cat=3 to see the Archive of Games!
- Also check out https://www.marieclaire.com/home/a32268495/games-to-play-on-zoom/ for more tips and types of games

Zoom, Cont.

Security:

- Configure a Meeting ID and Password.
- Enable Waiting Room.
- Disable "Join before host"
- Enable "Mute participants on entry"
- Enable Screen Share to "Host Only"
- Disable "Allow Removed Participants to Join"
- Disable "Allow File Transfer"
- Keep your **Zoom** application up to date.

JustTalk Kids

Accessibility:

- JusTalk Kids allows kids to video call and message using Wi-Fi so they don't need a phone number.
- App is available on IOS & Android

Price: JusTalk Kids offers auto-renewable subscriptions: $3.99/month, $19.99/6 months, or $39.99/year; non-renewing subscriptions: $4.99/month, $24.99/6 months, $47.99/year; a "Lifetime" plan is a one-off payment of $79.99.

Features:

- Kid-appropriate doodles, stickers, and games during the call help kids creatively express themselves, sparks conversation and laughter.
- Video & Voice Calls
- Texting/Messaging

Age Range: 13+

JustTalk Kids, Cont.

Security:

- Kids will not receive friend requests, calls or messages from strangers. All of your children's personal information (including conversations) is encrypted and completely safe.
- " Person In Charge" Account is registered and constructed by the assistance of an adult. All login information is connected to adult account.

KidsEmail

Accessibility:

- App is available on IOS & Android
- WiFi Accessible

Price: $4.95/Month

Try Kids Email for free for 30 days before signing up for a subscription. No credit card required during Trial Period.

Features:

- Read it Aloud Feature(Options to voice message or have the message read to the child allowed)
- Drawing Board
- TIME RESTRICTION: You can choose to restrict times of the day and days of the week that your child can login. You can even ground them for a certain period of time and display a custom message from you when they attempt to log in!

Age Range: 6+ y/o

KidsEmail, Cont.

Security:

MAIL MONITORING: Parents can receive a copy of all incoming and/or outgoing email that is sent to/from your child. This is a simple setting that can be enabled/disabled if desired.

BLOCK SENDERS: If you allow your child to receive email from anyone, you can still block specific people by adding them to a custom blacklist.

NO ADS: There is no advertising on this site.

CONTACT MANAGER: You can add family and friends to your child's contact list. You can also deny the sending and/or receiving of emails to/from anyone not belonging to that child's contact list.

Caribu App

Accessibility:

- App is generally easy to use. Often used with grandparents and children. Has a great deal of educational opportunities attached. Thus allowing for more engagement with the child
- App is available on IOS & Android
- App is easily accessible with WIFI

Price: Caribu Unlimited is $9.99/month or $99.99/year.

Features:

- Read and draw with their parents and grandparents through a video-call when they're not in the same location
- On Caribu video calls, kids can draw, read bedtime stories, solve puzzles, play games, play learning games, cook, and even view famous artwork together in a real-time video call, no matter how far apart you are.

Age Range: 2+ y/o

Caribu App Cont.

Security:

- " Person In Charge" Account is registered and constructed by the assistance of an adult. All login information is connected to adult account. Thus resulting in none of the child's information being needed.
- "Contact": Any Person on the contact list must be approved by parent. Then they are given access to be in contact with child.
- No information of child is used. Privacy of child is of utter most importance.

Additional Feature Found on Most Apps/Websites

Peace-of-Mind

Many of the apps offer location-sharing features as well, which can be exceptionally comforting when your children aren't with you, so you still know where they are, and some of the apps are free from annoying advertising messages. Not all apps are free from charge, but if the features meet your needs, it may be worth the cost.

Websites Used for Reference

- https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/social-media-networks-made-for-kids/#gromsocial
- https://www.commonsensemedia.org/app-reviews/playkids-talk-kids-safe-messenger
- https://www.fennec.me/en/
- https://www.kidsemail.org/
- https://talkingparents.com/blog/october-2019/apps-communicate-family
- https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/what-is-groupme-s-privacy-policy-04bae73c-42f2-4598-9460-8ae279672a4f
- https://www.whatsapp.com/security/

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