

A parent's guide to location settings



On many of our app reviews we recommend switching off location settings for your child. This is because having them turned on could show your child's location, or frequently visited places to lots of people – either to all their contacts on a private profile, or to any user on a public profile.

But are there times that you might want to allow an app to have access to location settings?

Many apps and games give users the option to share their location. You should sit down with your child and review the location settings on their favourite app or game and talk to them about what they're sharing online. Remind them, and explain why, they shouldn't share location on posts, or public forums and chats, videos or with people they don't know.

What apps allow you to share your location:

- Instagram
- Facebook
- Pokemon Go
- Snapchat
- and many more.

What are the risks of location sharing?

- If shared publicly, their location could be seen by someone they don't know.
- People could find out where they go to school or live.
- Allow accurate picture of movements / routine to be built up.

All of these things increase risk to children, of cyberbullying, stalking or unwanted contact (from friends or others) or becoming a target.

Is it ever ok to share your location?

Set some rules together around how and if they will use location sharing. If your child needs to walk home they might like to think that you can check where they are and welcome that you can track them on a private, secure app till they get home. You could also share your location with your child so that they can follow your journey – such as if you are out for a walk or run.

If your child is going out alone or travelling back from somewhere, encouraging them to share their location with you or other family members can be a good way to help keep them safe. However, if your family decides to use an app like this you should always speak to your child first and make sure they understand why it's necessary. Remember to check the age recommendation for any app too.

Here are some apps that you could discuss with your child to see if you want to use them.

Hollie Guard App

This app has lots of different features, from letting a contact know the journey you are planning and when you have reached your destination, to an emergency alarm and accident alerts. This could be very useful for older kids wanting more independence. Make sure to explore the app together and discuss how it works and what to do if they are unsure about any situation.

WalkSafe App

The WalkSafe app has local crime data available to allow users to plan a safer route home. You can plan arrival times and Check-Ins to be shared with chosen contacts with alerts if you don't arrive or check in at the arranged time. This app might be useful to check areas where you are spending time or walking through, but it might mean some people feel more anxious about what is happening around them.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp allows users to either share their current location, or share their live location with a contact. You could use this if your child was walking home and you both wanted some reassurance. This feature is end-to-end encrypted, which means no one can see your live location except the people you shared with.