



# A guide to Snapchat for parents and guardians



## What's inside?



Snapchat's  
features



Frequently asked  
questions



Safety and wellness  
resources



Conversation  
starters

# A letter from parents who work at Snap Inc.

Dear parents and guardians,

Your teenager has created a Snapchat account. Now what? You're sceptical. Why would your teen want to use an app where much of their content is deleted by default? Social platforms are constantly evolving and we understand that it can be hard to keep up. It's natural to have questions and concerns, and we hope that you find this guide helpful in learning about Snapchat and becoming a resource to educate and empower your teen.

We recognise that you want to ensure that your teen is well protected and informed while using



our app. Our goal is to provide a space for teens to express their creativity and authentic selves. Snapchat is different from traditional social media as the app was created as a fun way to keep in touch with close friends, not strangers.

**“Why does my teen want to use an app where much of their content is deleted by default?”**

Unlike other platforms, we don't allow public comments and our default settings mean that Snapchatters can only receive messages from people who they've added as a Friend.

Beyond talking to friends, Snapchat is a great way for families to stay connected. Snapchat helps you use your creativity to communicate in a fun and casual way! It's a place to just have fun with each other (no worrying about to-do lists or reminders to wash the dishes). Instead, you get a chance to send silly pictures and live in the moment (without clogging your camera roll!). Use Snapchat to Snap pictures of your family pet while your teen is at school or add our Lenses to make your teen laugh!

We understand that any app that facilitates communication has the potential to be abused, which is why we have – and will continue to – focus a lot of time, resources and energy on the safety of our platform. With extensive in-app reporting, our community guidelines and wide

range of active safety partners, we let our teens know that their safety is our priority.

We created this parent's guide to provide you with additional information that empowers you and your family to express yourselves safely, live in the moment, learn about the world and have fun together. We hope you find it helpful as you continue to have open and honest conversations with your teen about what they are doing online.

**Remember, we're here for you and your teen!**

**The parents who work at Snap Inc.**



# Table of contents

**3**

What is Snapchat?

**4**

Frequently asked questions

**6**

Top features

**7**

Our privacy principles

**8**

Helpful safety tips

**9**

Wellness resources

**10**

How to talk to your teen about Snapchat



# Snapchat: the basics

## What is Snapchat?



As a parent or educator, you might know Snapchat as the messaging and camera app that's one of the only ways teens communicate with their friends these days. From the very beginning, we've focused on helping real friends connect when they're apart and to feel comfortable expressing themselves in the moment. Snapchat was created as a tool to make people feel comfortable expressing themselves with their camera.

Snapchat is deliberately built differently to traditional social media, in ways that make it much safer for our community. We encourage parents and teens to have regular conversations about appropriate use of Snapchat and other platforms which is why we put together this guide.



# Frequently asked questions

With our camera, we've created a way for people to express themselves using our creative tools to say so much more in a single Snap than the limitations of a text message. On Snapchat, you're free to be you with the people you care about the most. Here are some answers to your most commonly asked questions:

## 1 How does the app work?

After you've signed up for an account and created your Bitmoji, it's time to start exploring! Snapchat has five tabs (from left to right): Map, Chat, Camera, Stories and Spotlight. Snapchat opens to the Camera.



Just tap on the camera icon to take a photo or hold to take a video. You can send pictures or videos, called "Snaps", to friends. They are not designed to facilitate easy messaging to strangers. When you first create an account, by default, you cannot receive a message from someone you have not added as a friend.

Express yourself!



You're in control of who you share things with, how you share them and how long they can be viewed on Snapchat.

## 2 Tell me more about Snaps

Snaps are made for quick and easy communication, just like real-life conversations! That's why when you send a Snap to a friend, the Snap is deleted by default, like words spoken aloud. We believe that this drives the level of authentic conversation that we see across Snapchat every day.



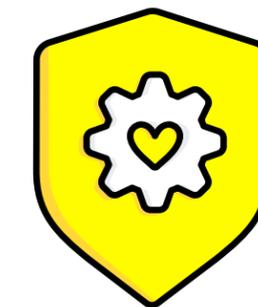
Remember, even though the Snaps are designed to delete by default, a friend can still take a screenshot, record the screen or capture it with another device.



## 3 What are Snap's safety standards?

All users on Snapchat must comply with Snap's Terms of Service and Community Guidelines, which prohibit hate speech, discrimination, misinformation, bullying, harassment, violent content and much more. Snap has dedicated teams who create and enforce these policies.

To learn more about how we protect our users, check out our [Privacy Centre](#).



## 4 Is there an age requirement to create an account?

Yes. No one under 13 years of age is allowed to create an account or use Snapchat, and we don't direct our services to anyone under the age of 13. If you have a child under the age of 13 who is using Snapchat, please contact us with your child's username and verification of your relationship.

### 5 How can I help to keep my teen safe on Snapchat?

Snapchat is deliberately built differently to traditional social media – in ways that make it much safer for our community. Snapchat is a place to connect and communicate with friends and loved ones, but it’s important to know how to stay safe. We recommend checking out our [Safety Centre](#) to learn more about our policies, our team and information for parents and educators. Some helpful tips for your teen include: creating a strong password, verifying their email and mobile number, only accepting friend requests from people that they know in real life and reading up on our Community Guidelines so that they can try to help their friends to follow them too!

**“Only accept friend requests from people you know in real life.”**



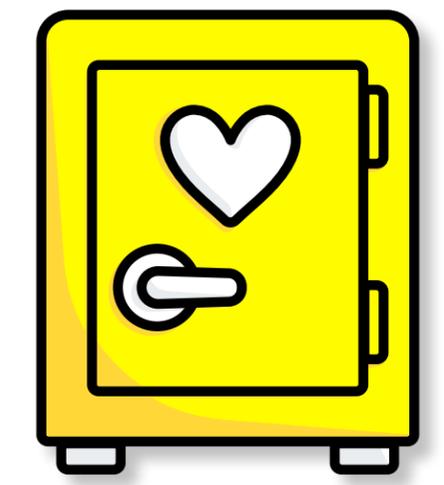
### 6 How do I report a safety concern?

We make it easy for our community to get in [touch](#) via in-app reports and off-platform feedback to identify inappropriate users and content. Users can report any content through in-app reporting, our support portal and the [Snapchat Support Twitter](#) account. We take action in accordance with our Community Guidelines and aggregate feedback to improve Snapchat.

**Note:** if you feel that someone is in *immediate* danger, contact your local law enforcement agency straight away.



**“ We focus on creating effective guidelines, protecting our Snapchatters and providing a safe, fun environment for creativity and self-expression. If your teen ever experiences a safety concern, they should always report it to us. ”**



# How to use Snapchat Top features

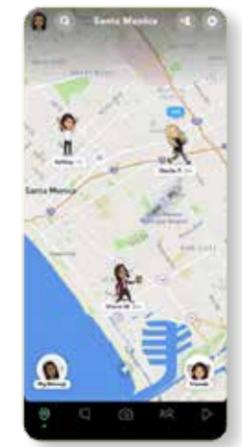
To help you navigate the app, check out some Snapchat fundamentals below. For a full list of features, check out our Snap Glossary on page 12.

**First things first:** there's more to Snapchat than just sending photo and video messages. The app has five tabs (from left to right): Snap Map, Chat, Camera, Stories and Spotlight.



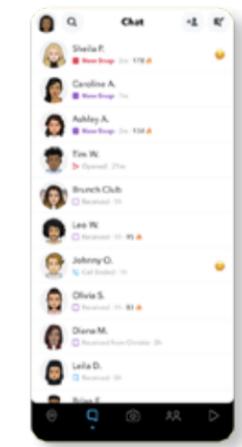
## 📍 Snap Map:

Snap Map connects our community to their best friends and to different places around the world. As with all our products, the Snap Map was designed with privacy at heart and location-sharing is off by default for all users. When a Snapchatter opens Snap Map for the first time, they're prompted to choose who they'd like to share their location with – whether that be all their friends, a select few or no one (Ghost Mode). Places on the Snap Map allow Snapchatters to view business hours and reviews, as well as to place takeaway and delivery orders.



## 💬 Chat:

From the very beginning, we've focused on helping real friends connect when they're apart and ensuring that they feel comfortable expressing themselves in the moment. Snapchat allows for video, photo, audio and text Chats, as well as phone and video calls. Messages are deleted by default and a user cannot receive a one-on-one chat from someone they aren't already friends with.



## 📷 Camera:

Snapchat automatically opens to the Camera. This is where you can take Snaps – which are videos or photos. After a Snap is created, it can be layered with creative tools, like Filters, texts, stickers, attachments and more. A Snap can be:

- Sent in a Chat
- Saved to Memories
- Added to My Story or used to create a Private Story or Custom Story
- Deleted



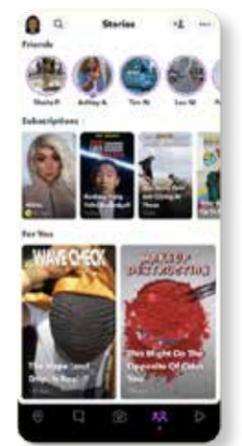
For additional information on when Snapchat deletes Snaps and Chats, please visit our support article [here](#). Check out page 12 for more on these terms.

## 👥 Stories:

This is where Snapchatters can view Stories from their friends, creators and the broader Snapchat community! It's also where you can view and watch subscriptions from Discover and the "For You" section.

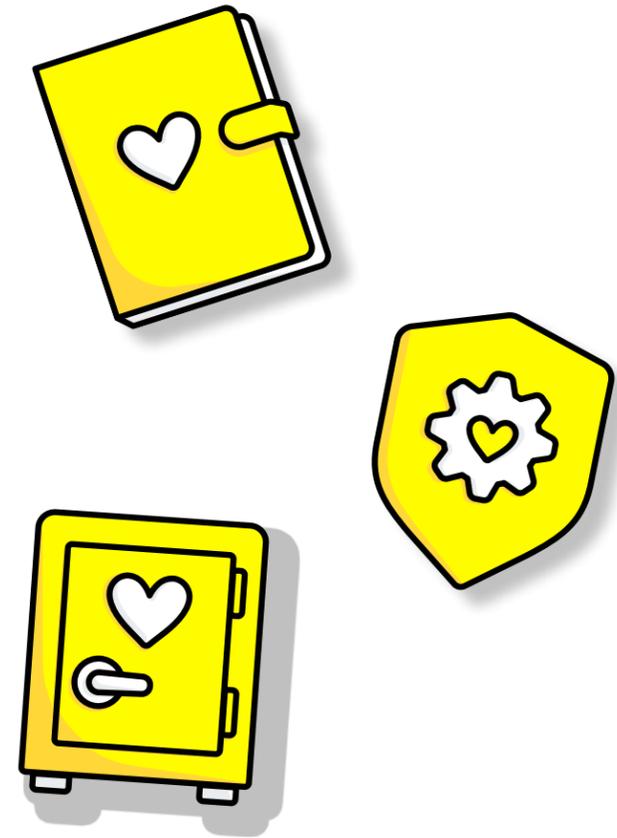
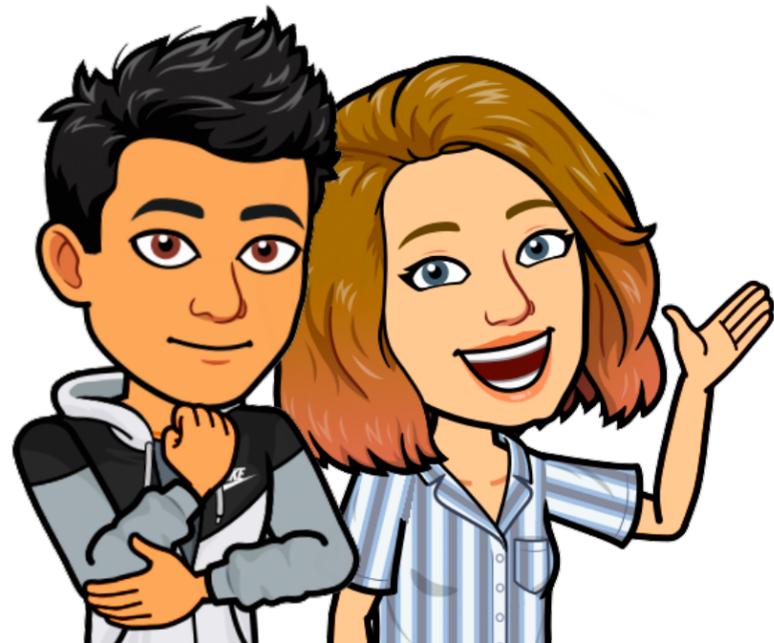
## ▶ Spotlight:

Spotlight shines a light on the most entertaining Snaps created by the Snapchat community. Explore by swiping up and down to move between content. If you see something you want to see more of, tap the heart to favourite it and personalise your feed!



# Privacy on Snapchat

## Our privacy principles



At Snap, we make your privacy a priority. We know your trust is earned every time you use Snapchat, or any of our other products – that’s why we treat your information differently to most other tech companies.

Even though our products are constantly evolving, our privacy principles remain unchanged:

- We communicate honestly and openly
- You choose how to express yourself
- We design with privacy in mind
- You control your information

To learn more about how we make your privacy a top priority, check out our [Privacy Centre](#), where you can find more details on our privacy principles and our privacy policy. If you are looking for a summary of the key issues, please review *Your Privacy, Explained*.



# Staying safe on Snapchat

## Helpful safety tips

Snapchat is a place to connect and communicate with friends and loved ones, but it's also important to know how to stay safe. We recommend checking out our [Safety Centre](#) to learn more about our policies, our team, and information for parents and educators. Keep in mind, Snapchat is for ages 13+.

We also offer in-app support for Snapchatters who may be experiencing a mental health or emotional crisis, or who may be curious to learn more about these issues and how they can help friends dealing with them. Our Here For You tool provides safety resources that have been developed by experts for when Snapchatters search for certain topics, including those related to anxiety, depression, stress, grief, suicidal thoughts and bullying.

The following are some tips to stay safe on Snapchat.



**1 Choose a strong password:** select a password that's at least eight characters long and doesn't include personal information, like your name, username, phone number or birthday. Include a mix of numbers, symbols, and capital and lowercase letters in your password. Don't share your password with others and don't use the same password for other apps or websites.

**2 Verify your email address and mobile number:** verify that the email address and mobile number associated with your account are accurate in Snapchat settings.

**3 Set up two-factor authentication:** this is an optional security feature to verify that it's really you when you log in to your Snapchat account. This makes your account more secure. Learn more [here](#).

**4 Keep it between friends:** Snapchat was made for keeping in touch with your close friends. We recommend that you only add or accept friend requests from people that you know in real life. Remind your teens that it's not safe to meet up with a person they meet online.

**5 Check your privacy settings:** choose who can send you Snaps, view your Stories or see your location on Snap Map in your settings. By default, only your friends can contact you directly or view your Story.

**6 Customise your location on the Map:** you can choose to share your location with all your friends you've added back, just a group of select friends or you can even turn on Ghost Mode when you want to go off-grid. The Snap Map only updates your location when you're using the app and only shares your location with the people you select to share it with.

**7 Change who can view my Story:** the default privacy setting is that only Snapchatters you've added can view your Story. The privacy settings you have when you post a Snap to your Story will remain for that Snap, even if you change the settings later.

**8 Report abuse on Snapchat:** you can always report abuse on Snapchat, including harassment, bullying or any other safety concern. If someone is making you uncomfortable, you can also block that Snapchatter and leave any group chat. To report a Snap, press and hold on a Snap or Story and then tap the "Report Snap" button.

**9 Difference between removing and blocking friends:** when you remove someone from your Friends list, they won't be able to view any of your private Stories, but they'll still be able to view any content you have set to Public. Depending on your privacy settings, they may also still be able to Chat or Snap you. When you block a friend, they won't be able to view your Story, send you Snaps or send you Chats.



# Keeping you in mind Wellness resources

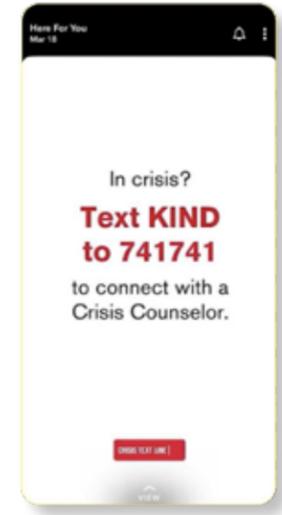
Snap is deeply committed to the safety and wellbeing of its community. We employ teams, technologies, policies and partnerships to keep our Snapchatters safe, healthy and informed.

We work with industry experts and non-governmental organisations to provide resources and support to Snapchatters in need. For a full list, visit our [Safety Partners](#).

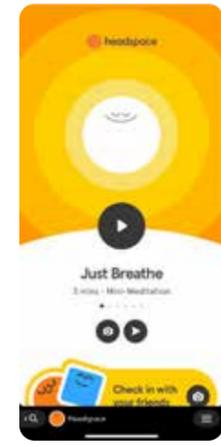
Snapchat provides resources and wellbeing features in-app to help support your teens, whether they are seeking emotional support or simply just want to chat! Our wellbeing features are designed to educate and empower members of the Snapchat community to support friends who may be experiencing their own struggle with mental health.



**Crisis Text Line:** We partner with Crisis Text Line, which allows Snapchatters who live in the US to chat with a live, trained crisis counsellor for free and is available 24/7. Just text **KIND to 741741**, or search Crisis Text Line in-app! If you are outside the US, check out our [Safety Resources](#) for more information.



**Headspace Mini:** Headspace and Snap are partnering to give Snapchatters access to guided meditations and mindfulness practices directly in-app. Through Headspace Mini, Snapchatters will be empowered to do meditation exercises with friends and send encouraging messages to positively boost friends in need. Please note that this feature is only available in select countries.



**Here For You:** a tool in Search that houses localised resources and content from professional non-profit organisations which is shown when people type in words associated with being in crisis. The Search topics include depression, anxiety, grieving, bullying, body positivity, LGBTQ mental health and more.

**In-app reporting:** our in-app reporting tool allows Snapchatters to anonymously alert us when they worry that their friends are at risk of self-harm. We also share resources to both the person alerting Snap to the situation and the person receiving the in-app support, sending them to a Support Site page that has self-harm and crisis hotlines resources in over 20 countries and languages.

In 2017, we launched in-app crisis resources for members of our community. This intervention appears as a message from Snapchat Support. Our Law Enforcement Operations team will proactively reach out to law enforcement when we believe, in good faith, that an imminent threat to life exists. Snapchat is not a professional mental health intervention resource. If a friend or loved one is in danger, use emergency services such as the Samaritans hotline, Shout text line or call 999.

**Safety Snapshot Discover Channel:** encourage your teen to subscribe to Safety Snapshot, which is a Discover show focused on educating Snapchatters about digital security and important ways to keep your Snapchat account secure. Please note that this channel is only available in select countries.

**Resource page:** Check out our [Safety Centre](#) for a full list of safety partners and resources for you and your teen!

Tap and hold in-app to scan



# How to talk to your teens

## Conversation starters

We know it's important to be able to communicate with your teen about using Snapchat. That's why we partnered with experts from MindUP, Crisis Text Line (called Shout in the UK) and Snap parents to come up with some conversation starters to help connect with your teen over Snap, recognise potential concerning behaviour and practise wellness within the app!

### Get involved

Creating your own Snapchat account can help you understand the app and better connect with your teen.

**Top tip:** have your teen teach you about using your new Snapchat!



### Here are some fun questions to ask to get the conversation flowing:

- Can I see what your Bitmoji looks like?
- Do you want to create a family Private Story or Group Chat for us?
- What filter do you use the most?
- Which Discover show is your favourite? Which ones will I like?
- How do Best Friends on Snapchat work?
- Who is your longest Snapstreak?
- Can I save a Snap? Where does it go if I save it?
- How do I go into Ghost Mode on the Snap Map?
- What's your favourite tab of the app?

- How can I make sure only my Friends are seeing what I post?
- What's your favourite Snap Game?

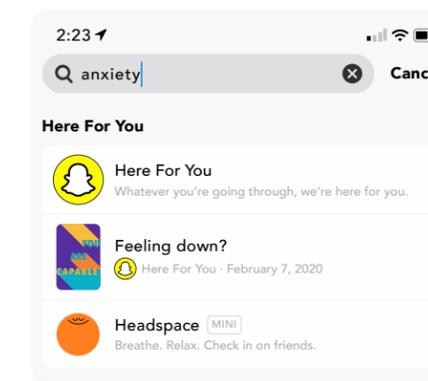
### Recognising a concern:

It's important to know what behaviours you should keep an eye out for in your teen. These behaviours might indicate that your teen is having trouble online and might need some extra support from you, a counsellor or another adult. Are you noticing any of the following?

- Difference in personality (increased anxiety, fear or anger)
- Avoiding conversations about technology
- Avoiding using their phone or laptop
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Change in school behaviour (lower grades, poor attendance, falling asleep in class)
- Self-harming ideations



If you are, make sure you talk to your teen and potentially seek help from a professional or check out our Here For You tool. For any urgent moments of crisis, make sure they know that Shout text line is available 24/7 by texting **SHOUT to 85258**. We've partnered directly with them to ensure the Snapchat community has free, confidential support from their trained crisis counsellors.



CRISIS TEXT LINE |



### Practising wellness:

Snapchat is designed so that people can only see the things you want to share, for as long as you want to share them. We also develop new products and features using our safety-by-design approach and help our community access preventative well-being tools and resources when they or their friends are experiencing a mental health crisis.

## Here are some ways to check in with your teen:

- Do you ever use Headspace to meditate? Research has found that meditation or practising mindful awareness can reduce stress and improve well-being.
- If you needed to report somebody's Snapchat, would you know how to?
- Do you watch the Safety Snapshot Discover Channel dedicated to safety?
- Are you subscribed to Here For You? This can be found by searching "Here For You" in your search bar on Snapchat
- Do you feel like you have somebody to talk to if something is bothering you on Snapchat?
- Do you know what resources are available to support you on Snapchat?
- How long do you spend in-app?
- Do you ever feel overwhelmed when using the app? What do you do after feeling this?

“  
**We all have the ability to bring more joy and wellness to our lives by exercising positive mental habits such as practising mindful awareness, expressing gratitude and acting with kindness.**  
**- Molly Stewart Lawlor, PhD**

**mindup**  
*For Life*

The Goldie Hawn  
 Foundation

”

## After talking with your teen:

Now that you and your teen are experts at communicating about Snapchat, it's a good idea to set some agreements for the future and to make sure you are continually having these conversations! Even creating a social media contract can help keep privacy and trust on both sides. By making these promises, it can help to facilitate trust between both parties.

Here are some conversation starters for fostering healthy communication with your teen and supporting their development of healthy screen and social media habits:

- Create talking rituals; set aside time for talking and listening like over family meals
- Involve your teen in conversation, asking questions like "What's your opinion on this?" and responding with openness to their ideas
- Learn how to really listen by eliminating distractions and maintaining eye contact

- Agree together on a time block throughout each day that includes a social media or phone "break".
- Talk openly about online risks and concerns, providing them with practical things they can do to deal with risks online, like blocking and reporting.

Here are some key guidelines to help your teen stay safe and well on social media:

- The importance of keeping social posts to your close circle – only accepting friend requests from people you really know
- Always ask yourself: WWGS? (what would Grandma say) before you post!
- Don't be a bystander – if you see something that makes you uncomfortable, report it!
- Always act within the community guidelines of kindness.



# Snapchat Glossary

## (A-Z)

**Camera:** this is where you send your friends Snaps, which are photos or videos.

**Chat:** send video, phone or text Chats with your real friends.

**Creative tools:** after you create a Snap, you can add stickers, text, doodles and more.

**Custom Story:** Choose Friends for your Custom Story! Anyone who joins will be able to add to this Story and see other members.

**Discover:** watch premium news and entertainment, including Snap Originals and mainstream media.

**Filters:** swipe right on a Snap and Filter options will appear to add colour effects, show venue info, feature your Bitmoji, show what you're doing and more.

**Games and Snap Minis:** games are a fun way to hang out with your friends on Snapchat! Snap Minis are bite-sized utilities tailor-made for friends, such as planning a film night or making a deck of flashcards.

**Ghost Mode:** when enabled, your friends can't see your location on the Snap Map.

**Lenses:** Tap on a face to launch the Lens carousel. Lenses add 3D effects, objects, characters and transformations to your Snaps.

**Location services:** Snapchat uses your location for features like Filters, Search, Snap Map, advertising and more. If enabled, your location will update while you have Snapchat open.

**Memories:** A Snapper's personal collection of Snaps and Stories is saved to your Memories.

**My Eyes Only:** this feature is found in Memories and allows Snapchatters to move Snaps and Stories saved in their Memories to their My Eyes Only tab – which requires a passcode to view.

**My Story:** a series of Snaps that play in chronological order which friends can view for 24 hours. You can choose the option to share with Everyone, My Friends or a customised list of people.

**Our Story:** a collection of Snaps submitted from different Snapchatters throughout the community. Snaps featured on Our Story are public content that can be shown on Snap Maps and even off-platform.

**Private Story:** Private Stories allow Snapchatters to create a Story that is only shared with a select number of friends.

**Quick Add:** Friend recommendations in Quick Add are based on a few factors, like who you're already friends with and who you subscribe to.

**Search:** Typing in Search will show you different things, so you can find what's most relevant to you; like finding friends or checking out our Here For You tool.

**Snapcode:** A Snapcode is special kind of image that you can scan with Snapchat to do different things, like add new friends or unlock Filters and Lenses.

**Snap Map:** See what's happening, find your friends and get inspired to go on an adventure with this tab. Location-sharing is off by default – you decide if you want to share your location with friends, or simply keep it to yourself with Ghost Mode.

**Snap Stars:** creators (such as influencers and celebrities) who have a wide audience will have a gold star. You can subscribe to these creators.

**Spotlight:** discover the world of Snapchat in one place and view perspectives across our community in this entertainment platform.

**Streaks:** this is typically represented by an 🔥 emoji next to your Friend's name in the Chats screen and is a tally of how many days the streak (i.e. Snaps exchanged with each other) has lasted. Snap Streaks are meant to be a fun, light-hearted way to recognise who you're Snapping with most.





**Snap Inc.**