Parents' Guide to APPs

Although child-friendly apps can make using the internet a more accessible and enjoyable experience, the thousands of apps available for different types of people mean it's important to make sure children use appropriate ones.

This guide maps some of the most common apps available and highlights those that might create risky situations for children, such as unintentionally revealing personal information, stranger danger and generating large bills through in-app purchasing.

59% Privacy
of apps send information about the device and user habits to a third party [1]

80/100 Purchases
of the top apps were 'free' but made all money through in-app purchasing [2]

29% Permission
of mums and dads let kids download apps without their permission [3]
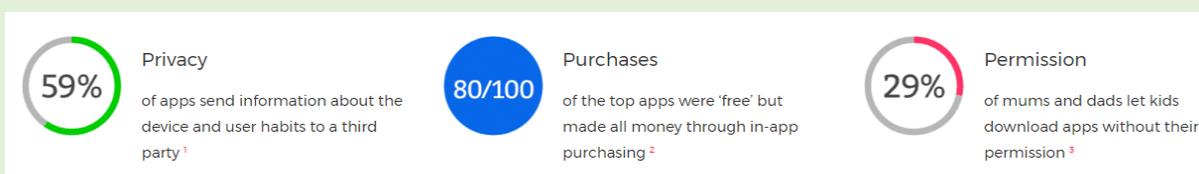
Some apps that allow children to create and maintain online relationships raise some important safety issues that it's worth knowing about as a parent:

Chatting with strangers
Meeting and chatting with strangers online poses risks to young people who might be vulnerable to grooming and online (and offline) forms of sexual abuse.

Sending inappropriate content
With the physical barrier of a screen, some people feel more empowered to pressurise others into sending messages, often of a sexual or derogatory nature.

Sharing a location
Many apps share the user's location. This can put children at risk from others who actively seek out children with the intention of meeting in the real world. Sharing a location can also raise concerns with identity theft and privacy.

Social networks allow young people to maintain social relationships with school friends, distant friends or online friends they've never met. This section looks at the world of social networking apps and some of the risks they may pose for children. For more information about social networks and how to set up important privacy settings, see the page on Social Networking https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/social-networking/.
Parents should be aware of some issues with social networking apps:

Sharing information
Many apps work on the basis of identity or phone number information. In many cases apps don't always let you know that this information is being used, meaning children could be sharing personal information. As well as on the social networks themselves, privacy and security settings are available on most devices. You can find out more at the Privacy & Identity Theft page https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/privacy-identity/ .

Cyberbullying
Smartphones allow people to take photos and share them instantly on their social networks or post information about someone online in seconds. Sometimes this can mean young people are even more vulnerable to episodes of cyberbullying.