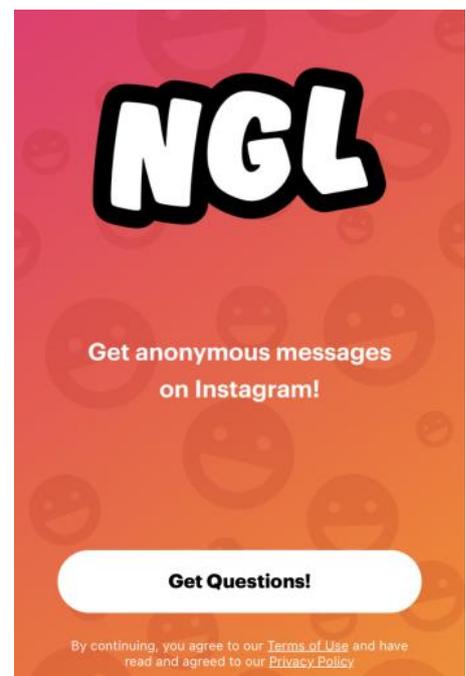


(NGL) Not Gonna Lie App

NGL is another of those 'bolt-on' apps which is designed to work alongside a major social media network. In this instance, the 'host' platforms are Instagram and Twitter - with NGL (meaning, as you may have surmised, 'Not Gonna Lie') inviting a user's friends and followers to ask them questions anonymously. An intriguing novelty, perhaps - but also not without risk.

Human nature being what it is, some people take the smokescreen of online anonymity as an excuse to behave in ways that they certainly wouldn't if their identity were visible. The idea of exposing young social media users to anonymous messages is one which understandably concerns many parents:



With around 60,000 songs added to its online library every day, Spotify is a vast treasure trove of audio dating from some 19th century recordings through to giants of the download age like The Weeknd and Ed Sheeran. Factor podcasts, audiobooks and videos into the mix, and the Swedish-based streaming platform quite literally offers something for everyone. Not everything in Spotify's depths is universally suitable, however, the sheer mass of music and content on the platform mean that, naturally, not all of it is intended for younger listeners. The poster below gives some more information.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about SPOTIFY

Spotify is a digital music, podcast and video service which gives users access to millions of songs and other content from creators all over the world. Since launching in 2008, Spotify has revolutionised the way music is listened to: it now offers the ability to manage and share more than 100 million tracks and five million podcast series, plus personalised recommendations, new release updates and the option to create collaborative playlists. As of February 2023, it is the world's most popular audio streaming subscription service with 489 million users globally.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

EXPLICIT LYRICS
As per Spotify's terms and conditions, people need to be at least 18 to use it. That said, the platform doesn't censor lyrics unless instructed to do so in the settings – so it's worth noting that young teenagers could still be exposed to age-inappropriate songs which contain explicit references to sexual behaviour, violence, discriminatory language and swearing.

GROOMING TACTICS
Although Spotify doesn't come with dedicated chat functionality, concerns were raised in January 2023 after reports of an 11-year-old girl being coerced into sharing explicit pictures of herself on the platform. The case highlighted predators' tactics of sharing empty playlists with other users: their messages were being arranged undetected through edited song titles and descriptions, bypassing security measures.

OVERSHARING
Spotify provides a perfect way to play music, with the ability to connect to another device, such as a Bluetooth speaker or an in-car stereo. While this is a useful feature, it's also easy to forget your surroundings and inadvertently play content which isn't appropriate for all listeners – especially those under the age of 18, potentially causing alarm or distress.

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE PODCASTS

Spotify's podcast community has grown exponentially and it's become a popular base for millions of users to listen to shows, stories, interviews and more – with content covering an array of topics. This includes some material which isn't suitable for minors, including audio which is obviously adult-themed, but can be just as easily accessed as everything else.

ACCESS TO SPOTIFY LIVE

If your child has a Spotify account, they'll also be able to access the platform's audio-only chat service: Spotify Live. While it's a separate stand-alone app, Spotify Live allows people to listen to live discussions on the main Spotify platform and, more notably, lets users enter virtual rooms to chat with other users, opening up direct conversations with strangers and individuals who might not necessarily be there for the right reasons.

PARENTAL ADVISORY EXPLICIT CONTENT

Advice for Parents & Carers

SWAP TO SPOTIFY KIDS

If you're concerned about what your child might hear while streaming music, Spotify Kids is a separate, ad-free service specifically designed for children aged 12 and under. It allows younger users to enjoy human-curated, child-friendly content (such as music and audiobooks) and is available to users with a Spotify premium Family subscription – meaning that parents can view and manage the content their child listens to.

TALK ABOUT THE RISKS

As with any platform, it's good practice to talk to your child about what they should be aware of when using Spotify. For instance, it's important they're aware never to share any personal information with strangers, and what they should do if they're exposed to inappropriate content. Encourage them to think critically about what they see and hear so that they feel comfortable raising any concerns with you.

CENSOR EXPLICIT CONTENT

Regardless of what type of account your child uses to access Spotify, there is an option to turn off explicit content in the settings – greying out all songs marked with an 'E' tag. If your child has their own individual account, it's easier for them to turn it back on – whereas with a family plan, you're in control and your child can't alter the setting without knowing the password.

KEEP AN EYE OUT

If you're concerned that your child is spending too much time on Spotify or you've noticed they're being particularly secretive about how they're using it, encourage them to talk about what they're listening to. It's always prudent to show an interest in their online habits from the outset – so you're confident they're using apps and services in the right way, for the right reasons, and they're not being drawn into anything they shouldn't be.

Meet Our Expert

Carly Page is an experienced technology journalist with a track record of more than 10 years in the industry. Previously the editor of tech tabloid *The Inquirer*, Carly is now a freelance technology journalist, editor and consultant.

National Online Safety
#WakeUpWednesday

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Safeguarding Workshops for parents

We would like to run some workshops (virtual or where possible in person) for parents/carers around the themes of safeguarding. These could be about online safety, issues within London and the borough of Newham such as gang culture and knife crime, how children can travel safely and where to find support. Please note this will not be a forum to discuss individual cases but general information will be provided. If you have any ideas or suggestions please let us know by e mailing the school info account. info@st-edwards.newham.sch.uk

