

3 sneaky tricks teens are using to keep secrets online

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It's no secret that teens are tech savvy, but just how sneaky are they when it comes to keeping their parents in the dark?

At Family Zone, our mission is to help parents keep their children safe online. Part of the job of our Cyber Experts is to keep you up to date on the latest apps, sites and online trends amongst kids and teens. In this week's blog, our Cyber Experts have delved a little deeper to uncover some of the latest sneaky tricks teenagers use to keep secrets online and hide their activity from their parents.

1. Ghost Accounts

Jordan Foster from ySafe explains, 'A ghost account acts as a secondary social media account that kids use to hide from their parents. They'll have their original profile, where they'll accept their parents as friends, and then the second account is used to hide all their activity they know their parents won't approve of.' A ghost account, which is predominantly used for Instagram, may contain inappropriate photos or posts and a network of random and unknown followers. 'Less innocent teenagers use these accounts so they can publish all the photos their parents would disapprove of, and also communicate with random people online. Girls are much more likely to create a ghost account as they're more likely to seek validation in the form of compliments from the opposite sex. The quickest way to do this is to publish a photo online and wait for the 'likes' and 'comments' to roll in,' Jordan says. Finding out whether your child has a ghost account can be very difficult, depending on how well hidden it is. Jordan recommends, 'Find their closest friend's profile on Instagram and go through the list of people they follow - if your child has a ghost account it's likely their friends will follow it.'

2. Snapchat tricks

There are two tricks Snapchat users have up their sleeves - one is a legitimate feature, the other is a glitch:

- **Changing usernames:**
Users can alter the usernames of whoever they wish. Teens are the most prolific users of Snapchat, and they're likely to have a lot of completely random followers. Even if parents check their child's Snapchat followers, the child has the option to amend any random follower's username to whatever they want. They do this so they can convince their parents that only their friends, peers and family follow them on Snapchat.
- **Secret screenshots:**
There is a way for users to screenshot other users' images without being found out. Snapchat is designed to alert users when someone has taken a screenshot of their Snap. It's a feature used to maintain a user's right to privacy. The glitch involves allowing a Snap to download and then turning the phone to Aeroplane mode. A user can then screenshot the Snap without Snapchat alerting the owner of the Snap. This glitch has been used for cyberbullying and revenge porn.

3. Secret message apps

There are several popular secret message apps available on the App Store. These include Telegram and Signal – both are designed to send 'self-destructing' messages to other users. Facebook has also released a 'Secret Message' function to its own Messenger app that allows both 'encrypted messages' and self-destructing messages. Parents have absolutely no way of tracing these messages, but they can block the apps so teens cannot use them on their devices.

Sometimes, protecting your kids from online risks includes protecting them from themselves. Family Zone can help you protect your kids by alerting you to all the apps they download on their devices, and we can block these apps if you don't want them being used by your child. Our team of [Cyber Experts](#) will identify which apps are risky to use and keep you regularly informed.

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[1300 398 326](tel:1300398326)
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