

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about YUBO



Yubo is a social networking platform where users can chat and livestream with up to 10 friends at once. People can connect with others based on location, with a Tinder-style 'swiping' mechanism to accept or reject someone based on profile pictures. The app has more than 60 million users worldwide.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

AGE-RELATED CONCERNS

Yubo's age verification feature helps to confirm a user's age upon sign-up and prevent fake ages or adults pretending to be minors. The app has a separate age community for 13 to 18 year olds to help ensure users can meet people their own age. Whilst a good idea, there can still be big mental, emotional and physical differences between a 13 and 18 year old (and different interests) so it's wise to monitor what your teen is watching or who they're speaking to.

LOCATION SHARING

Livestreaming and chatting with strangers is a large feature of Yubo. The app automatically asks to share your exact location or your city, which if granted, could potentially expose children to safety and privacy concerns, especially if sharing live-time and if the person they're speaking to is not someone they know very well.

LIVESTREAM RISKS

Yubo users are encouraged to host 'lives' in order to connect and make new friends. Unlike other social networking apps, livestreams on Yubo can be viewed by and commented on by anyone – whether they're a friend or not. The host can then invite up to 10 people to join in their 'live' while an infinite number of people can view, opening up direct contact with strangers, and the potential for inappropriate content, bullying or sharing personal information with people they don't know.

ON AIR

WELLBEING IMPACT

Yubo users 'swipe' to accept or decline the chance to talk with each other. These decisions are entirely based on someone's profile picture, raising the potential for children to be left with low self-esteem if declined repeatedly. Negative feedback about their appearance can seriously damage a child's emotional wellbeing, causing a loss of confidence in how they look or how interesting they are.

OVERSHARING

When user's sign-up for an account, they are asked to tag five interests. This means users with similar interests can be grouped together to help build connectivity. Children may also share their name, photo, age and location in the hope of building trusted friendships, however, whilst shared innocently, others users may use this information for more malicious purposes such as doxing, phishing scams, identity theft or even grooming.

IN-APP PURCHASES

Yubo prominently promote two monthly subscriptions in their app called 'Power Pack' and 'Elite Pack', which help boost children's visibility and allows them to see who has swiped right and viewed their profile. Teens can also buy Yubo's official currency, YuBucks, to spend on individual powers ranging from £10.99 to £59.99. All can be bought directly in the app and promise big benefits beyond the free version, making them very attractive.

Advice for Parents & Carers

EXPLORE THE APP YOURSELF

It's always best practice for parents and carers to explore any app before allowing their children to use it to fully understand how the app works, and what type of content and communication your child will be exposed to. Although no app will be 100% secure, Yubo have introduced a robust age verification feature which makes it difficult and time consuming to set up accounts as a younger person, improving its security detail.

DON'T SHARE LOCATION

Discuss with your child the importance of not giving away their location to strangers. Ensure that their exact location is turned off and never disclose what city they're in with people they don't know. It's important they recognise good safety and privacy measures so that they don't make themselves easy to track down or inadvertently give away personal information.

PROTECT PERSONAL DETAILS

Talk to your child about how much information they should share about themselves online. Help them understand the dangers of disclosing personal details, including social media handles, as this can be another way for strangers to gather more information. Within the chat feature, Yubo can identify if you're about to share your phone number or address and will send a pop-up to make you think twice and delete the message if you change your mind.

STAY AWARE

It's important to stay attuned to how your child is using social media. If they only access Yubo in private, for example, you might question what they're potentially using it for. It's also important to watch for warning signs that they may be over-using the app; prioritising it over everyday routines like meals or homework, for instance, or showing signs of irritability and a lack of concentration.

ALTER THE SETTINGS

Explore the security controls Yubo offers and make sure you implement those you feel will be best for your child. Ensure you and your child know how to block and report profiles, screen out nudity in live streams and keep their location private. There's also an option to mute words to avoid triggers, unwanted content or topics. Yubo state they use a combination of AI algorithms and human moderation to reduce inappropriate content and behaviour on the app too.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.

