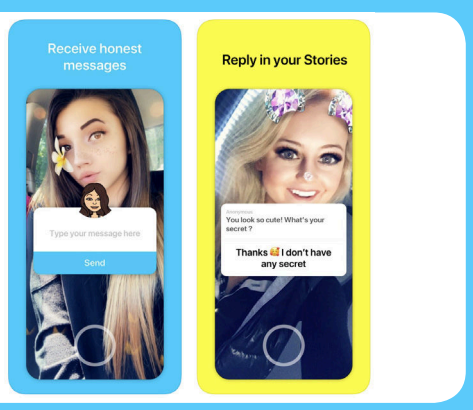
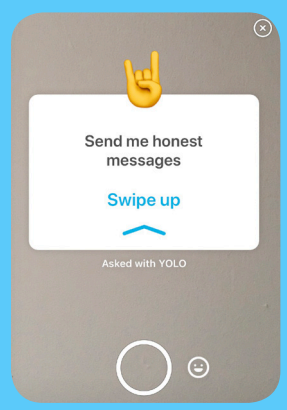
YOLO

YOLO is an anonymous question and answer app that works in combination with Snapchat. In May 2019 it became the most downloaded app in the UK iTunes store only a week after its release and with no prior marketing or promotion. It has become hugely popular amongst children, particularly teenagers, as it offers them the opportunity to join in anonymous Q&A without having to reveal their identities, which often encourages more honest and open peer feedback. This can offer kids a real sense of self-worth when they receive positive comments on their posts but can also have serious drawbacks if abused. At the time of writing this guide, YOLO was only available to download from the iTunes App store and unavailable to Android users.

AGE RESTRICTION 13+



What parents need to know about YOLO

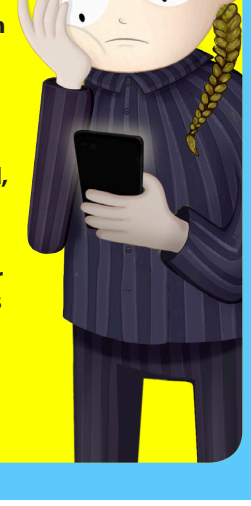


EVERYTHING IS ANONYMOUS

Once a user has downloaded YOLO, they will be prompted to open Snapchat and post a message to their Snapchat story which asks their friends and followers to send them honest messages. From these responses, all of which are anonymous, the user can then choose one and either reply direct to it in the YOLO app or reply via an image or video in Snapchat. This response can then be added to their Snapchat story. Given the anonymity, these messages may not always be helpful or positive.

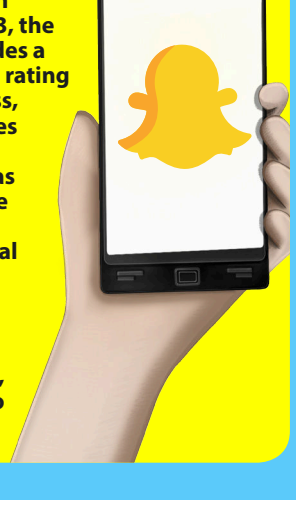
RISK OF BULLYING

Like previous similar apps before it, YOLO could be used to facilitate bullying given user identities are hidden. Cyberbullies may see this as an opportunity to send offensive or abusive comments to your child, especially as there is little opportunity for screening replies prior to them landing in your child's inbox. Children's charities, such as the NSPCC, have already voiced their concerns over the potential for the app to be misused.



NO AGE VERIFICATION PROCESS

Whilst YOLO recommends that the app should not be used by children under the age of 13, the iTunes store provides a recommended age rating of 17+. Nonetheless, if your child chooses to download the app and already has Snapchat, there are no age verification checks and no initial barriers to use. As long as your child has access to an iPhone and has Snapchat installed, they have access to YOLO.



AN INFLUENTIAL FEEDBACK TOOL

YOLO is designed to offer children the ability to tell their peers what they think of their posts and aims to encourage positivity between friends. However, the app may become an influential tool in shaping how your child behaves and interacts if they receive feedback from their followers which is more critical, such as in respect of appearance or their day to day actions. Children are so keen to be accepted by their friends that they may try and act on the criticism in order to do whatever it takes to fit in.

Top Tips For Parents

1 SPEAK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT CYBERBULLYING

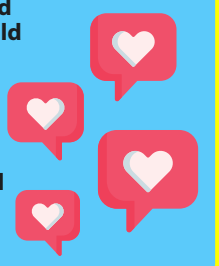
The best way to deal with offensive or hurtful comments online is to talk your child and prepare them for what they may encounter. Offer them advice and support in dealing with nasty comments and teach them how to report or block users, so that they feel empowered to take action and can build confidence in staying safe online. Try to get them to talk about it so that they don't feel alone or unable to call for help.

2 TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT YOLO

Every child wants to feel a sense of validation from their friends and peers but some may be looking for it for different reasons to others. Talk to your child about their use of the app and why they use it. Ask them if they see it as a positive influence in their life and the type of questions they are being asked by their followers. If they don't really see any benefit in it, do they really need it?

3 TALK ABOUT BEING KIND ONLINE

Unfortunately, children and teenagers can say nasty things and the anonymity that YOLO provides means that some may see this as an opportunity to openly say things that maybe otherwise they wouldn't. Talking to your child about being kind to everyone, both online and offline, and treating others how they would wish to be treated will help your child to understand the damage that cruel or nasty comments can have on others and the potential long-term consequences it could bring.



4 USE BOTH YOLO AND SNAPCHAT PRIVACY FEATURES

Although YOLO primarily works through Snapchat, it does offer the ability to report offensive comments and permit users to be blocked. If your child is concerned about comments they have received, this should be the first step they take in order to ensure nothing is received from that user. Similarly, to ensure your child is only interacting with friends and people they know, ensure that only their friends, and not everyone, can view their Snapchat story. This will limit who can send your child any anonymous messages.

5 IF WORRIED, SIMPLY DELETE THE APP

If your child has received a number of offensive comments or is repeatedly being targeted by bullies, then the best option may be to delete the app altogether. All the features of the original Snapchat app will remain the same and your child will still be able to interact with their friends as per normal.

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Meet our expert

Pete Badh is a writer with over 10+ years in research and analysis. Working within a specialist area for West Yorkshire Police, Pete has contributed work which has been pivotal in successfully winning high profile cases in court as well as writing as a subject matter expert for industry handbooks.

SOURCES:
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