

CHATTING, MEETING, DATING APPS AND SITES

MeetMe: Chat and Meet New People -- the name says it all. Although not marketed as a dating app, *MeetMe* does have a "Match" feature whereby users can "secretly admire" others, and its large user base means fast-paced communication and guaranteed attention.

What parents need to know

- **It's an open network.** Users can chat with whomever's online, as well as search locally, opening the door to potential trouble.
- **Lots of details are required.** First and last name, age, and ZIP code are requested at registration, or you can log in using a Facebook account. The app also asks permission to use location services on your teens' mobile devices, meaning they can find the closest matches wherever they go.

Omegle is a chat site that puts two strangers together in their choice of a text chat or a video chat room. Being anonymous can be very attractive to teens, and Omegle provides a no-fuss opportunity to make connections. Its "interest boxes" also let users filter potential chat partners by shared interests.

What parents need to know

- **Users get paired up with strangers.** That's the whole premise of the app. And there's no registration required.
- **This is *not* an app for kids and teens.** Omegle is filled with people searching for sexual chat. Some prefer to do so live. Others offer links to porn sites.
- **Language is a big issue.** Since the chats are anonymous, they're often much more explicit than those with an identifiable user might be.

Tinder is a photo and messaging dating app for browsing pictures of potential matches within a certain-mile radius of the user's location. It's very popular with 20-somethings as a way to meet new people for casual or long-term relationships.

What parents need to know

- **It's all about swipes.** You swipe right to "like" a photo or left to "pass." If a person whose photo you "liked" swipes "like" on your photo, too, the app allows you to message each other. Meeting up (and possibly hooking up) is pretty much the goal.
- **It's location-based.** Geolocation means it's possible for teens to meet up with nearby people, which can be very dangerous.