

## TEXTING APPS

**Kik Messenger** is an app that lets kids text for free. It's fast and has no message limits, character limits, or fees if you only use the basic features. Because it's an app, the texts won't show up on your kid's phone's messaging service, and you're not charged for them (beyond standard data rates).

### What parents need to know

- **Stranger danger is an issue.** *Kik* allows communication with strangers who share their *Kik* usernames to find people to chat with. The app allegedly has been used in high-profile crimes, including [the murder of a 13-year-old girl](#) and a [child-pornography](#) case. There's also a *Kik* community blog where users can submit photos of themselves and screenshots of messages (sometimes displaying users' full names) to contests.
- **It's loaded with ads and in-app-purchases.** *Kik* specializes in "promoted chats" -- basically, conversations between brands and users. It also offers specially designed apps (accessible only through the main app), many of which offer products for sale.

**WhatsApp** lets users send text messages, audio messages, videos, and photos to one or many people with no message limits or fees. This app is typically used to communicate while overseas.

### What parents need to know

- **It's for users 16 and over.** Lots of younger teens seem to be using the app, but this age minimum has been set by *WhatsApp*.
- **It can be pushy.** After you sign up, it automatically connects you to all the people in your address book who also are using *WhatsApp*. It also encourages you to add friends who haven't signed up yet.

**GroupMe** is another app that doesn't charge fees or have limits for direct and group messages. Users can also send photos, videos, and calendar links.

### What parents need to know

- **It's for older teens.** The embedded GIFs and emojis have some adult themes, like drinking and sexy images.
- **Teens are always connected.** Without fees or limits, teens can share and text to their heart's content, which may mean they rarely put the phone down.