



Get the answers to the questions you're asking

What is Ask.fm? Is it safe for my child?

Ask.fm is a social networking platform where users create profiles with photos and information about themselves. Users ask each other questions but you don't have to be a member to ask a question or browse profiles. Users can block their identity and ask questions anonymously. Users can limit who they accept questions from or can leave themselves open to questions from anyone, including anonymous users.

What do people ask on Ask.fm?

Ask.fm allows users to check through open profiles without creating their own account. There are many overtly sexual questions asked. Some users deflect them well, while others are not as skilled or are happy to engage in the sexual banter.

Many conversations are between school friends and cover daily school happenings.

What is Ask.FM doing to protect children?

Ask.FM's Terms of Use state that users must be 13 years or older. It advises people not to share personal information and to block and report users who break the Terms of Service. It advises that 'if the person keeps bothering you, report abuse to us by pressing the Report button and to law enforcement'...'we can supply identifying information (of anonymous users) if necessary'.

In August 2013 Ask.fm announced changes to its policies due to public scrutiny. It indicated it will improve its reporting, moderation and information on sources of help and advice. If your child has an Ask.fm account, you may like to go online with them to help select the appropriate settings.

Will banning my child from Ask.fm protect them? Are there other platforms like this?

Banning use of sites or apps may not be the best option as children will find ways to engage with platforms like Ask.fm. You can't protect children from all of the risks posed by these platforms and applications but you can discuss your concerns and establish boundaries. The platform is itself is not the issue – the behaviour is.

How do I talk to my child about my concerns?

Be honest with them. Talk about the media stories, express your love and concern about what is happening online. Ask if they have experienced bullying or sexual advances online and talk it through with them. Banning seldom works and children will find other ways to get online. They will stop talking to you about issues if they aren't meant to be online anyway. Keep the communication open, or recruit a trusted family friend or family member to help.

When should I be worried about my child?

If your child's behaviour changes at home or school you should talk to them, particularly if they seem disinterested in things they used to like, seem very unhappy and/or their sleep and eating is impacted. Seek professional advice if necessary including through the Cybersmart Online Helpline counselling service, the school counsellor, your GP or a psychologist. If your child has particular vulnerabilities, be vigilant about their contacts offline and online. Help them join groups out of school where they can find friends and support. Talk to the school and make sure they are supported.