



# Digital Bulletin – Sendit

Anonymous apps are not a new thing in social media. Sarahah and Yolo were popular for a short while enabling people to add comments to other social media sites without providing any username or means of identification. But why are developers creating apps where identity is concealed and what are the potential risks or benefits?

## Why are there anonymous apps?

This type of app is very popular with children and is often used as a source of validation. It's nice to receive an anonymous comment that you looked nice today or that you are appreciated. The developers of these apps believe that "anonymity can unlock super good behaviours" (*Gregoire Henrion – developer of YOLO*). The intention is that it is a platform for positive and affirming comments without feeling embarrassed or awkward.

## Sendit

Sendit is a new app that works alongside Snapchat and Instagram. It allows users to ask questions to followers and get anonymous replies. There is a function that helps users find out who has sent a comment by offering 'hints' for a fee.

## What are the risks?

As you might imagine, not all of the comments are positive, affirming replies. Some reviewers have said the social media app "is full of bullying" and "has started so much drama." Anonymous apps are also "notorious hubs for cyberbullying," according to Common Sense Media. Just about all of the major ones have closed down after being overwhelmed by instances of inappropriate use. Josh Ochs, the founder of digital safety resource Safe Smart Social, has said these types of apps "can bring out the worst in some tweens and teens" and that they're, as a rule, "not good for human nature".

People have also raised concerns about privacy. Snapchat requires that third-party apps use the Snap Kit to create apps like sendit. This helps Snapchat ensure the apps used with their platform do not ask for private information beyond your display name and Bitmoji. Additionally, their Terms of Service only let people use these kinds of third-party apps. This helps keep private information safe.

It is worth mentioning that the age restriction for Sendit is 17+, which reflects the inherent risk involved in using anonymous apps on social media.

## Suggestions

If your child uses Snapchat, Instagram, TikTok or any other social media platforms, there is a chance they also use third party companion apps as well. Help them stay safe online by using the following tips:

- Check age requirements: minimum age requirements exist to protect young people from content that is not developmentally appropriate. Ensure they are only using social media apps for their age group and check that any companion apps are also appropriate for their age.
- Talk about the risks of companion apps like Sendit: if everyone else in their class uses a certain app, they might feel the need to as well. As such, it's important they are aware of the risks. Discuss what the app lets people do and whether it is a healthy risk to take.
- Review, add or update parental controls: mobile networks, app stores and the apps themselves may all have controls to help keep your child safe. Discuss controls for who can contact your child, what kind of content they can see, whether they can make purchases and what they can download from the app store.

If there are any topics that you would like more information about, or if you have any concerns regarding online safety, please feel free to contact me.