What is Snapchat?

Snapchat is a mobile app for Android and iOS devices. It’s headed by co-founder Evan Spiegel. One of the core concepts of the app is that any picture video or message you send - by default - is made available to the receiver for only a short time before it becomes inaccessible. This temporary, or ephemeral, nature of the app was originally designed to encourage a more natural flow of interaction.

One last thing: Snapchat’s developer is a public company, called Snap. It claims to be a camera company. As such, it creates other products, including hardware, like Snapchat Spectacles, [which you can read all about from here](https://www.pocket-lint.com/apps/news/snapchat/144308-snap-spectacles-what-s-the-story). Also, Snapchat is colloquially referred to as Snap.

What’s the point of Snapchat?

Snapchat was initially focused on private, person-to-person photo sharing, but you can now use it for a range of different tasks, including sending short videos, live video chatting, messaging, creating caricature-like Bitmoji avatars, and sharing a chronological “story” that’s broadcasted to all your followers. There’s even a designated “Discovery” area that showcases short-form content from major publishers like Buzzfeed.

Snapchat even lets you store media in a private storage area. Other features include the ability to add filters and AR-based lenses to snaps and show your live location on a world map. But the key thing to realise about Snapchat is that it is all about instant communication through your [mobile phone](https://www.pocket-lint.com/phones/buyers-guides/120309-best-smartphones-and-flagship-mobile-phones-to-buy). Prior to Snapchat, social media was very desktop-based, and it was all about accumulating data.

For instance, you'd post statuses, tweets, photos, and videos, and you'd have a record of all those things online, so your friends could comment on them and you would all see them forever. Snapchat has changed that. It changed the way we communicate online. With Snapchat, you can quickly send a photo of yourself with a rainbow-puking AR lens applied to a friend, and after they open it, it'll disappear forever.

Technically, they can screenshot it if they want, and reply with their own photo or video response, which they can also broadcast to their story for friends and followers to see. There are so many uses for this app. It’s hard not to see its value and why it's unique.

What does all the lingo mean?

Many reports and studies have claimed that the bulk of those users are millennials. As a result of those younger users, the app has yielded a number of different unique terms and names for its features, from “snaps” to “story”. If you’re confused by all this lingo, you should really read through the Glossary section of this Snapchat guide before you move on to how the app actually works.

Snapchatter: It’s not as common anymore, but it means a user of Snapchat.

Snap: When you take a photo or video, or receive a photo or video, it is known as a “snap”. So, when someone asks you to snap them, they are asking you to send them a photo or video through Snapchat, or even a message through the app’s chat function. The Snapchat app itself is also colloquially referred to as “Snap”, as is the app’s developer/public company.

Snapback: This term was more popular when Snapchat launched, but it’s faded since. Nevertheless, if you’ve heard it, just know that it simply means a reply to a snap. So, if you Snapback, you’re just replying to a private one-on-one snap that you’ve received.

Story: You can link snaps together and broadcast them as you capture them. They’ll appear to your followers as a “story” reel. They can tap through your story and watch every snap to experience your entire day. A reel can only be played back for 24 hours, after which, it disappears for good, though you can always save your entire story, or an individual snap from your story, to the Memory section - aka private storage - of your Snapchat to keep forever.

Snapcode: A Snapcode is a scannable code that makes adding new friends even easier. For instance, a friend can simply flash their Snapchat camera at your Snapcode, which will immediately add you, without you having to manually look up their handle and tap the “add” button. Your Snapcode, which is similar to a QR code, can be located on the Profile screen. You can access it by tapping the ghost icon or your Bitmoji in the corner of the Camera screen.

Score: Ever notice that number next to a friend’s handle in Snapchat? It’s a score - an equation combining the number of snaps they've sent and received, stories they've posted, and other factors. You can find a friend’s score when you hold down on a friend’s name in your contact list, story feed, or chat area. And you can find yours under your Snapcode located in the center of your Profile screen. The higher your score, the more you likely use Snapchat.

Snapstreak: Some of your friends or the people you follow might have different emoji next to their Snapchat names in the Chat section of your Snapchat. That means they’re on a streak, or Snapstreak, with you. In other words, you and that friend or friends have snapped each other (not including chat messaging) within 24 hours for more than one consecutive day. For a comprehensive list of what each friend emoji means, go to Settings > Manage > Friend Emojis.

Trophy case: Snapchat might notify you of a new trophy you’ve earned, and tapping that notification will take you to your trophy case, which holds all the trophies for milestones you’ve achieved as a Snapchat user. From sending a snap with a filter to sending 50 snaps with five or more pen colours, trophies encourage user interaction and content creation.

Lenses: You can make snaps even more fun by adding augmented reality-based special effects and sounds, with a feature called Lenses. To activate lenses, go to the Camera screen in Snapchat, then long-press on your face in the camera view, and lenses should appear in a row next to the capture button. Swipe around to select the lens you want, and then tap the capture button to take a snap with it. Popular lenses include the ‘rainbow puke’ and ‘dog with tongue’.

3D World Lenses: Unlike Lenses, which are primarily applied to your face - or a selfie shot - in real-time, World Lenses affect the environment around you. They appear in the same row as Lenses, but only when your camera is facing outward. You might see one that features your Bitmoji avatar, even. For instance, a current one shows our Bitmoji avatar mixing potions and chemicals while sitting at a desk. This animation is overlaid on the world around us and can be captured and then shared with our friends in a chat or followers via our story. Both Lenses and World Lenses are frequently changed by Snapchat, though popular ones are recurring.

Filter: You can jazz up your snap by adding a fun overlay with a filter. After you take a snap, swipe right or left on the preview screen to add coloured filters, the current time, local weather, speed overlays, or geofilters to your photo or video. After taking your snap and applying your first filter, you can press and hold and then swipe to add yet another filter, too.

Geofilter: Like filters, you can use a geofilter to decorate snaps. Unlike filters, however, geofilters are specific to your location or an event you’re attending. They encourage other users to share their experiences with friends and followers. On-Demand geofilters may also be designed and purchased by individuals or smaller companies and only become available when a user enters a specified location, such as a wedding or graduation venue.

Chat: This is a messaging feature within Snapchat that lets you directly chat with other users. You can access the Chat section by swiping from left to right on the Camera screen. From here, you can also send Bitmoji stickers, start a live video call, send money, share snaps, and more

Memories: Since launch, Snapchat has added several features that allow you to screenshot or save snaps. The latest example is Memories. It not only gives you another way to store snaps in Snapchat’s cloud but also introduces a section for accessing media locally stored on your device. When you take a snap, you’ll see an option to save it to your Memories (it's like a private storage locker), where you can organise, edit, search, lock, and share the snap after the fact.

Discover: This is a section, right of the Camera screen, meant for brands and publishers, which can broadcast stories for all to see. On Discover, you can find branded content made by Vice, Cosmopolitan, Daily Mail, ESPN, Tastemade, CNN, Buzzfeed, and more.

Snap Map: With this feature, you can share your location with your friends or followers. It also allows you to scroll around an actual map to see where your friends are located. You can choose whether to share your location, of course. To access Snap Map, go to your Camera screen, then pinch your fingers on the screen like you’re zooming out from a photo, and the Snap Map should then appear. You and friends will be represented by Bitmoji.

Bitmoji: If you have downloaded the Bitmoji app, created an avatar, and linked your account to Snapchat, you’ll see AR-based lenses featuring your avatar as well as stickers in chat with your avatar. You might also see “friendmoji” stickers in a chat, which feature both you and a friend. Like other features, Bitmoji are designed to encourage user interaction on Snapchat. Keep in mind that Bitmoji was its own, separate platform until Snapchat acquired it a couple years ago.

How does Snapchat work?

Here’s where this app guide gets really tricky. Snapchat updates so often that it’s a waste of time to write a lengthy step-by-step instruction manual on how to operate the app, as Snapchat might look and work completely differently in just a few days, so we’ll instead focus on popular, key features and how they work on a general basis, but more importantly, the main screens you’ll see when navigating Snapchat.

If you need more details about how to get around the app or do specific things, we encourage you to visit [Snapchat’s support hub.](https://support.snapchat.com/en-US)

Camera screen

Tap the capture button to take a snap, or press-and-hold it to record a video snap up to 10 seconds long. If you keep holding it, it’ll record a multi-snap.

After you take a snap, you can use all kinds of creative tools. For instance, tap the pencil tool to draw all over, tap the text tool to add a caption, tap the sticker tool to add a sticker or Bitmoji, etc.

From the moment you open Snapchat, you will see a view of whatever your device’s camera can see. This is the Camera screen.

Now, how it looks and what options it shows may change over time, but generally, you will see a capture button at the bottom, with buttons to access your Memories screen, Chat screen, and Stories screen. At the top, you might also see options to access your Profile screen, Search screen, and maybe even turn on the flash or switch your camera view to front-facing. Anyway, primarily, from this screen, you can capture snaps.

To do so, tap or hold down the capture button, for a photo or video, respectively, and then you'll see options to save it to Memories/your camera roll, add it to your story, or send it to a friend or a group of friends. But before you share it with anyone, be sure to decorate the snap with text, a doodle, a sticker, a link, etc. You can even adjust the time it can be viewed from a few seconds to unlimited.

[OnePlus Nord, Acer Nitro 5 reviewed, and Bolt eScooter chat - Pocket-lint Podcast 60](https://www.pocket-lint.com/gadgets/news/147975-pocket-lint-weekly-podcast-tech-news-reviews-and-interviews)

Also, remember, when taking a snap, if you tap the Camera view, you will see Lenses and World Lenses appear. Swipe through them and tap one to apply it. From there, you can decorate the snap and share it with others.

Snap Map screen

Only the people you choose can see your location, or you can even turn on ghost mode when you want to go off the grid.

Your location on the Snap Map only updates when you have Snapchat open.

When you open Snapchat and are confronted by the Camera screen, pinch inward as if to zoom in, to see Snap Map. You will then see your Bitmoji avatar, if your Bitmoji account is linked, on a live map. Tap the Settings button if you want to enter “ghost mode” and become invisible. Either way, any user you follow who has not enabled ghost mode will appear on the map so that you can see their exact location in real-time.

Snapchat may also serve up stories of users from around the globe so that you can quickly tap and see what’s happening elsewhere, like a Father John Misty concert in LA.

Memories screen

On the Memories screen, you can create new Stories, edit, and send snaps you’ve saved to Memories, and use smart search to find old snaps.

To open Memories, just swipe up from the Camera screen or tap the circle/cards underneath the Capture button.

Near the capture button, you should see an icon that looks like cards or a circle. Tap it to access your Memories, an area in Snapchat where you can not only store snaps to Snapchat but also access media locally stored on your device. You can search memories, share memories, mark up memories, and more. On the Memories screen, you can also access your profile, capture a snap, and go to the Chat and Stories screens.

Chat screen

When you’re chatting one-on-one with someone, a blue dot will appear at the bottom of your Chat screen, which means they’re present in the chat. If they’ve set up Bitmoji, their Bitmoji will pop up instead.

When you're chatting in a group chat, a Snapchatter's name will light up inside a bubble above your keyboard. This lets you know they’re present. Just tap on a name bubble to chat with that Snapchatter one-on-one. Or, to see who has read a chat, just tap on it.

Chats are deleted by default once you’ve both left the Chat.

When you open Snapchat and are confronted by the Camera screen, tap the Chat button in the corner or swipe from left to right to access the Chat screen. From there, you can start a new chat, search chats, see all your active chats, and even go to your Profile screen, capture a snap, quickly switch to stories, and more. Again, these options may change over time.

So, the point of this section is to share one-on-one or in a group with friends. You can start a conversation or tap on an existing thread to message, send a snap, send cash, start a live video chat, send a Bitmoji sticker, and more. You can also long-press on friends’ names to see their Snapcode, Snapstreak, and other options for interacting with them on Snapchat. To edit a friend’s name, or even block or remove them, tap on their conversation thread, then tap the hamburger (menu) icon, and you’ll see the additional options for managing that friendship.

Discover screen

Keep up-to-date on breaking news with Discover! Watch Publishers' stories and shows. To use Discover: Swipe right to left on the Camera screen to open Discover. Tap on a Story that sparks your interest

Tap the right side of the screen to go to the next Snap in this story, or tap the left side of the screen to go back and rewatch the last snap. You can also swipe down to exit a story.

Swipe from right to left on the Stories screen to access Discover, a section that showcases branded stories from publishers like Daily Mail and MTV. You can’t control what type of content is served up to you, but you can subscribe to certain publishers by long-pressing on a thumbnail for a publisher’s story and then pressing the subscribe button. To view a story from a publisher, tap the thumbnail for their story.

Like other stories, you can skip through, and when watching, you can long-press on any snap to mark it up and then send it to a friend or group of friends. You can do this to both photos and videos.

Stories

To post a snap to your Story, take a snap, then tap the arrow on the bottom of the screen to add your snap to your Story (and if it is your first time creating a Story tap 'Add' to confirm you want to post to your Story).

Go to the Discovery screen to view your friends' stories.

When you open Snapchat and are confronted by the Camera screen, swipe from right to left to access the Discoveries screen. From there, you can view all your friends’ broadcasted snaps in a reel that plays for up to 24 hours. Recent friend updates are at the top, followed by publishers' stories at the bottom. Just tap a friend’s name to begin viewing their story, and then tap on individual snaps within the reel itself to skip forward

You can also swipe up from a snap in a story to send a chat to that person. Anyway, from the Discover screen, you might see options to add to your story, search stories, find friends, quickly add suggested contacts, access your profile and audience settings, capture a snap, and return to chat. Snapchat also highlights content from Discover on this screen.

Search screen

Search is the fastest way to find a friend, a group you’re in, and more. Just tap the magnifying glass at the top of the screen to start searching.

Type in something you’re trying to find, or browse through suggested friends and topics.

When you open Snapchat and are confronted by the Camera screen, tap the Search button at the top. From there, you can search for other users by their Snapchat name. Verified users will have an emoji appear next to their name. The Search screen that pops up will also recommend related users, show you top stories, and allow you to view other users and their stories by criteria like music, sports, fashion, and animals.



Profile screen

There are a few different ways to add other Snapchatters. Here's the easiest way: from the Camera screen, swipe down or tap the Bitmoji in the upper left-hand corner of the screen. This will take you to your Profile screen, where you will see options to find and add friends.

Also, from your Profile screen, you can create a Snapcode. With a Snapcode, friends and followers can visit a link by simply scanning it in Snapchat.

From most screens in Snapchat, you will see a ghost button or your Bitmoji avatar in the corner.

Tap it to access your Profile screen, where you will find your Snapcode, Snapstreak, and options to view your Trophy Case, who has added you, your friends, and a way to add more friends. You can also capture a new snap from here, access Chat and Stories, and even find additional Settings or search Snapchat, though these options may change over time.

Settings screen

Change your privacy settings, Snap Map location settings, birthday settings, Memories settings, Snapcash settings, and more from Settings.

Just tap the Gear icon in the corner of your Profile screen.

When you see the gear icon on your Profile screen, tap it to access your Snapchat account settings, where you can link your Bitmoji account, manage on-demand geofilters, create or scan a Snapcode, add two factor, adjust your Memories, Spectacles, and Shazam preferences, change your password and phone number, and so much more.