



# Equip Kids Against Stranger Contacts

## Introduction:

In our digital age, our children are more connected than ever. While technology brings many benefits, it also opens the door for potential contact with strangers online. At HackHeroes, we believe in equipping parents and children with knowledge. Here's a guide to understanding the risks and taking proactive steps.

### 1. Understand the Landscape:

- Popular Apps & Platforms: Familiarise yourself with popular apps among children like TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, Roblox, and others.
- Open vs. Closed Networks: Know the difference. Open networks, like public chat rooms, allow for anyone to join, while closed networks, such as certain gaming platforms, only allow contacts if both parties agree.

### 2. Know the Features to Watch:

- Friend Requests: Some apps allow for anyone to send friend requests. Teach your children to only accept requests from people they know personally.
- Public Profiles: Platforms like Instagram or TikTok might set profiles to public by default, exposing posts to anyone. Ensure profiles are set to private.
- Location Sharing: Some apps can automatically share the user's location. Check settings to make sure this feature is off or restricted.
- Chat Rooms: Games like Roblox can feature chat rooms where strangers might interact with your child. Set chat settings to friends-only or turn off the chat feature.

### 3. Conversations Matter:

- Open Dialogue: Maintain an open conversation with your child about their online experiences. Regular check-ins can give them a platform to share any concerns.
- Scenario Planning: Discuss hypothetical situations with your child. For example, 'What would you do if someone you don't know sends you a message online?'

#### **4. Tools at Your Disposal:**

- **Parental Controls:** Use built-in parental controls in apps and devices. These can restrict unwanted contacts, purchases, and more.
- **Monitoring Tools:** Consider tools that help you monitor your child's online interactions without invading their privacy. These can alert you to any potentially harmful interactions.

#### **5. Empowerment Strategies:**

- **Declining Requests:** Teach your child it's okay to decline friend requests or messages from strangers.
- **Blocking & Reporting:** Ensure your child knows how to block and report anyone that makes them uncomfortable.
- **Trust Their Instincts:** Tell them to trust their feelings. If someone or something feels off, they should come to you immediately.

#### **6. Take Immediate Action:**

- **Document:** If you ever discover your child has been contacted by a suspicious individual, capture screenshots of messages or profiles.
- **Report:** Use in-app reporting features and consider informing local authorities if the situation seems threatening.
- **Reinforce:** Reiterate safety guidelines with your child and consider added security measures.

### **Conclusion:**

The digital landscape is ever-evolving. Staying informed and maintaining open communication with our children is key. With this guide, we hope to empower you and your child for a safer online experience.