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THE CONTROVERSIAL TEEN APPS OF THE SUMMER

TEENS ARE DOWNLOADING THESE THREE APPS THIS SUMMER—EVEN IF PARENTS MIGHT NOT BE HAPPY ABOUT IT...

It's not easy to make a popular teen app. We know their [current favorites](#) (not the same as Millennials') but it seems that many Gen Z-focused platforms come with their fair share of roadblocks and controversy. Facebook [recently shut down](#) its teens-only "Snapchat clone," Lifestage. The little-known app only allowed teens under 21 to join, letting young users post pictures and videos publicly to "make it easier for teens in the US to connect with others at their school," but the lack of safeguards to verify user age raised privacy concerns. But even the beloved Snapchat had its fair share of naysayers at the start—thanks to its reputation for being sexting central. They managed to grow out of those early growing pains, and it's hard to say which fledgling teen platforms will overcome their controversial beginnings. It seems like there are plenty of teen platforms vying for the honor though—and these three are perhaps the most controversial of the summer:

[SARAHAH](#)

There's a new anonymous app in town, and teens are making it [the most popular free download](#) in the App Store. [Sarahah](#)—roughly translated as "honestly" in Arabic—has had big viral growth, especially this summer after the debut of its English version on June 13th. Since then, teens have embraced the anonymous platform, and Sarahah screenshots are appearing on Facebook and Twitter (much as they did when Whisper was the anonymous app of the moment). Interestingly, Sarahah started as a platform for co-workers to leave anonymous "constructive messages" about their bosses, until Gen Z users managed to find it. Some are saying that Sarahah can [be a self-esteem builder](#), but it's not all sunshine and compliments. One 11th grader [describes the app as](#) "a way for teens to continue the drama and say things about people without revealing their identity," and parents are wringing their hands over the mysterious platform. Anonymous apps are notorious for breeding negativity, and as with anonymous apps Yik Yak, Ask.fm, and Whisper before it, Sarahah is also [plagued with bullying](#) and trolls—so be cautious about the app's future success. At the end of 2016 [we warned brands](#) that positivity can make or break social platforms, and our [Play Nice trend](#) revealed that 90% of 13-33-year-olds wish that people were more positive on social media.

[YELLOW](#)

Described as a "[Tinder for Teens](#)," the app Yellow is starting to trend—and parents are worried. Spoiler alert: parents are always worried about a new buzzy app, and local news loves to stoke the flames—but in this case, they may have cause. Yellow lets users swipe left and right to match with and meet someone new, then connect on Snapchat to message their new acquaintance or meet IRL. Though the app is meant for teens only, registration only asks for a name and birthdate with no verification measures whatsoever. The company says it's working on a way to verify user age, but, as is, it's easy for anyone to get on the app and start swiping. Yellow is already the number one app for teens in the U.K. and is starting to [gain traction in the U.S.](#), as parents and Sherriff's Offices make an effort to warn young users of its dangers.

MONKEY

Since we [first wrote about](#) Monkey as a buzzed-about app to watch back in February, the platform has been downloaded 3 million times and been a top 10 app among 13-24-year-olds since April. Created by 17-year-old app developer [Ben Pasternak](#), Monkey connects users with other random users for a set period of time. [According to](#) its co-founder, the appeal lies in the ‘charm’ of online friends, "With internet friends, you can be whoever you want to be...if you say something to a friend in real-life, that carries over — you're going to have rumours and drama." But right now, Monkey has some drama of its own. The app is [trying to avoid](#) becoming “Chatroulette 2.0.” While their goal was “to create a community without inappropriate content,” sexually explicit chats have been seeping through—despite their best efforts. Monkey’s teen founders are promising the next version of their AI program will be more proactive, picking up any explicit content and auto-banning the offending users before a report is made.

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