musical.ly

What is musical.ly?

Gone are the days of singing into a hairbrush in front of the mirror. These days you can become an internet pop star in seconds…but if you are not careful, you may also become a target!

Musical.ly is a free music, video and social app for ages 12+ (App Store), that can be downloaded for IOS and Android devices. It allows users (also called "'musers'") to create fun music videos (called "musicals") within minutes, share them online with friends and other musical.ly subscribers. 'Musers' can give and get feedback, comments and likes on their performance.

'Musers' can choose from 1000s of popular tunes and videos or can take on challenges to create a 'musical'. Techniques will include lip syncing, dancing and special effects to create their 'musical' and them share them on other social networking sites within seconds. The most 'liked' performances form part of a leader board, creating competition and the need for users to deliver an even more memorable performance.

Sounds really innocent and fun right? Wrong! The capabilities of the app provide easy opportunities for users to see children at their most vulnerable, expressive and in some cases provocative in their bid to become the next internet sensation. 'Musicals' are meant to be shared and the use of hashtags (#) increase the viewing audience, with over 22,000,000 searches on one social networking platform alone.

Is musical.ly safe for children to use?

If you search for examples of musical.ly videos online, the results are perhaps not a surprise. You will see children, many of whom are under the age of 13, copying dances, movements and clothing styles that are less than age appropriate. Self-expression and exploration is a natural part of growing up. The difference is, they are doing this online in the public domain, where anyone could be watching.

You only have to read the reviews of the app to realise that this is causing concern, even with those who have downloaded it.

Using musical.ly safely

- **Communicate your expectations** – As a parent, it is your responsibility to make clear what is and is not acceptable online behaviour. You need to accept that allowing your child access to online apps like these, require trust and clear boundaries, for their own wellbeing. If you are not comfortable with them dressing in a particular way or behaving suggestively whilst lip syncing to the latest tunes, musical.ly may be one to avoid.

- **Ask the question** – Encourage your child to visualise who might be watching their video. Pose the question: Think about a person you would least like to see your video. How do you feel about posting it?

- **Downloading the app** – Once downloaded the app remains public (anyone can view your content). **You have to change the setting to make it more secure**

- **Privacy** – Users are able to control and approve who can see their 'musicals and who can 'follow' them. The key here is to impress upon your child how important it is, that they only have real life friends following them. If they accept people they do not know, the privacy setting is pointless.

- **Not that private!** – Even with a private account there is information in your Bio (Biography) that remains public. It is too easy for others to find out personal information and about other social media accounts.

- **Personal Information** – Use creative usernames that do not identify your child's real one on screen. At the very least take off surnames as names are used alongside the musicals and any other personal information. Use this approach for all social media accounts**.**

- **Collection of personal information** – This app collects personal information of its users and shares it with third parties. For full details, read the Privacy Policy (www.musical.ly/privacy.html)

- **Turn off app location settings** – Although other users are not able to search your child's exact location from the app, it will give them a good idea where they are. The app allows users to search for others in their location in the "my city' area of the app, to find those locally who are using musical.ly.

- **Pieces of a puzzle** - Combine this with other information that your child might be sharing on their other social media accounts and someone who is persistent will not have to look too far to get all they need to make contact.

- **Search and Check** – Ask your child to show you their account or search your child's account and see what information they are displaying. If you are able to see personal information, then so can others. **You are not prying, you are parenting.**

- **Watch the musicals** – Watch the musical and content they have created, use this as a starting point for opening up a conversation about what they are sharing and how it makes you feel.

- **Take action** – If you are uneasy about your child using musical.ly, they are under the age of 13 or have shared personal information without your permission, you can contact musical.ly directly at **privacy@musical.ly** and they will be able to lock or delete your child's account.

- **Think before you act** – Deleting your child's account may be a quick and easy solution, but it is unlikely to stop them finding more creative ways to obtain the app.

- **Read the Privacy Policy** – This will tell you all you need to know and help you make some important decisions about how you will allow your child to use musical.ly. www.musical.ly/privacy.html

- **Look and you will find** – As with many social networking sites, if you search long enough you will find many examples of material which is inappropriate to be viewed by children.

- **Making a decision** – You are a parent and you will know your child enough to make a decision about allowing them to use musical.ly or any other social networking app. Musical.ly is designed to be a fun and appealing app and it is not difficult to see why it is so popular. By following the steps outlined above you have a better opportunity to ensure that your child is protected online.

Remember the internet should be a fun and liberating experience for all, but take the right steps to make it a safe one!