What Parents & Carers Need to Know about Wizz

Wizz is a networking app which allows users to connect and chat with other people around the world. Its principle is similar to a dating platform: users have a profile with up to three photos, along with optional interests and hobbies tags. This allows other like-minded people to be recommended in searches. If a user likes what they see on someone’s profile, they can initiate conversation through the initial message feature. Otherwise, they swipe on. The app uses age verification technology, when an account is created and groups users by age.

**What are the risks?**

**Over-sharing**
Immediately after setting up an account, users start receiving friend requests (mainly from the opposite gender). For many young people, this will be exciting and it boosts their confidence. As young people tend to be more trusting online and may believe what others tell them, however, this can lead them into dropping their guard and revealing personal information to strangers.

**Catfishing and Predators**
Wizz uses a digital ID system, to verify users’ age. AI only detects approximate age, though, so an older person who looks younger could be matched with teens (or vice versa). Also, profile pics on Wizz don’t have to match the face of the person who did the initial age verification. It would be fairly easy to create a fake account using another person’s photos with a made-up name and age.

**Explicit Content**
During our research, conversations on Wizz very quickly turned sexual. Users frequently suggested ‘taking it to Snap’ (Snapchat’s disappearing image feature can make photos move to sharing explicit selfies), connecting on other social media, swapping nude or semi-nude pictures, and having sexual chats. These users created an impression of the platform being sleazy and unsafe for young people.

**Advice for Parents & Carers**

**Talk it out**
If your child has downloaded Wizz, talk to them about why they like it and who they’ve chatted with. Have they shared any personal details with this person or connected with them on other social media? Ask about the various risks that can arise from engaging with strangers online and get them to consider using a safer app with more robust safety features.

**Emphasise caution**
Young people are far more inclined to see the good in others; they often overlook the fact that scammers set up fake accounts on apps like this with the intention of getting money or personal data. Remind them that not everyone online is who they claim to be, how easy it is for someone to create a bogus profile, and why it’s vital to think twice about sharing anything on networking apps.

**Be supportive**
When connecting with strangers on apps like Wizz, seemingly innocent chats can quickly progress to become sexually explicit and lead to nude photos being sent. Make sure your child knows to come to you if they’re uncomfortable about anything, and always ask if they’ve been asked to send. If they’ve already shared something that they no longer regret, reassure them that you’ll support them no matter what.

**Keep things transparent**
It might feel awkward, but regular chats about your child’s online life can be beneficial. If they seem suddenly anxious or secretive around their phone or tablet, they may have something they need to get off their chest. You could also consider not allowing digital devices in their bedroom, especially overnight—many of the riskier conversations on apps like Wizz tend to take place.

Meet Our Expert

Dr. Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator, and researcher who has developed comprehensive digital literacy and youth safe use programs in school, youth military and university papers and advised on research to the American government on enhancing intercultural and online behavior of young people in the UK, USA, and Australia.


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