**What parents need to know about musical.ly**

Last week, I updated my parenting guides and invited readers to contact me with questions about apps. The next day, I received an email from a parent about musical.ly. I immediately downloaded and played around with it.

After cruising around musicaly.ly, I am not surprised parents have questions. Musical.ly profiles are public and full of young faces. If your child is asking about musical.ly, here is what you need to know.



**What is musical.ly?**

[Musical.ly](http://musical.ly/)is a popular app for creating 15-second music videos. How it works is kids select snippets of popular songs and record themselves singing, lip-syncing or dancing. Some kids skip the music and perform 15-second comedy skits. Once they finish recording, kids can add effects/filters and share them on musical.ly as well as other popular social networks.

To grow their fan base, teens can share their videos anywhere. Musical.ly encourages users to post on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Messenger, WhatsApp, and Vine. They can also save their video to their camera roll and post on other online communities. The goal for many users or “musers” is to have a featured video. Featured videos are chosen by musical.ly and appear on the Featured Feed. These chosen videos garner more likes and fans.

On musical.ly, all accounts are public by default. Which means when kids post a video, everyone can see it. Also, anyone can follow them. Most accounts are public. In settings, kids can change their account to private. With a private account, only approved followers can see their creations.

**What Parents and Kids Need to Know**

Rated T for Teen

Musical.ly is rated T for teen on [GooglePlay,](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.zhiliaoapp.musically&hl=en" \t "_blank) “+12” on [iTunes](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/musical.ly-your-music-video/id835599320?mt=8) and “all ages” on [Amazon](http://www.amazon.com/musical-ly-videos-instagram-facebook-messenger/dp/B0117U0G3M/ref%3Dsr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1436937782&sr=8-2&keywords=musical.ly). Musical.ly says it restricts users to over 13 and teens, between 13 and 18, must have parental permission. When signing up, musical.ly does not ask users to enter a birthdate or age. Anyone can sign up easily with an email. After surfing around musical.ly, I would say most users are under 18. One of the most popular musers is [Baby Ariel](http://www.famousbirthdays.com/people/baby-ariel.html) who is 15 years old.

Discuss inappropriate videos

This is not kidz bop. The song choices are popular dance songs and some have swearing and questionable lyrics. Most kids love these catchy songs without paying too much attention to the words. Watching young kids imitate the style and dance moves of their favorite singers, especially on a public account, can be a bit unsettling.  Parents should talk to their child about song choices and what is and is not appropriate in a video.

As far as adult content, musical.ly does a decent job of keeping it hidden. Musical.ly does [not allow explicit content or nudity](http://musicallyapp.tumblr.com/community) but it also does not pre-screen videos. With unscreened user-generated content, an adult video probably lurks somewhere, which is true for most apps. Musically keeps kids from easily finding it with a search filter. For example, try searching “sex” in musical.ly and nothing comes up. If kids do happen to stumble across an inappropriate video, they can click on the profile and press the button with three dots to report it.

Create a private account

Accounts are public by default. This means anyone can see his or her videos and anyone can follow them. Kids can choose to make their accounts private. To set up a private account, they should go to their profile and click on the gear in the right hand corner and choose settings. From here, they can scroll down and choose “private account”. With a private account, kids must approve every follower and only their followers can see their music videos. Like Twitter and[Instagram](https://kidsprivacy.net/2012/06/14/instagram-is-more-than-a-fancy-photoshop-app/), kids cannot choose to make some videos public and some private. It is all or nothing.

Even with a private account, their profile is still public. Other musers, can search for their account and see their profile photo, username and short bio. People can also see their fans, followers and likes. What they cannot see is their music videos unless they are an approved follower. Teens should keep their personal information and private usernames off their musical.ly public profile.

Report mean comments

Musers can comment on each other’s videos. Unlike [deviantART](https://kidsprivacy.net/2014/06/18/parents-review-deviantart/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), most musers do not critique each other’s creations. In fact, most comments are encouraging. Musical.ly promotes positive comments by asking musers to “say something nice.”

I did see a few mean comments criticizing a performer’s appearance. If they do receive an unwelcome comment, kids can block the person and report the comment. To block, they need to go to the person’s profile and in the upper right corner click on the 3 dots. Here they can choose to  “block this user” and “report abuse.” If reporting and blocking does not work, kids can take a screenshot and send it to info@musical.ly. Musical.ly states it takes [bullying very seriously and any rude behavior to another muser will result in the removal of the account](http://musicallyapp.tumblr.com/community).

**Cannot delete an account**

Once a child opens an account, they cannot delete it. Right now, musical.ly does not allow any users to delete their account. On their website, they promise this feature is coming soon.

In the meantime, if you do have a child under 13 on musical.ly, parents can contact musical.ly directly. According to their terms of service, parents can report their child’s account to musical.ly by sending an email to privacy@musical.ly. If the child is under 13, they will promptly take steps to delete personal information and terminate the child’s account.

**Finally, parents should download musical.ly and check it out. Most teens are making interesting, creative videos. Before letting your budding singer or dancer download musical.ly, parents should talk about what is appropriate, how to set up a private account and what to do if they have an obnoxious fan.**