

**Inappropriate APP use. Some information for parents.**

**One of our parents who is a Detective Senior Sergeant and who works in the Child Protection Registry wants to share some information about 2 apps that are currently being used by a significant group of students at our school- Musical.ly and Live.ly**

**The first issue is that videos are being made while in school uniform – this identifies the school.**

**Children are naming students and talking about after school activities- naming their netball club and what position they play etc. All of these actions make it very easy for predators to ‘know’ a child and where to find them.**

**The other aspect is the content of the dances/songs they are filming- some are suggestive- totally innocent on our children’s part but of course they are giving a message way beyond their years- fish lips are a signal!**

**Even if you set the account to private, with this app, if your friend likes the video and their account isn’t private it will be seen in the public domain.**

**Another major problem is the ease of clicking on hashtags, many of which take them straight to pornography.**

**The parent supplied the information below. I’m sure you will also find alerts and reviews if you do an online search.**

**Lindy Bryant  
Principal**

### **What is Musical.ly?**

Musical.ly (pronounced MU-zik-lee) is a social network for sharing user-generated videos, mostly of people lip-syncing to popular songs. Users -- or "musers" -- can create and upload their own videos (called musicals) where they lip-sync, sing, dance, or just talk. You can also browse and interact with other musers’ content, which covers a wide range of topics, songs, and styles.

### **How safe is Musical.ly?**

Using any social network can be risky, but it's possible for kids to safely use the app with adult supervision (and a private account). When you sign up for Musical.ly, your account is public by default, meaning anyone can see your musicals, send you direct messages, or use your location information. Parents should make sure to turn on all privacy settings for accounts kids are using, so only people you know can interact with your videos or message you on the app.

### **How does Musical.ly work?**

Musical.ly users sign up with a phone number, email address, Facebook, or Instagram account. Once logged in, you can search popular "musers," categories (comedy, animals, sports), and hashtags to find videos. Or you can use your phone contacts or social media followers to find friends already on the app. Many kids on musical.ly like to create videos, but plenty of people don't post themselves -- they just use the app to find and follow content creators.

### **Is Musical.ly appropriate for kids?**

Because of Musical.ly's emphasis on popular music, many videos include swearing and sexual lyrics, so it may not be age-appropriate for kids to use on their own. It's also easy to find people wearing revealing clothing and dancing suggestively, although Musical.ly won't let you search for objectionable content such as "sex" or "porn." If you supervise your kids and stick to songs you already know from the radio, Musical.ly can be a kid-friendly experience.

### **What age is Musical.ly recommended for?**

Common Sense recommends the app for **age 16+** mainly due to the privacy issues and mature content. Musical.ly requires that users be **at least 13 years old** to use the app and that **anyone under the age of 18 must have approval of a parent or guardian** -- but there are plenty of young tween musers. If your younger kid or tween wants to use the app, **the account should belong to an adult who can monitor what younger users are browsing and sharing.**

### **How are Musical.ly and Live.ly related?**

Musical.ly and Live.ly were created by the same developers and are linked together. But where Musical.ly is based on recorded videos, Live.ly is a live-streaming service, which can be a riskier option for kids and teens. You can use one account for both services and move between the two apps depending on what features you want to use. In fact, the only way to have a private Live.ly account is to link it to a private Musical.ly account (the Live.ly default is also public). But a kid who's on Musical.ly will likely want to be on Live.ly and vice versa.

### **How can you make your Musical.ly or Live.ly accounts private?**

To make your Musical.ly account private, go to your profile page and select the gear icon in the top-right corner. Select Settings and scroll down to Privacy. There are three options: "only friends can direct.ly me," "hide location info," and "private account." Select all three for a fully private account. Note: This is also the only way to set a connected live.ly account to private.

### **How to delete a Musical.ly video?**

To delete a Musical.ly video that you have posted to your account, select the video you want to delete from your profile. From there, you will want to tap the "... " icon in the bottom-right corner and select Delete. You will be asked if you are sure you want to delete the video, then it will be removed from your profile.

### **How can I delete a Musical.ly account?**

**At this time, there is no way for a user to delete their Musical.ly account.** This feature could be available in the future, but for now, the best bet is to make an account private, delete all the content and then delete the app from your devices.

### **How can I use Musical.ly with my kids?**

You can provide a buffer between kids and iffy content by watching videos with your kids and making musicals together. Offer to hold the camera or turn it around to do a selfie duet. You can post it or save it as "private," so only you can see. The app also lets you share videos by email, text, or other social media where you can better control who sees it, so kids can perform for friends and relatives instead of a wider network of people.

### **How do you do a duet on Musical.ly?**

Musical.ly has a feature that allows two users who aren't in the same place to perform a duet. Both users must follow each other to make it work. One user creates and posts a video, then a mutual follower can tap the "... " icon at the bottom right of the video and select "start duet now!" The second user can then lip-sync along with the first person, either swapping back and forth or in a split screen.

### **How can I monitor my kid's activity on Musical.ly?**

Other than blocked search terms, there's no way to filter out content on musical.ly, so kids using the app on their own might come across age-inappropriate videos. Parents can and should share an account with kids under the age

of 13. For older kids, ask about their favorite "musers" and get to know their videos (with or without your kid). Also take the time to regularly look at the most popular songs, videos, and challenges.

### **What if my kid wants to get famous on Musical.ly?**

While the safest way to use musical.ly is with a private account, the social nature of the app and the rapid success of its stars might have your kids begging to set it to public. There's huge enticement to get famous, which could encourage kids to do things they wouldn't normally do to get a larger audience. They may also become obsessed with "likes" and virtual approval. Encourage and model safe behavior, and make sure to set limits on the type of information your kid shares.

### **Article by Cyber Expert Susan MCLEAN**

*Susan is Australia's leading expert in the area of cyber safety and was a member of Victoria Police for 27 years. She was the first Victorian Police officer appointed to a position involving cybersafety and young people and is the most highly qualified of all the Federal Government's certified eSafety providers.*

As a parent/carer it can be almost impossible to be aware of all the apps and sites that kids are on.

As soon as you are on top of one, it is oh so yesterday and there is a new app on the block. It is not so much the name of the app (some are very misleading) but what the app actually does that a parent should be concerned with. By knowing how an app works and what it does will go a long way to helping you make an informed decision about whether or not to let your child use it.

Don't be fooled with the hollow cry of, 'But everyone else has it', because I can assure you they don't. Anyway who cares? If everyone were on the roof jumping off you would allow your child to do it as well?

Much like pester power at the supermarket, some apps will get under your skin before you know it. If an app works on what I like to call the 'lice concept' – infest one child and get the rest, then you have to get yourself into gear and sort it out as I can promise you that your child and many other parents will not.

So to the latest app to hit our kids devices and us between our eyes is: Musical.ly. On the surface it seems to be a fun, karaoke type app and if you read the description on the iTunes store it will tell you that you can create amazing videos to impress your friends, in other words, a popularity contest where the number of 'likes' equals being popular.

So far so good you say. How could this app be harmful? Well here are some other things for you to consider.

The warnings on the side bar of the iTunes store state the app has:

- Infrequent/Mild Profanity or Crude Humour
- Infrequent/Mild Sexual Content and Nudity
- Infrequent/Mild Mature/Suggestive Themes
- Infrequent/Mild Cartoon or Fantasy Violence
- Infrequent/Mild Alcohol, Tobacco, or Drug Use or References

Sorry, but I don't think any of these topics are suitable for young children and early teens. Whilst accepting that kids see and view many things online outside of a parents control, when you are aware that your child is hanging out in a place of potential harm, why are you allowing them to be there?

If you read the Terms and Conditions of Use (T & C) you will also find that a person must be over the age of 13 years to set up an account and that a person between and ages of 13yrs and 18yrs must have parental permission. This alone should tell you that it is far from suitable for kids under 13.

Here are some things that I think you should consider prior to allowing your child to set up an account on Musical.ly.

- 18+ content in the songs lyrics. Swearing and adult concepts in the provided music. Some song lyrics are clearly inappropriate for children and most adults don't hear the words anyway. Who can forget, 'Blow my Whistle' about- you guessed it or 'Dirty Talk' by Wynter Gordon... google it if you can't remember. Most songs come with gyrating video clips as well.
- Musical.ly users can search for other users to view or follow near their own location/city (uses GPS technology).
- User generated videos can be viewed and shared onto other social media and messaging apps increasing exposure. You lose control of the clip.
- Public comments on Musical.ly, which can be nasty.
- Friends commenting that you have 'ruined' their favourite song and bullying in real life as a result.
- Users can publicise their messenger usernames or social media profiles on their Musical.ly profile.
  
- **Kids uploading content taken in the school grounds before school starts clearly identifying student and school via GPS and/or uniform. Cybersafety 101 is about NOT sharing personal information.**
- Large numbers of very young kids from about 8yrs on the site.
- Predators being able to watch the videos of your child, take them, and store them for future viewing pleasure (Yuck!)
- If you have a child over 13 years and you are happy for them to use the app, then ensure that the following security settings are enabled. Go to the 'Settings' tab and then ensure that the 'hide location', info is turned on. This means that another user close by cannot search for your child, nor are they giving away their location via GPS. Also ensure that 'private account', is also turned on.
- Although your child may resist this as they can't become 'popular' with a private account, this is the only way to retain a small amount of control of where your child's content ends up. Remember that once posted, you have lost control and friends today can be enemies tomorrow.
- Technology is here to stay and in a few weeks or months there will be another new app to acquaint yourself with. Don't be afraid, knowledge is power so be involved in what your child does online. Keep the lines of communication open and honest and remember, there are other parents out there that say no. You are not alone. Don't be afraid to sit down with your child and check it out. Kids are usually reasonable when there is validity behind a decision. Stay strong and remember your child's safety is your responsibility both on and off line.