



PRIVACY RISKS AND HARMS REPORT

Common Sense Privacy Program

The Common Sense *Privacy Risks and Harms* report identifies risks to children and students as they engage online and identifies ways for parents and educators to choose the products that best protect our youngest consumers from privacy intrusions and manipulation by third parties that could have long-term implications.

These decisions by parents and educators on which products to use at home and in the classroom need to be guided by resources backed by research and experts with informed analysis of the risks. Our easy-to-understand privacy evaluations from Common Sense include an overall score, display tier risks, and summarize privacy concerns to guide parents and educators in making informed choices. Information and communication technologies offer tremendous benefits to children, especially the most disadvantaged, but parents and educators need to be able to harness the power of the technology while at the same time limiting the harms in order to protect children. As parents, educators, and consumers, our main leverage in encouraging companies to make changes in how they collect and use personal information from kids is in our purchasing decisions, by us only buying products for kids that protect their privacy and avoiding products that do not.

Privacy has meant many things over time, but in the digital age the stakes are high, and the issue raises important questions about what personal information is collected from kids by the applications and services they use every day, how that information is used, and with whom it's shared and why. The understanding of the implications vary, and the choices we make for our children now can have ripple effects for decades to come. Many parents and educators say they are not concerned about the right to privacy and believe there are no real privacy risks or harms because they think their children and students have nothing to hide.

However, the choices kids make (and those their parents make on their behalf) with personal information are ultimately choices that define their online identities and profiles. When it comes to privacy, different people face different kinds of privacy risks and harms. Kids are especially susceptible to behavioral, social, emotional, physical, and financial risks that could create lifelong social and emotional harm. For example, when students take college entrance exams such as the PSAT, the ACT, or Advanced Placement exams, they are often asked to check off a box if they want to receive information from colleges or scholarship organizations. That simple act of checking a box to share a kid's personal information and their exam grades with third parties can be given without parental notice or consent and introduces privacy risks. Organizations like the College Board and ACT could use a student's personal information to create and market personal profiles to third parties. A student's personal information could also be combined with their online digital footprint to create detailed profiles that may be used by college admissions offices to determine acceptance based on statistical analysis of their data that takes into consideration the student's sex, race, and behavior on social media accounts.

With this report, we collect the best available information about ways consumers can arm themselves with information when choosing which technology tools to use. There is no one-size-fits-all solution for privacy, and so parents and teachers need to educate themselves with resources like ours and those offered by other trusted sources in order to best understand how to minimize the risk of harms to our youngest consumers based on the personal information collected from them, who has access to it, and how it is used.

Read the full report at: commonsense.org/privacy-risks.