

# WHY YOU SHOULD DELETE SNAPCHAT

WRITTEN BY ADAM MCLANE

I've been engaged in various forms of social media since AOL chat rooms in 1994. And I've never seen a more dangerous application targeting teenagers, specifically girls, than Snapchat.

*The premise of Snapchat is simple.* You take a picture, send it to a friend, and they can only see it for up to 10 seconds before it's deleted.

And that's where the lie begins.

**I want to be blunt.** My goal for this post is to motivate you to delete Snapchat from your phone.



## Reason #1 - Snapchat is built on a lie

In my book, *A Parent's Guide to Understanding Social Media*, I share three rules about social media which lead me to the conclusion that Snapchat isn't to be trusted:

### Rule #1

#### Everything posted online is public

I wrote about this in depth here.

The central premise of Snapchat is that what you are sending is private. *That's a lie.* There is a very real risk that everything you share with any app or on any website will become public. One day, every image you post online may become associated with your name.

When you post something online you give up the ability to control where that image goes. So even if you aren't using your real name to post with Snapchat, that "*private image*" may one day pop up in a Google Search of your name.

The same is true of anywhere you post something online. You always must know that what you are posting *could* become public.

## Rule #2 – There's no such thing as anonymity online, only perceived anonymity.

Any time your device connects to the internet it associates 100% of your activity with your device. (Every device has a unique identifier, like a finger print. When you buy it and register it that transaction is linked to you and everything you do with it is ultimately pointing back to you.)

Every site, every image you upload/download, every search, every call... everything is associated with that device. *E.v.e.r.y.t.h.i.n.g.* Even if you delete it. Even if you use a proxy server. Even if... *E.v.e.r.y.t.h.i.n.g.*

The content isn't always saved, but the activity itself most definitely is.

With Snapchat, the perception that your account is anonymous... *meaning it is using a pseudonym [An account name] and not your real name*, makes it easy to think that you are disassociating what you send on Snapchat from "the real you."

Pure and simple. *Perceived anonymity is dangerous.* And Snapchat uses that to their advantage to get you to trust it. *Over time you'll begin to think that if you're using a fake name, what you send can't be tracked back to you.*

### **But that's not how the internet works at all.**

Snapchat knows who you are, where you are, and they store it all. (They are legally bound to.) Even though their marketing copy says they don't... *their terms of service say that they do store it AND they have the right to sell that information as an asset to the company which they can sell.* (See Usage Data on their terms of service. Also look at the language in their privacy policy: "*We cannot guarantee that deletion always occurs within a particular timeframe.*" This is important because when you create an account you are legally agreeing to these terms even though it's exactly opposite of the marketing.)

## Rule #3 There's no such thing as online privacy, only perceived online privacy

The biggest lie is that the images go away. In fact, because they are transferred between users of the app, that image actually touches several servers between your phone and your friends phone. The image goes from your device, to your phone carriers servers, to Snapchats servers, to your friends phone carriers servers, to their phone. That message is logged all of those places, that image is stored on Snapchats servers, that image is stored on your phone, and that image is stored on your friends phone. (Not to mention a ton of servers and switches who pass that data across the web.)

All the Snapchat app actually does to make it so you see if for just a few seconds is change the name of the file so that you can't see it. *But it's still there.* [Read this article: [Forensic Expert Pokes Holes in Snapchat and Facebook](#)]

**Bottom line:** Perceived privacy is dangerous. It convinces you that something is private, when at it's very core it isn't private at all. Combine that with the lie that what you share on Snapchat is anonymous and you'll see why I think Snapchat is so dangerous, especially for teenagers.

**Sidenote:** Ironically, a text message is more private than something sent with Snapchat. The FCC guarantees that a text is a private exchange between two devices and it takes a search warrant to access your texts. With Snapchat you are willingly sharing something over a network that is not secure and *you are not protected, legally*, from them revealing all of your messages down the road. When you agree to the terms of service you agree that all of the data is theirs and they can do with it whatever they want.

**I mean, why do you think the app is free?** Because they are collecting data about you and selling it to marketing companies. Duh.

You are the product they are selling!

## Reason #2 - Snapchat was created as a safe way to sext

Currently, the creators of Snapchat are busy suing one another about who really created the application in the first place. The case has revealed documents which confirm what everyone has known since the beginning. Snapchat was created as a “safe” sexting app.

Here’s an email about drafting the first press release, included in the court documents. (The app was originally called picaboo)

Uhhhh, let’s be honest. What betch ever wants anyone to get hold of her pictures? I mean with incriminating photos of lacrosse team captains, rounds of drinks at, and sexy, fun photos of new outfits, a betch would be at the mercy of her captor if anyone ever got a hold of her phone.

LA County Superior Court

And this is an exchange between the creator and a person they are asking to promote the app’s release.

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> — Original Message —  
> From: "Nicole James" <[nicolerjames@gmail.com](mailto:nicolerjames@gmail.com)>  
> To: "Evan Spiegel" <[espiegel@stanford.edu](mailto:espiegel@stanford.edu)>  
> Sent: Wednesday, July 27, 2011 5:07:38 PM  
> Subject: Re: Yo gurl, here's an iPhone app I think you'd love...  
>  
> Ahh, okay. So it's like, the best way to sext, basically. Cuz you can't save the images?  
>  
> On Wed, Jul 27, 2011 at 7:57 PM, Nicole James <[nicolerjames@gmail.com](mailto:nicolerjames@gmail.com)> wrote:  
>  
> I just sent a photo describing how I feel about Picaboo. (i.e. Still no clue...)  
>  
>  
>  
> On Wed, Jul 27, 2011 at 6:19 PM, Evan Spiegel <[espiegel@stanford.edu](mailto:espiegel@stanford.edu)> wrote:  
>  
> Lucky guess. ( <http://thatwhitebitch.com/post/6599627108> )  
>  
> And yeah - I didn't even giggle once...kind of a letdown.  
>  
> Gotta try Picaboo to love it. It's a fun + fast way to share pictures that disappear. You can share anything if it isn't saved forever..inside jokes w friends, "does my ass look fat in this dress," etc. We've seen a lot of crazy stuff.  
>  
>  
> If you send one to teampicaboo I'll send you my best thizz face back..

The creators refer to themselves as “*certified bros*” who brag about their fraternity getting kicked off Stanford’s campus. And they refer to women, their target demographic, as “*betches*.”

**Is that how you like to be talked about?** If you are a parent, are you excited about your daughter being targeted to send images through a service to “*certified bros*” who call your daughter a “*betch*.”

I think not.

**The fact is that Snapchat was created as a sexting app.** Like a do it yourself version of *Girls Gone Wild*. You might not use it that way, **but that’s what it was created for.**

And the fact is that the images are not deleted, according to the terms of service, they can store for whatever purposes they want for as long as they want.

(Read this article about the lawsuit, including more documentation about how the creators talk about women, the app, and their hopes to get very rich selling your usage data.)

**Worse yet?** Snapchat is funded with venture cap money, lots of it. So the goal of Snapchat is to sell it for a lot of money... including all of the data... meaning you have zero control where your “*private*” images will one day end up.

Check this little gem out in their privacy policy: “*Sharing of information: We may share information about you as follows or as otherwise described in this Privacy Policy: In connection with, or during negotiations of, any merger, sale of company assets, financing or acquisition of all or a portion of our business to another company;*”

What does that mean? That means your “*private pictures*” are ultimately for sale. And you’ve given them permission to sell them.

Don’t think that’s a problem? Read the story of Angie Varona, who shared some images at age 14 and is now a face & body used to sell porn and fake Facebook accounts against her will.

“But I use it innocently” “But it’s really fun.”

Lots of not-so-innocent things are used innocently. And lots of innocent things are used for not-so-innocent things.

Yup. *That’s true.* But I think when you understand that the app is fundamentally built on a lie, one which intentionally deceives you, and when you understand that the original intention of the app— in the words of its creators— was “*the best way to sext.*”

Do your homework. Investigate for yourself. **Then delete it.**

**My advice?** Share pictures over text message or Instagram. (Instagram, part of Facebook, has a much better privacy policy, terms of service, and is not built on the lie of privacy.)

## About Adam McLane

A lifelong youth worker, Adam McLane is a Partner at The Youth Cartel and Principal at McLane Creative. He is a purveyor, connoisseur, trader, and collector of ideas.

Kristen and Adam have been married 16 years and live in the San Diego neighborhood of Rolando with their rowdy children, Megan, Paul, and Jackson.

## More from Adam McLane

### ***A Parent's Guide to Understanding Social Media -***

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