



Snapchat Parent Guide

Snap Map, Quick Add, and disappearing messages — what to lock down first

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WHY THIS GUIDE EXISTS

Snapchat has faced state lawsuits from six states since 2024. A 2026 Missouri case cited a dark-web "Sextortion Handbook" that specifically instructs predators to use **Snap Map** to locate victims near named schools. Snapchat's disappearing messages, while framed as privacy-friendly, also mean there's often no record left for a parent to review after the fact. This guide covers the three features named most often in real cases: Snap Map, Quick Add, and disappearing messages.

⚠ Important: Snap Map shares your child's precise real-time location with their friends list by default in "Ghost Mode off" state for many accounts. Check this first — it's the single highest-value setting in this guide.

STEP 1 — TURN ON GHOST MODE (HIDE LOCATION)

- 1 Open Snapchat → tap the Snap Map icon (bottom left)
- 2 Tap the gear icon (top right of the map)
- 3 Enable "Ghost Mode" — this stops sharing precise location with anyone, including friends
- 4 Alternative: set visibility to "My Friends" only, never "Everyone," if you want location shared with real friends only

STEP 2 — RESTRICT WHO CAN CONTACT AND ADD YOUR CHILD

- 1 Settings → Privacy Controls
- 2 Set "Who Can Contact Me" → Friends Only (not Everyone)
- 3 Set "Who Can View My Story" → Friends Only or Custom
- 4 Turn OFF "Quick Add" — this stops Snapchat suggesting your child to strangers as a friend, and vice versa
- 5 Turn off "See Me in Quick Add" specifically, even if the above is already off

STEP 3 — UNDERSTAND DISAPPEARING MESSAGES ARE NOT TRULY GONE

Messages set to disappear can still be screen-recorded or photographed by the recipient before they vanish — "it disappeared" does not mean "it wasn't seen or saved." Talk to your child about this directly: assume anything sent could be kept by the other person, regardless of Snapchat's settings.

✅ Tip: Snapchat does notify a user if the other person takes a screenshot — but not if they photograph the screen with a second device, which leaves no notification at all.

STEP 4 — WARNING SIGNS TO WATCH FOR

- Frequent new "friends" added via Quick Add that your child hasn't met in person
- Secrecy about location sharing, or reluctance to show you their Snap Map settings
- Anyone asking for a Snap that would embarrass your child if shown to others
- Someone asking to move the conversation to Discord or another app — the same handoff pattern covered in our Discord Parent Guide and the FBI-investigated "764" network (October Journal issue)
- Gifts or requests tied to a Snapchat-only relationship

STEP 5 — HOW TO REPORT & BLOCK

Block a user: open the chat → tap their name → "Manage Friendship" → "Block." **Report a user or content:** press and hold the message/Snap → "Report," or use Snapchat's Support site (support.snapchat.com) for detailed reports with evidence. For suspected grooming or exploitation, also report to the FBI (tips.fbi.gov) or NCMEC's CyberTipline (CyberTipline.org).

CONVERSATION SCRIPT FOR PARENTS

Use this with children ages 10–15:

"I want to check your Snap Map settings with you — not because I don't trust you, but because Snapchat shares your exact location by default unless you turn that off. If anyone you only know from Snapchat ever asks to meet up, or asks for a photo you wouldn't want me to see, come tell me right away. You won't be in trouble — ever."

QUICK REFERENCE CHECKLIST

- ☐ Ghost Mode enabled or location set to Friends only
- ☐ Who Can Contact Me set to Friends Only
- ☐ Quick Add turned off (both directions)
- ☐ Child understands disappearing messages can still be captured
- ☐ Child understands the Discord-handoff red flag
- ☐ Child knows how to block and report
- ☐ Regular check-in conversation scheduled