Whatsapp 'read once'
Parent Guide

All you need to know about Whatsapp's new messaging feature

Age Rating: **13+**

What is it?

Whatsapp's new **'read once' feature** lets users send photos or videos that can only be viewed once. Once it has been viewed, it will be **automatically deleted** from both the sender and the recipient's galleries.

You **cannot forward, save, star or share** the file once you have received it. The image may, however, **still exist on Whatsapp's servers** for up to two weeks after it has been sent.

It's similar to **Snapchat's model,** in which all messages are **time-sensitive images**.

What are the risks?

People can still **screenshot** a message sent via the 'read once' feature. Whereas **Snapchat will inform you** if a message has been screenshotted, **Whatsapp will not**.

The 'read once' feature can give users using the app a **false sense of security** and encourage them to **send images they might not feel comfortable with** someone having for an extended period. It's important to remind them that **someone could still screenshot** the image.

It might also encourage users to send **upsetting or abusive messages**, thinking that there will be no proof of what they've sent.

What safety features are there?

If someone sends your child a message using 'read once' and they find the content upsetting or abusive, make sure that they **report it straight away**. Whatsapp **can access messages that are reported** – even if they were sent using the 'read once' feature.

Screenshotting a message may also be helpful if you feel law enforcement needs to be contacted.

What else should I do?

Make sure that your child has a **good understanding of the reporting and blocking functions** on Whatsapp.

Remind them to **block** anyone who sends them a 'read once' message that makes them **feel uncomfortable or unsafe** and not to send messages to **people they don't know**.

Talk to them about the feature and make sure that they are **fully aware** that whilst 'read once' messages seem **exclusive**, it's always possible for **someone to screenshot something they don't want others to see**.

As always, encourage them to **talk to you about the feature** and to **come to you if anything is wrong**.

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