

A Parents' Guide to **Ask.fm**



ConnectSafely
Smart Socializing Starts Here™

Top 5 Questions Parents Have About Ask.fm

What is Ask.fm? Ask.fm is a social site and app that's all about asking and answering questions. You ask questions of friends—people you follow—and they answer with text, pictures or video. By default, questions are asked anonymously, but you can opt to include your screen name. You can also opt not to receive anonymous questions. If you prefer to be more private, you can choose to answer questions from only your friends and followers. Or, you could choose and answer random questions for more visibility. For further reach, opt to have your posts appear in the Stream, which is a public feed of questions and answers from Ask.fm users around the world.

Why do people like Ask.fm? In a word, it's fun. There's also a unique allure to anonymous spaces, a feeling of 'anything goes' that can be at once appealing and terrifying. Sometimes the questions and answers are serious, and sometimes they're silly and irreverent. And since users and the service provide a constant stream of questions, there's always something to talk about.

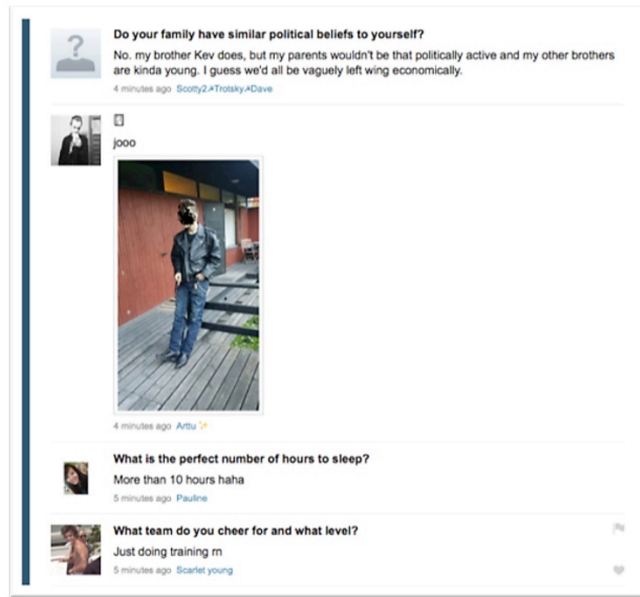
What type of questions do people ask? Questions run the gamut, from politics and pop culture to more personal questions like what justifies a lie. People can make up their own questions, or choose from the thousands of questions Ask.fm generates every minute.

Is bullying an issue on Ask.fm? Bullying can and does happen in real life and online and, of course, it happens on Ask.fm. Teaching our kids to respect themselves and each other in both physical and online spaces will go a long way toward reducing the mean-spiritedness that happens on services like Ask.fm.

What's the best way to stay safe on Ask.fm? As with most social media, good behavior begets good behavior. Treat others with kindness and respect and you'll invite the same. On Ask.fm, there are steps you can take to keep your experience on the positive side, like blocking anonymous answers, reporting abuse and avoiding the public Stream, which at times can feel like a river of middle school angst, although the overwhelming majority of questions and answers on Ask.fm are respectful and not at all mean.

Ask.fm is a social network on mobile devices and the Web that allows you to ask questions—to your friends or others who also use the service. People use Ask.fm to ask all sorts of things about life, religion, politics, books, pop culture, food, travel and much more. It's a way to explore what others think on just about anything that might interest you.

You can direct questions to specific people or friends, or to groups of people. The questions can be asked anonymously, or you can opt to associate your username with a question. Answers to questions are not anonymous and are identified by your username. Answers can be text or video, or text with a picture, or text with emojis (little pictures, like smiley faces) on mobile devices. Unregistered users cannot ask—or answer—questions.



Ask.fm was founded in 2010 and based in Latvia until 2014, when it was acquired by Ask.com (of IAC, a public company that also owns Match.com, About.com and numerous other online brands), and is now headquartered in Dublin, Ireland, with offices in Oakland, California and Riga, Latvia.

Using Ask.fm

Before you can use Ask.fm, you need to sign up for an account. It's free and easy and if you have a child using Ask.fm, it's a good idea for you to create an account too—even if you only use it to familiarize yourself with the service.

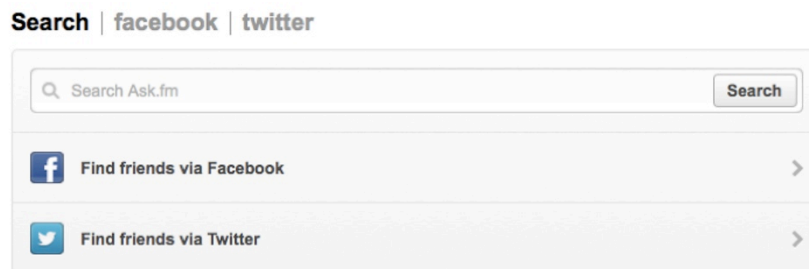
Go to Ask.fm and click Join Now and answer the simple list of questions, or download the Ask.fm app from the Apple app store or Google Play store. It will ask for your date of birth so that the company can comply with the Child Online Protection Act (COPPA) by assuring that everyone is (or at least says they are) 13 or older. Once you fill in the blanks, you'll be asked to link your account with your Facebook or Twitter account. This is to help find Facebook and Twitter friends who are also Ask.fm members and, of course, it's optional.



Friends and followers

Ask.fm uses “friend” and “follower” interchangeably. You can follow someone without them following you (and vice versa), and once you follow a person, they are added to your friends list. You cannot see who follows you, which means that others can follow you without your knowing, though you have the ability to block specific people. Parents might want to mention this to their kids so that they know that answers can be seen by essentially anyone, and that anonymous questions could also be from anyone since anyone can follow you without your knowledge. Note that no one can see questions in your inbox until they are answered, and only then will they appear publicly in your profile.

You can find friends and people to follow by linking Ask.fm to your Twitter and/or Facebook account and selecting the people who you already know, or you can search for anyone by name or email address.



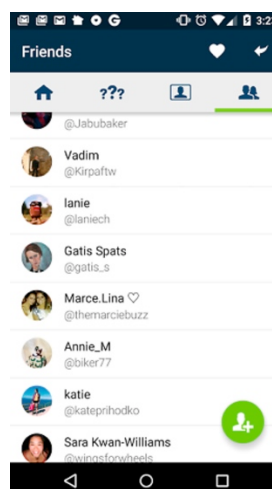
Asking a question

You can ask questions to anyone on the site, even if you don't follow them, by typing a question on their profile. By default, the question will be asked anonymously (no one will see your username) but you can uncheck the Ask anonymously button at the bottom to display your username along with your question. You can opt-out of receiving anonymous questions, so unchecking the box may be required for some questions you ask.

To ask a question to friends, click on Home and then Ask friends a question



For mobile: click on the 'friend' icon.



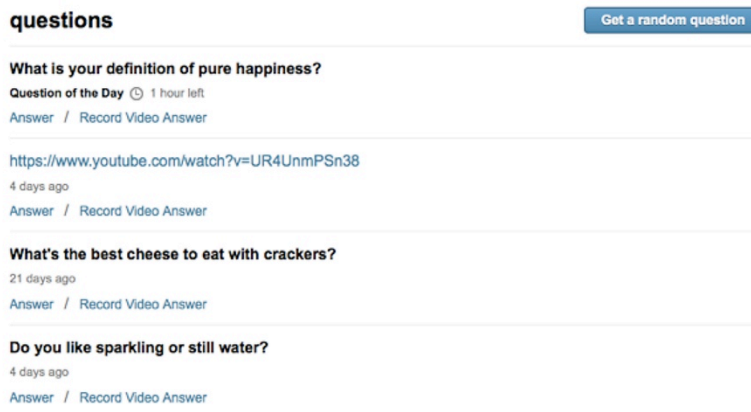
Then type in the question and click on the name(s) of any friends who you wish to ask. Any question you ask will not be visible to anyone other than the people you ask until at least one person answers it. At that time it will be visible on your profile. Everyone can see content on your profile. You can delete anything from your profile at any time.

Limits of anonymity

It's important to know that anonymous doesn't mean unaccountable. Even if your username isn't shared with other users, it is available to Ask.fm staff if they are required to do so by law and called upon to investigate a potential crime or violation of their terms of service. And, Ask.fm, just like all reputable online services, must comply with any properly submitted legal orders, which means that anyone who breaks the law using online services can be held accountable.

The inbox

In addition to questions from friends and followers, the Ask.fm staff generates lots of questions on a variety of topics, plus a "question of the day" that's usually of broad interest to many users. You can receive these questions by clicking "get a random question" or the dice icon on your mobile device.



Note that system-generated questions cannot be reported or blocked.

Answering questions

You can answer a question with text or by recording a video answer from your computer or phone. If you type an answer, you also have the option of uploading a photo or other image, as well as using emoji on your mobile. Once you answer a question, both the question and the answer appear on your profile, which can be seen by anyone.

You can also share your answer and the question on Facebook, Twitter or Vk.com. For all practical purposes, what you answer is public so you should be sure not to say anything that violates your privacy, could get you in trouble, or is embarrassing.

Be careful with images, video and connected services

Be especially careful if you record a video answer. Be aware of how you are dressed, how you present yourself and what is in the background (as well as any sound that may be picked up) and be respectful of

the privacy of anyone else who might appear in the video. If you're unhappy with your answer for any reason, you can delete it by clicking on the "x" to the right of your answer.

answers

RSS

Do you like to act spontaneously or plan things? Why?



I like spontaneity. Yes, I plan things but I like last minute things too.

17 minutes ago

When you answer a question, notice if there are checkmarks next to Vk.com, Facebook or Twitter (by default Ask.fm does check them if you connected your profile to these apps). If they are checked, your answers will also appear on those services so, if you don't want to share your answers with friends or followers on those services, be sure that they are unchecked (if you're not connected they will be unchecked by default).

What can totally impress you?

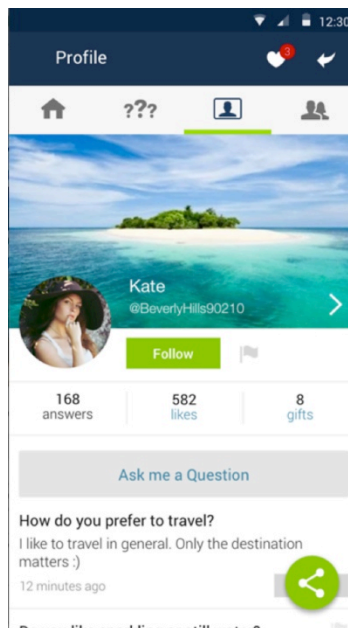
5 days ago

honesty

Add an image

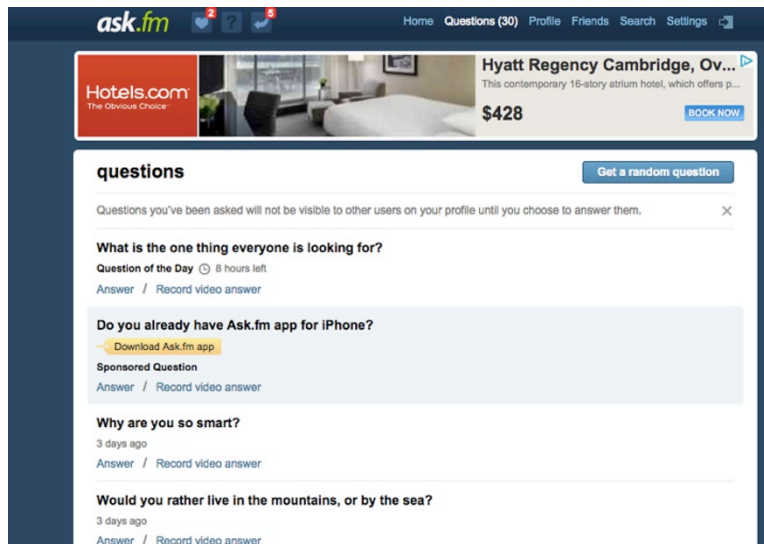
Share: Vk.com Facebook Twitter

Answer



Viewing other people's questions

You can view your questions by clicking on the question mark or Questions near the top of your screen. That will show any questions directed at you, questions created by you and for you, automated questions, and the Ask.fm question of the day that goes out to everyone, plus a "sponsored question" from Ask.fm. As you can see from this image, you may also see contextual ads on Ask.fm that could be based on your Web surfing or searches.



Ask.fm safety center

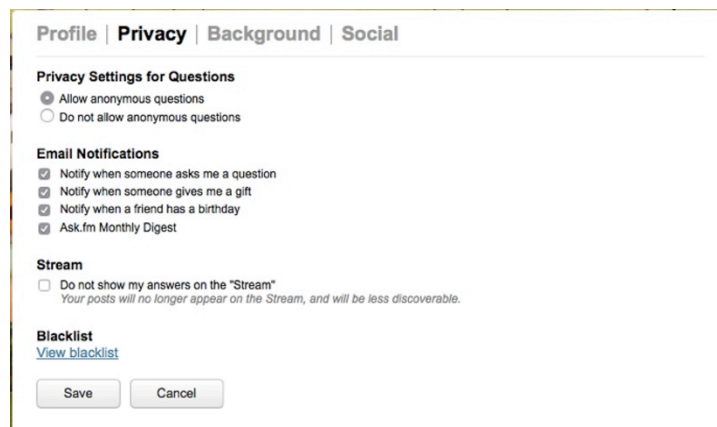
Ask.fm maintains a safety center (safety.ask.fm) with answers to frequently asked questions about blocking, reporting abuse and other safety-related issues. There are also resources for teens, parents, educators and law enforcement.

Privacy settings

From Settings, click on Privacy to control:

- Whether people can ask you anonymous questions (the default is that they can but you can change that)
- Whether to be notified by email if someone asks you a question, sends you a gift (gifts cost real money), or when a friend has a birthday.

Whether your answers are shown on the "Stream" that can be seen by anyone, regardless of whether they are your friend.



Setting and changing your password

As with all social media accounts, it's important to have a secure and unique password. One reason is because a weak password makes it easier for someone to impersonate you, potentially posting embarrassing or harmful information or using the service to spam or defraud your friends. Make sure your password contains numbers, symbols and at least one uppercase character and don't use an identical

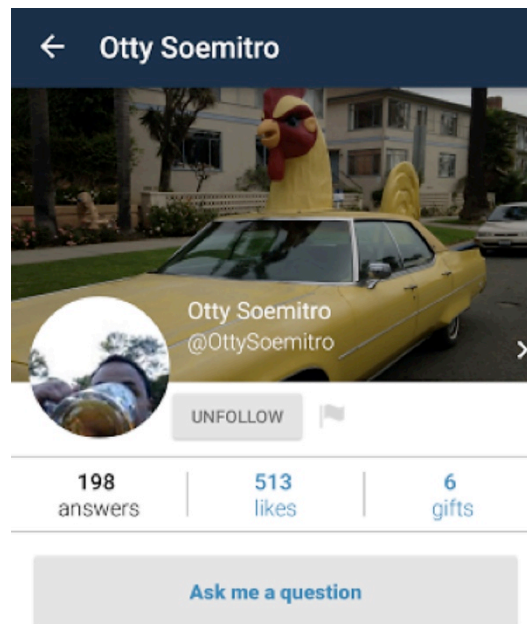
password for multiple sites or services. For advice on how to create an easy-to-remember but secure password, visit [ConnectSafely.org/passwords](https://connectsafely.org/passwords).

What to do about harassing or annoying questions

Sometimes just asking someone to stop is all it takes. If you feel safe contacting the person, you might just ask them to please stop asking you questions. That doesn't work all the time, but it often does. If you don't feel safe or if the person continues to annoy or harass you, you should report this (see below for details). You can also block people (which means they can no longer send you questions) and anonymous questions. If someone is just posting annoying content, you can unfollow them. If you feel that you are at risk of being harmed, also call 911 or your local police department.

Unfollowing

To unfollow someone, go to their profile page (also accessible from your Friends list) and click Unfollow. You can choose this option when you no longer wish to see content from this person in your feed. You can reverse the process at any time and follow them again. The person won't be notified that you unfollowed them or re-followed them.



Blocking someone

You also have the option to block someone, which means that the person will not be able to ask you questions, like your answers or give you a gift. And all their likes will be removed from your profile.

To block someone you can go to their profile (search for them and click on their username) and then click Block, which is under the Unfollow button in very light letters. Blocked users will still be able to see your answers, but will not be able to interact with you. You also have the option to report that person (see below for more on reporting) at the same time, but you can just block them and not report them if you don't feel that their actions warrant possible removal from the service.

You can also block a user (even if they are anonymous) directly from your inbox by hovering your pointer over the right rail of the question to display the Report or Block button and selecting it.

You can see who you have blocked by viewing your Blocklist in your Privacy Settings. You can also unblock users at any time by viewing your Blocklist.

See Safety Tools: <http://safety.ask.fm/safety-tools/>

Block ✕

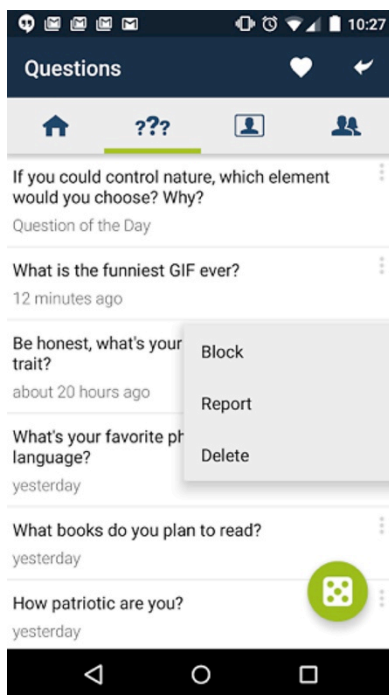
Report User
Reported profiles are sent to our moderators for a review. They will ban the reported profiles if they violate Ask.fm terms of use.

This is spam.
 This user puts people at risk.
 This user appears to be under 13 years old.

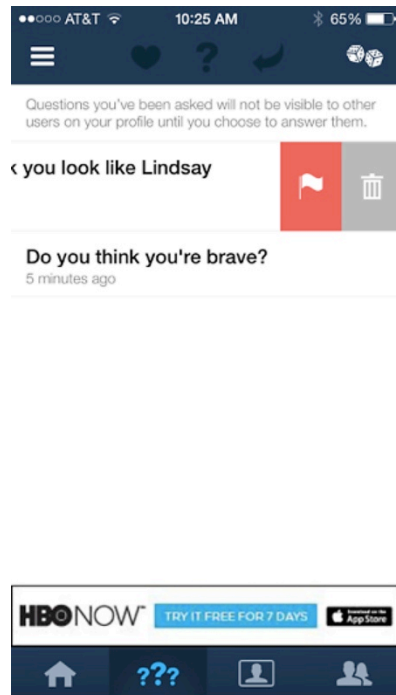
Block User
Blocked users won't be able to ask you any more questions, like your answers, or give you gifts. All their likes will be removed from your profile. Blocked users will still be able to follow you and view answers you publish. You can unblock users by visiting your Privacy Settings.

so what's the name of said "yummy Vietnamese restaurant"? I love tofu salads!!!

Android



iOS



Reporting abuse

If you feel that a person has been abusive, is spamming people, is creating risk, is under 13 or has otherwise violated Ask.fm's terms of service, you can report them to company moderators who will review their activities on the service and take appropriate action including possibly banning them from the service. The Report button is next to the Block button (below Unfollow) on each person's profile but—as stated earlier – you can report and block someone at the same time. You can also go to the Help section at the footer of the site and click on Contact Us to report abuse or other violations.

As with unfollowing and blocking, the person you report will not be notified that you have reported them.

Report

Report User
Reported profiles are sent to our moderators for a review. They will ban the reported profiles if they violate Ask.fm terms of use.

This is spam.

This user puts people at risk.

Harassment or Bullying

Self Harm

Nudity or Pornography

Violence

Hate Speech or Extremism

This user appears to be under 13 years old.

Block User
Blocked users won't be able to ask you any more questions, like your answers, or give you gifts. All their likes will be removed from your profile. Blocked users will still be able to follow you and view answers you publish. You can unblock users by visiting your [Privacy Settings](#).

Submit Cancel

Closing thoughts for parents

It's easy to be intimidated by all the social networking apps and services that kids use and even technology experts have trouble keeping up with all the new services. But you don't have to be an expert to understand how to help your child use Ask.fm or any other service or app safely. The "rules" for using any site or service are pretty much the same. Be respectful of yourself and others, be careful what you post and pay attention to any privacy settings, security tools and blocking and reporting mechanisms.

It's also important to remember that tools like Ask.fm are mostly an extension of your child's "real world" social life. Although there are exceptions, kids tend to hang out online with the same people they hang out with in person.

What's most important is to help your kids develop critical thinking skills so that no matter what services they use (online or off), they think about what they're doing, take care to protect their privacy and security and keep an eye out for scams and things that may not be what they seem.

And parents too need to do a bit of critical thinking by not panicking every time you hear a media report about something awful happening in social media. The reason the news media cover awful situations is because they're rare. How often do you see headlines about planes landing safely? Of course kids can get into trouble using Ask.fm or any other service, but the same can be said for swimming pools. That's why we teach them how to swim. As for our job as parents, it's important to keep the lines of communication with your kids as open as possible and to work together to figure out what's appropriate for them in terms of safety, privacy, reputation and time management. It generally just works better to talk with our kids about their favorite tools—with genuine interest, not fear—because they're more likely to come to you when they need help and you're much more likely to be kept in the loop about the technology that they use.