



One of the most exciting aspects of social media for teens is the opportunity to meet and talk to people they don't know. If you are thinking that this flies in the face of one of the basic safety rules you taught your child when they were little, don't talk to strangers, you'd be right. Your teen knows talking to a strange adult face-to-face is dangerous and would never do it, but something about talking to a strange adult on a screen seems inconsequential. We talk to tens of thousands of teens every year, and without exception, they tell us talking to a stranger is dangerous but they do it online all the time. When we ask them to explain the obvious discrepancy between what they know is safe and what they are doing, they say real-life choices "feel" different than online decisions. This mindset makes perfect sense in light of what we see every day online. Every child that I have talked to about sending a mean or hurtful online message always says they would have done it differently if they were face-to-face with the recipient. This is true for adults too. Thoughtless Twitter posts have ended careers and relationships.

**Ome TV** is a new popular iteration of many online platforms that pair strangers together online and often do that through their web cameras. Ome TV is an alternative to Omegle. Omegle is one of the most popular types of apps that connects with strangers and has been on the scene for a while. Its popularity is mainly due to Youtubers who have become famous by creating Omegle prank videos on YouTube. If you search for "Omegle pranks" on YouTube, you can watch hundreds of these videos and begin to understand why a teen would be drawn to seek out a similar "fun" experience on Omegle's website or on the Ome TV app. What they find are nude men in front of their web cameras waiting to expose themselves to anyone who randomly gets connected to them. Unfortunately, you can't unsee that. The less obvious predators will want to talk to a teen and find out more about them, maybe follow their Instagram or SnapChat account, so they can stalk them online.

**This app or any app that allows a child to talk to strangers is not safe.**

# How to keep your child safe

## **Password Protected App Store**

Omegle is a website. Their app was removed from the App Store. If you want to block your child from going to Omegle on their devices, you will need to make sure the web address, Omegle.com, is blocked. There are scores of other apps like Ome TV that are “Omegle alternatives.” A password protected App Store will stop your child from downloading Ome TV and other dangerous apps onto their devices.

## **Talk to Your Child and Filter Your Internet**

Talk to your child about these apps and why they are dangerous. These apps sometimes come up at sleepovers or when teens are together at a friend’s house. When your child goes to another house, do those parents filter their internet? They should. Share this with them.

You can filter the internet coming into your home with OpenDNS.com (free service), your internet provider’s parental controls (paid service), or your router (free and paid).