What is YouNow?

YouNow is a live streaming service which allows users to broadcast live video feeds to an online audience.

YouNow broadcasts have two main features: a window where the broadcaster's live video is displayed; and a chat window, where viewers write real-time messages to the broadcaster and chat to other viewers.

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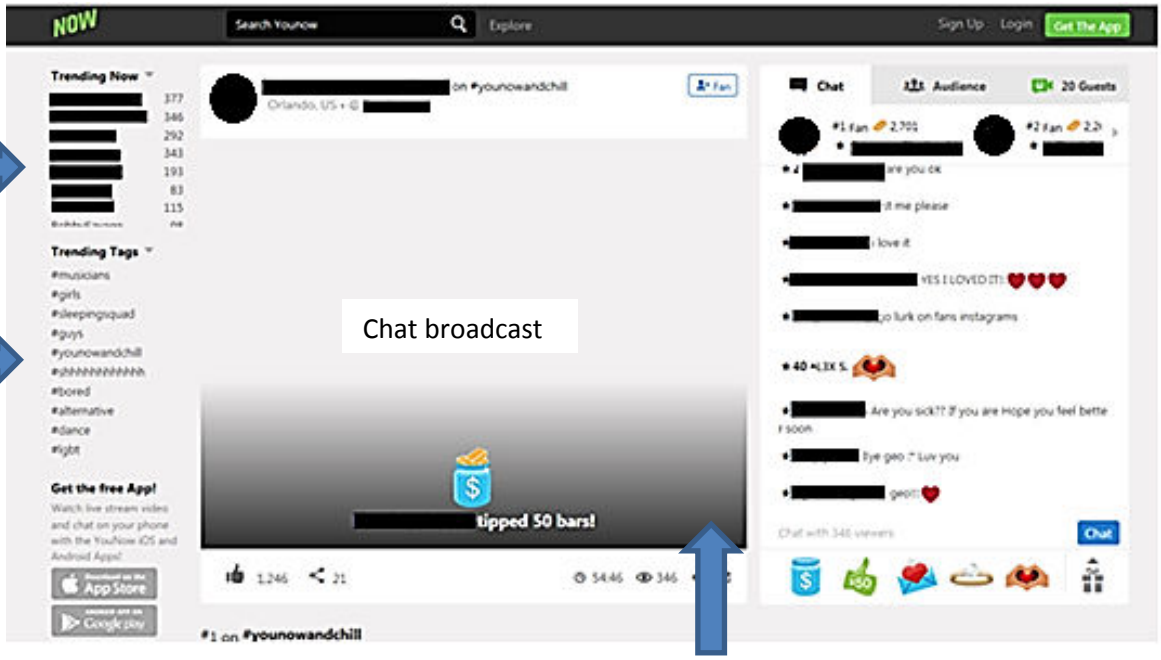
Trending broadcasters

Trending hashtags



Chat window

Chat broadcast

Users broadcast on a wide range of subjects and use hashtags to categorise their videos (for example, *#girls #boys #bored #music* and *#dance*). This categorisation enables other users to search for and find video feeds related to a certain subject.

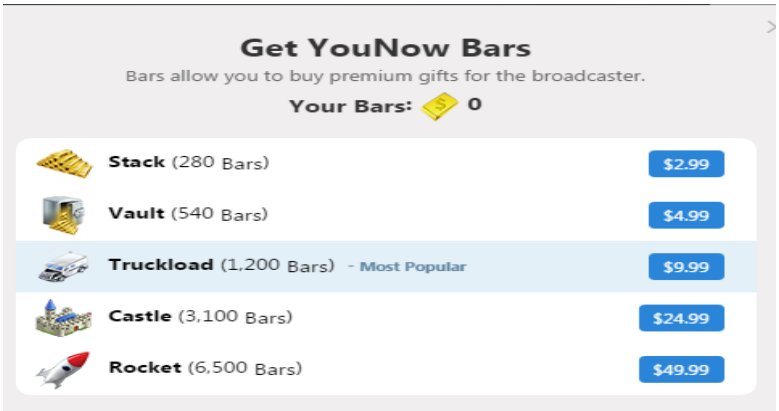
Broadcasters generally aim to build a 'fan base' through regularly streaming videos and interacting with their audience. To show their appreciation, 'fans' use a virtual currency called 'bars' to send gifts to broadcasters. 'Bars' can be thought of as 'online money' and are bought by users through

their PayPal accounts. As broadcasters become more popular, they trend across the site and rise up the chart for their chosen hashtag. The higher up the chart, the more easily discoverable they are to potential viewers. For many, the goal is to rank as the top stream for a particular hashtag.

How much does it cost?

YouNow can be accessed for free via a Wi-Fi enabled computer with a webcam, or a smartphone installed with the YouNow app. However, there are various additional 'in-app' purchases users can make in order to enhance their use of the site.

Users are able to buy a virtual currency called bars in order to 'virtually tip' broadcasters. These bars can be used to buy virtual gifts, which give the viewer the ability to support broadcasters and to become more visible to them. Bars are purchased by users through their existing PayPal account.

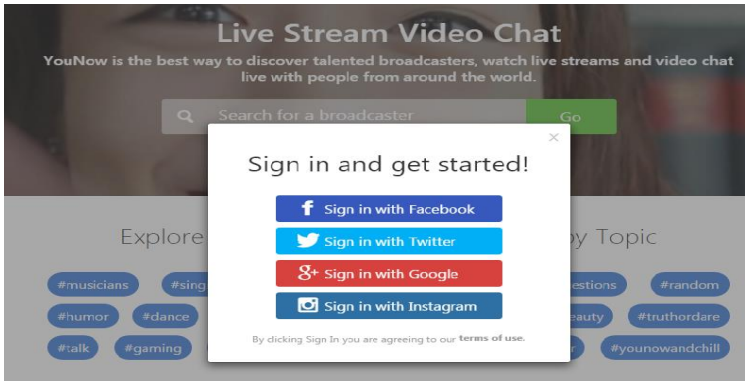


Some popular broadcasters are selected by YouNow to become 'Partners'. These Partners are allowed to offer a subscription service to their viewers, which costs $4.99 a month (approximately £3.50). Subscribers gain additional privileges such as priority chat during broadcasts.

Age restrictions

YouNow's site rules state that the site is intended for individuals aged 13+. If YouNow is informed of an account belonging to a user under 13 it will be terminated.

To broadcast a video or communicate in the chat window a user must register for an account. To do this a user can choose to sign in through their existing Facebook, Twitter, Google or Instagram accounts.



Users do not have to submit their age when registering. Therefore children below the age of 13 can (with or without their parents' permission) use the site without restriction. However, they will be breaking YouNow's terms of use which states that users must be over the age of 13.

It is also possible for a child under 13 to watch broadcasts on the YouNow website or app without signing in or registering an account. However, they will not be able to create live broadcasts or chat to other users.

Should I be concerned about YouNow as a parent/carer?

Sharing personal information

Part of YouNow's appeal is that video content is broadcast live and users are able to interact with the broadcaster, and other audience members, via the chat room function. These interactions often involve users publicly sharing personal information. As these exchanges take place in 'real time' there is a tendency for users to be impulsive, get 'caught up' in a conversation and share something without thinking of the consequences. As always, it is important you talk to your child about the risks of sharing personal information online. Make your child aware that any broadcasts they make shouldn't feature visual signifiers that might reveal personal information about them (such as their location, social media usernames, or school).

Similarly to other social media platforms, YouNow does not require a user to register in order to view content on its website. Therefore children should be made aware that anyone could be watching the videos they broadcast.

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Inappropriate content

The objective for many broadcasters is to develop a following and rise up the leader board. To achieve this, broadcasters may often film themselves behaving in increasingly daring or inappropriate ways. - for example taking off a piece of clothing whilst broadcasting using the truth or dare hashtag (#truthordare). This can often be encouraged by users watching via the chat function. It is advised that you have open conversations with your child about the content of their videos and the impact of their digital footprint. In addition, it is important to reinforce that they should not feel pressurised to do anything that makes them feel uncomfortable and if they see anything that upsets them, to come and tell you.

Broadcasters categorise live streams under particular hashtags to identify the subject of the video e.g. *#dance, #musicians*. Some of the hashtags used could be considered inappropriate for children to use. For example, a popular hashtag is *#sleepingsquad*, where broadcasters leave their webcam on overnight to film themselves sleeping.

Similar to other live streaming sites, YouNow does not filter or monitor broadcasts. Therefore there is a possibility that your child could view live video streams that are inappropriate for their age. It's a good idea to advise your child that if they do view something which upsets them or makes them feel uncomfortable, they should 'Flag' or 'Report the user' (see below on how to do this), exit the broadcast and discuss with you what they have viewed.

Videos remain online

At the end of a broadcast, the video remains visible on a user's profile for 3 days, or is permanent if it the most recent broadcast by that user. However, users have the option to delete any broadcast, at any time, on their profile by going to User profile > **Broadcasts**.

It is important to make your child aware that it can be difficult to keep ownership or control of a video once they have posted it on the internet. Other people can easily take a screen shot (photo of the screen) or record their broadcasts and then share them on other platforms. With live broadcasting it is easy to act in a spontaneous way, but these moments can be easily captured and reposted without your child's knowledge. It can then become difficult to remove every copy online.

Links to inappropriate or phishing websites.

Within chats, some users may share URLs (website addresses) that link to Phishing websites. These are fake websites created by criminals in order to gain access to people's personal data. They often appear identical to real websites, such as online banking sites. On clicking the link, the user is directed to the fake website and prompted to enter their log-in details or other personal information. The criminal then has their details and is able to access their account. Advise your child not to click on these links. They should use the 'flagging' system (see below) to report a user posting these links.

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Talking to unknown users

If your child uses YouNow, talk to them about the people they are interacting with. Whilst it may be fun for your child to chat to new people, they should be mindful that it is easy for others to misrepresent themselves online.

It is always advisable that you speak to your child about their 'online friends'. Users on YouNow may try to gain the attention and trust of your child through becoming their fan and giving them praise, likes and virtual gifts. If a user links their YouNow account to their other social media profiles it is very easy for them to move to other more private social media services with other users who they have met on YouNow.

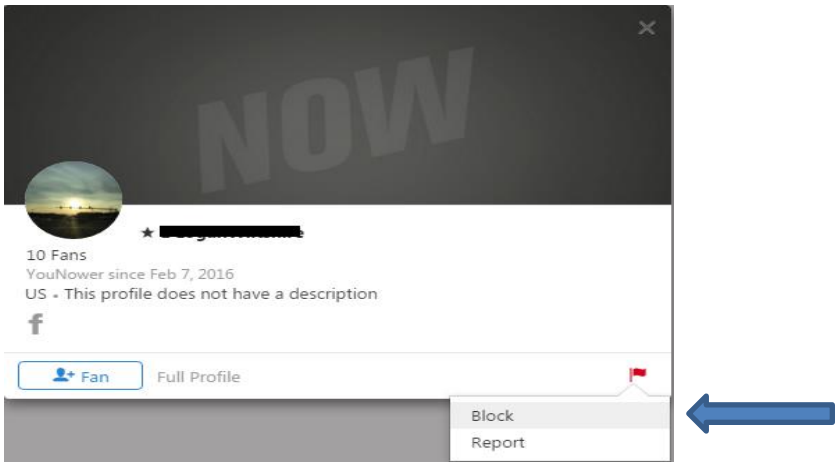
Even if your child does not post details of their other social media accounts on YouNow, it is common for users to ask for this information in the public chat. We would recommend you have a discussion with your child about why someone might want to add them on multiple social media platforms (such as Facebook or Instagram). Doing so means that they are likely to have more access to information, photographs and private communication opportunities.

We recommend that any online chat with unknown users remains in 'public places' where other people are able to see their conversations. However, if a child does go to a private chat service with someone they have met online they should be very careful not to reveal any information that could help the user identify them, share any images/ videos they wouldn't want their family and friends to see, or agree to meet them face to face.

Blocking, flagging and reporting

How to block a user

Your child can block other users from contacting them in broadcasts and on their profile pages. To block a user click on their **username >** navigate to the **flag icon >** select **block.**



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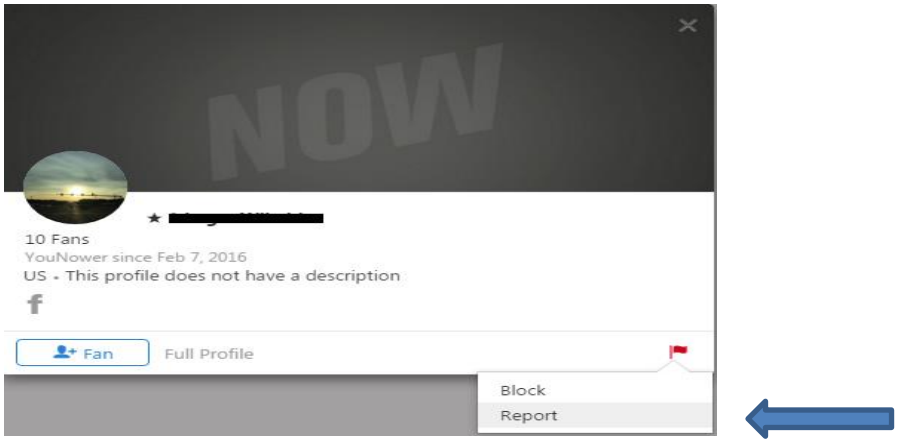
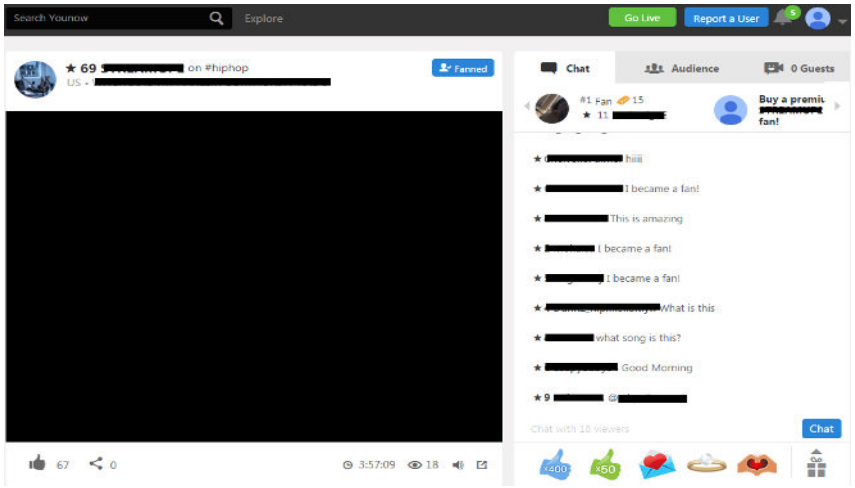
How to flag a user

If your child encounters inappropriate content they can 'Flag' another user. This refers the content to a live moderator who will review the situation and take appropriate action. To flag a user click on their **username >** navigate to the **flag icon >** select **report.**



How to contact a moderator

A more detailed report requesting a moderator's attention can be sent in real time by using the 'Contact mod' form on the YouNow website. To do this, click the **Report a user button** in the upper right hand corner of the page. You will then be asked to provide details via a contact form.



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How to delete an account

Users log in into their YouNow account through an existing Facebook, Instagram, Google or Twitter account. In order to deactivate your child's account you will need to know which account they use to access YouNow, their email address or username, and password. As always, it's a good idea to discuss with your child the reasons why you feel it isn't appropriate for them to have an account and involve them in the process of deleting it.

On the YouNow website, hover over the dropdown menu in the upper-right-hand corner of the page (profile photo icon) and select **Settings** > Navigate to **Privacy** > select **Terminate my account**.

Reporting abuse

If you have any concerns about grooming, sexual abuse or exploitation on YouNow or on any online app or site, report to CEOP (the National Crime Agency's Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command) at www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre.

Further advice and support for parents and cares is available at www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents.

NB: We endeavour to keep our parents guides as up-to-date as possible, however due to the changing nature of social media, the information and advice in this guide may well date over time. Information is correct as of February 2016.

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