



## Location Services Safety Tips

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A growing number of location-based tracking applications available for smartphones and other devices make it easier than ever for you to show your friends and family where you are in real time. You can do a single “check in” at a restaurant or set your phone to update where you are as you move from location to location. Before letting your teens use location services, teach them safe practices to avoid giving out more information than you’d like.



### What are location services?

Location services are applications, websites or products that identify the location of the user, for private use or to broadcast to others. A variety of services let consumers broadcast their locations publicly, often from mobile phones. Some programs, such as the popular Foursquare, let people check in at specific locations. Others, like Google Latitude, let them continuously broadcast their movements in real time. A third method of showing your location is geotagging, used by websites like Flickr, to let consumers match photos to a location on a map. Location services may also use the information to send tailored advertisements to the person.

### What are some potential risks in using location services?

Weak privacy controls may let people other than your trusted friends and family see where you are. This may leave you or your family and friends vulnerable to things like stalking or other unwanted activities.

### Questions to ask before using location services

We do not recommend that children under thirteen use location services. Young children do not need to share their location with anybody. If your teens want to use location services, ask yourself these questions before allowing them to:

**Do I know what my teens are doing?** Talk to them about their habits, and check the settings on their phones. Are they using location services? Which ones? Do they know safe online practices? Review their privacy settings with them.



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**Are the websites age-appropriate?** Some geolocation websites don't allow children under a certain age, such as 13 or 18, to join. Look at the site to ensure that your teen meets the site's age requirement, and see if you yourself are comfortable with the site.

**Are the privacy settings strict enough?** By default, some geolocation services let non-friends monitor an individual's activity. For example, the default on Foursquare will show even non-friends where individuals are, if both parties check in to the same place. Make sure to check you and your teen's settings.

**Who can see where photos and videos were taken?** Many photo and video applications let you choose who can see your geotagged photos and videos. For example, with Flickr, you can manage this by changing the location privacy setting for your photos or by creating a geofence (a way to make certain geolocations such as you home or school, more private). For more information, see our [Flickr Safety Guide](http://safely.yahoo.com/yahoo-products/flickr-safety-guide-2/) (<http://safely.yahoo.com/yahoo-products/flickr-safety-guide-2/>).

**Where are my teens checking in?** Checking in to personal places, like your home, your friend's house, or a church may be an unsafe way of letting strangers know information you should keep private.

**How specific are the broadcasts?** Location-based services that track you as you change locations can let you narrow or widen how specific your location is. Some services let you manage your setting so that it shows only the city, not the address, of the lemonade stand down the street.

**Do my teens know who they're checking in with?** Check out your teens' friends list, and ask them if they know everyone that they are broadcasting to. Make sure they know these friends in real life.

**Can other people broadcast my teen's location?** Some sites let consumers show their location and the location of their friends. Check your teen's settings to see if friends can show where your teen is.

**Are updates linked to other accounts?** If updates on one social network are linked to a public account on another, your teen may be publishing to a larger audience than you think. Check each account's privacy settings to make sure all linked accounts are visible only to friends.

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