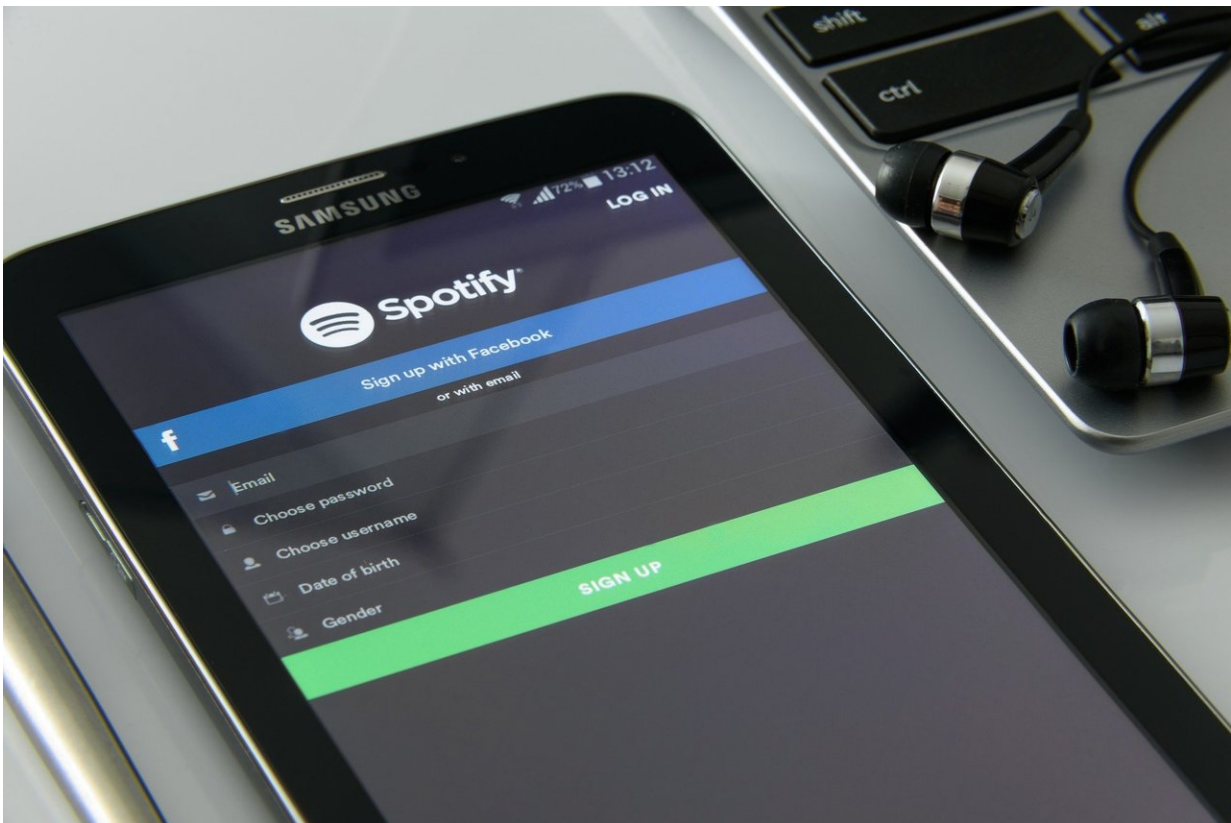


Spotify launches standalone music app for kids

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Spotify wants to hook your kids on music at an early age. And the Swedish company is doing so by launching a tailored Spotify Kids app on Wednesday, initially in beta and only in Ireland. Though make no

mistake, Spotify has designs on spreading the service to other global markets, including the U.S.

No timetable was given.

The new iOS and Android app, targeted to kids as young as 3 on up to approaching the teenage years, will be populated with just around 6,000 pieces of content curated by "expert" human editors, mostly music but also age-appropriate stories.

The number of tracks is expected to grow but for now represents a teeny-tiny subset of material when you consider Spotify has more than 50 million tracks in its catalog. But the kid-approved content does include such name artists as Taylor Swift, Ariana Grande, Ed Sheeran and Bruno Mars, as well as partners such as Disney, Nickelodeon, Discovery Kids and Hasbro. Only sanitized versions of such performer's songs will be in the mix.

Spotify says the product is the output of two years of research. Along the way, Spotify consulted with child advocacy groups.

This "playground of sound," as Spotify describes it, will come at no extra cost to subscribers under Spotify's Premium Family plan, currently \$14.99 in both the U.S. and Ireland, for up to six [family members](#) living under the same roof.

Maintaining privacy

Spotify stressed that the app is ad-free, complies with European and U.S. privacy regulations and that the company would not be sharing or selling data to third parties for advertising purposes. The company says it does share with companies that may help the app function on a daily basis. And it could share with law enforcement as well if asked.

Spotify adds that it collects encrypted data related to what's playing to help personalize the experience for the listener; parents can request that such data be deleted.

During sign-up, parents must give their consent and, through parental controls, can determine when the kid can listen. Entering the child's birth date is also optional. If parents choose to do so, the kid will get an acknowledgment on the day.

For now, though, Mom and Dad cannot choose the artists within the app that the kids can listen to or not; that's coming later. Meanwhile, the kids themselves can choose among a dozen customized characters or avatars, the only element within the experience they can change on their own.

Each market will have 80 premade playlists, some tailored to locals, thus playlists out of the gate are titled Irish Lads and Top Hits Ireland.

The only playlist that can be customized (and accessed offline) is a collection of songs the kid picks as favorites. Kids who can read and write will be able to search for tunes within the app; obviously, caregivers can also type in the names of songs or artists who are among the approved handpicked catalog.

One thing parents cannot do initially is add any of the songs they approve of in the larger Spotify universe to the kids' app, though such a feature is on the road map. If you're listening as a family a parent can toggle back and forth from their own Spotify app to the kid's version.

And, no, parents can't remotely peek in on the session the kids are listening to, though they can turn off access to the app remotely.

Finding the right content by age

Given such a broad age range, Spotify has established two separate experiences parents can pick for their kids, though the available content is the same for both. A tab for younger children surfaces nursery rhymes, lullabies and bedtime stories and includes simpler shapes, softer colors and easily recognizable symbols. Older kids are exposed to brighter colors, more dynamic imagery and age-appropriate pop music.

Though I haven't been able to test the app at this early stage, I think as a parent I'd like to see even more granular age controls, given the wide range in maturity levels among kids.

Playlists will generally span a variety of content categories, including Movies & TV, Top Hits, and Seasonal.

One playlist for the smaller children is called "Silly Songs for Kids" with such selections as "Fruit Salad" from The Wiggles, "Hakuna Matata" from "The Lion King" cast members, and "Mr Butt" from Regurgitator's Pogogo Show.

A "Girl Power" playlist for older kids includes "High Horse" from Kacey Musgraves or "Man! I Feel Like a Woman!" from Shania Twain.

Spotify now reports 248 million active monthly users and 113 million subscribers. Through Spotify Kids, the company is counting on the next generation to make those numbers swell.

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