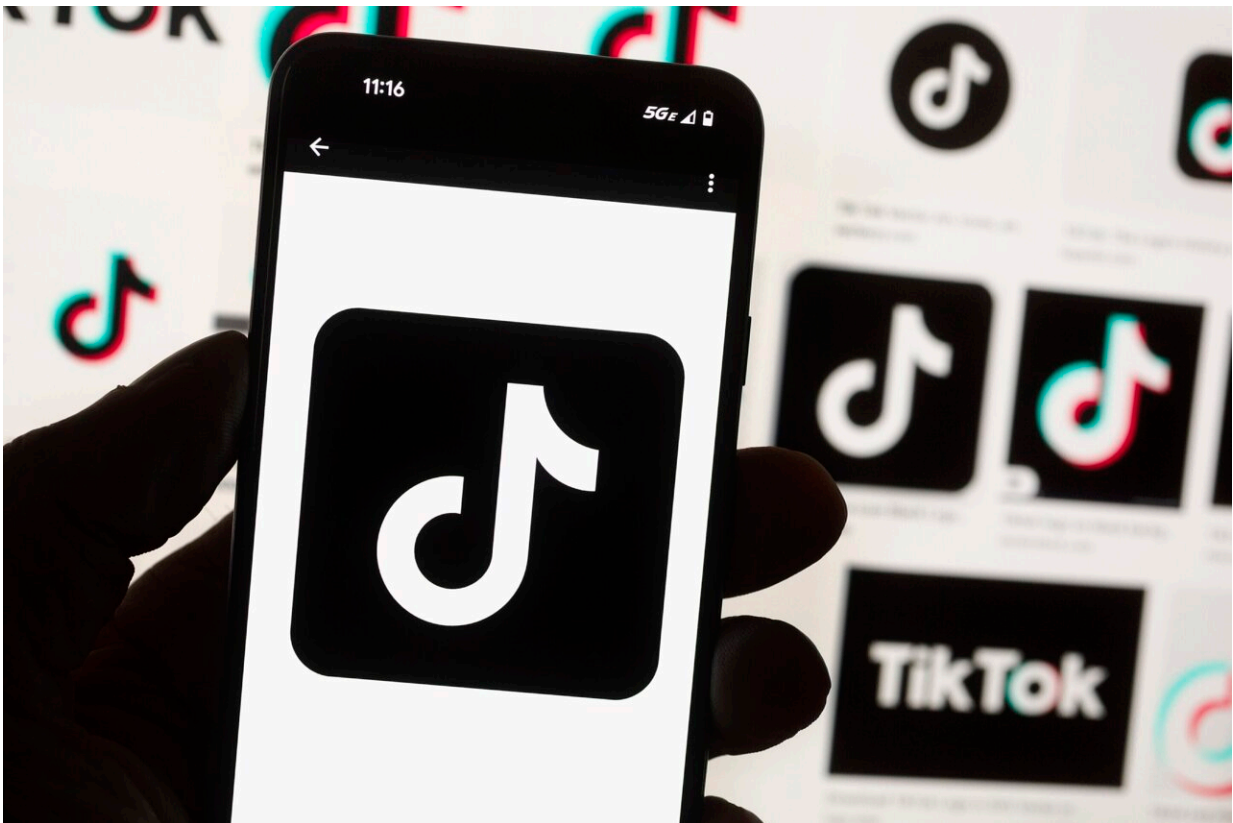


TikTok sets new default time limits for minors

March 1 2023, by Michelle Chapman



The TikTok logo is seen on a cellphone on Oct. 14, 2022, in Boston. TikTok says every account held by a user under the age of 18 will automatically be set to a 60-minute daily screen time limit in the coming weeks amid growing concerns about the app's security. Credit: AP Photo/Michael Dwyer, File

TikTok said Wednesday that every account held by a user under the age

of 18 will have a default 60-minute daily screen time limit in the coming weeks. The changes arrive during a period in which there are growing concerns among different governments about the app's security and ability to alter its algorithm to push certain posts.

The update also mirrors gaming rules imposed on minors in China, where TikTok's parent company ByteDance was formerly based. ByteDance now says it has no headquarters because it is a global business and that instead it has leaders in Singapore, New York and elsewhere managing its business. In 2021, Chinese authorities issued new rules that let minors play online games for only an hour a day and only on Fridays, weekends and public holidays—an effort to curb internet addiction.

In the U.S., families have struggled with limiting the amount of time their children spend on the Chinese-owned video sharing app. According to the Pew Research Center, about two-thirds of Americans teens use TikTok.

Cormac Keenan, head of trust and safety at TikTok, said in a blog post Wednesday that when the 60-minute limit is reached, minors will be prompted to enter a passcode and make an "active decision" to keep watching. For accounts where the user is under the age of 13, a parent or guardian will have to set or enter an existing passcode to allow 30 minutes of extra viewing time once the initial 60-minute limit is reached.

TikTok said it came up with the 60-minute threshold by consulting academic research and experts from the Digital Wellness Lab at Boston Children's Hospital.

There have long been concerns about what minors are exposed to on social media and the potential harm it might do. A [report released](#) late last year suggested that TikTok's algorithms are promoting videos about

self-harm and eating disorders to vulnerable teens. Instagram, which is owned by Facebook parent Meta, has also faced similar accusations.

Social media algorithms work by identifying topics and content of interest to a user, who is then sent more of the same as a way to maximize their time on the site. But social media critics say the same algorithms that promote content about a particular sports team, hobby or dance craze can send users down a rabbit hole of harmful content.

TikTok also said Wednesday that it will also begin prompting teens to set a daily screen time limit if they opt out of the 60-minute default. The company will send weekly inbox notifications to teen accounts with a screen time recap.

Some of TikTok's existing safety features for teen accounts include having accounts set to private by default for those between the ages of 13 and 15 and providing direct messaging availability only to those accounts where the user is 16 or older.

TikTok announced a number of changes for all users, including the ability to set customized screen time limits for each day of the week and allowing users to set a schedule to mute notifications. The company is also launching a sleep reminder to help people plan when they want to be offline at night. For the sleep feature, users will be able to set a time and when the time arrives, a pop-up will remind the user that it's time to log off.

Outside of exorbitant use by some minors, there is growing concern about the app around the world. The European Parliament, the European Commission and the EU Council [have banned TikTok from being installed on official devices.](#)

That follows similar actions taken by the U.S. federal government,

Congress and more than half of the 50 U.S. states. Canada has also banned it from government devices.

House Republicans are pushing a bill that will give President Joe Biden the ability to ban the app nationwide, which has faced opposition from some civil liberties organizations who argue such a move would be unconstitutional. The legislation passed the Republican-controlled House Foreign Affairs Committee on Wednesday along party lines. The bill must still get a vote on the floor of the House and Senate.

© 2023 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: TikTok sets new default time limits for minors (2023, March 1) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2023-03-tiktok-default-limits-minors.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.