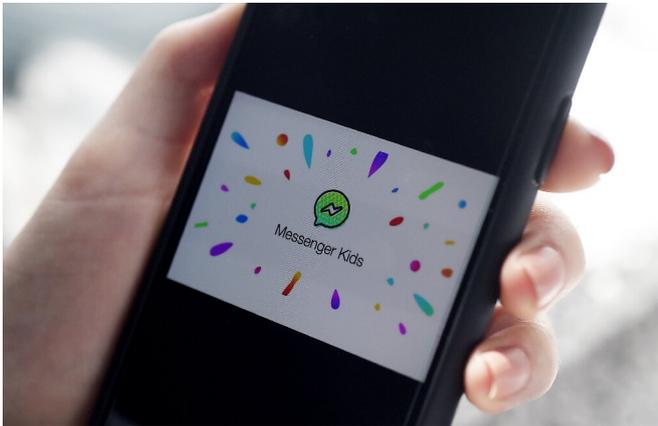


Facebook rolls out Messenger Kids to 70 new countries

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Facebook's Messenger Kids app aimed at children under 13 who are not authorized to have their own accounts is rolling out to 70 new countries

Facebook on Wednesday rolled out its Messenger Kids application to 70 new countries, saying it can help children deal with the challenges of distance learning and isolation during the virus lockdowns.

The app, which is aimed at [children](#) under 13, will also be adding a "supervised friending" feature enabling parents to approve new connections, starting in the United States and gradually rolling out to other countries.

"With schools closed and people physically distancing, parents are turning to technology more than ever to help their kids connect with friends and family," Facebook's global head of safety Antigone Davis said in a blog post.

"Messenger Kids is a [video chat](#) and messaging app that helps kids connect with friends and family in a fun, parent-controlled space. Today, we're starting to roll out Messenger Kids to more countries and we're adding new choices for parents to connect kids with friends."

Messenger Kids was launched in the United States in 2017 and expanded later to Canada and a handful of other countries, aiming at children too young for a Facebook account.

With the changes announced Wednesday, kids will be able to connect in groups to help facilitate learning, under parental supervision.

Parents in the US, Canada and Latin America can also allow their children to make their name and profile photo visible as part of the move to get more friends.

Kids will be able to initiate their own [friend](#) requests. Up to now these had to be initiated by the parents.

"Parents have told us they want to be able to give their kids more independence in managing their contact list while still maintaining parental supervision," Davis said.

"Previously, it was up to parents to invite and approve every contact for their child. Now with supervised friending, parents can choose to allow their kids to also accept, reject, add or remove contacts, while maintaining the ability to override any new contact approvals."

Some privacy activists have argued the app could be harmful to children by drawing them into online activity and potentially gathering data on them.

Facebook has argued that the app helps [parents](#) supervise their youngsters who would be using its platform without safeguards.

The new countries are in various regions of the world and include Afghanistan, Costa Rica, Indonesia and Tuvalu. No European countries are on the list.

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