Apps – Being in the Know

Ask.fm - a social networking site that gives users the opportunity to anonymously ask and answer controversial questions online.

Burnbook - Cyberbully made easy

Instagram - This hugely popular photo-sharing site is owned by Facebook, so you may be more familiar with it than with other photo-sharing apps. Users can add cool filters or create collages of their photos and share them across Facebook and other social media platforms. The app is rated 13+ and may be slightly tamer than Tumblr, but users can still find mature or inappropriate content and comments throughout the app (there is a way to flag inappropriate content for review). "Trolls" — or people making vicious, usually anonymous comments — are common. A user can change the settings to block their location or certain followers, but many users are casual about their settings, connecting with people they don't know well or at all.

Kik Messenger - Kik is a mobile app that people can use to text with friends at high speed and with more of a "face-to-face feel" than regular texting (users' profile pictures appear in a little bubble next to their text, and they can quickly text photos, sketches, or even pre-designed greeting cards to individuals or groups). The app is rated ages 17+, but there is no age verification so anyone can download it. Like some other instant messenger apps, Kik allows your teen to connect with others using just a username (rather than texting from her phone number). But it begs the question: Should teens be texting with people beyond their phone contacts?

Omegle - App store description: "Omegle is an app for meeting new friends. When you use Omegle, it picks another user at random and let you have a one-on-one chat with each other. Chats are completely anonymous, although there is nothing to stop you from revealing personal details if you choose to."

Poke - Poke is Facebook's app that, similar to Snapchat, promises that photos sent will "self-destruct" within seconds after they're received. While Poke isn't nearly as popular as Snapchat, it is still gaining young users who can use it for sexting. Also like Snapchat, the images sent via Poke can be saved or viewed with certain workarounds. The App store rates it ages 4+ (but it is connected to Facebook, which is a 13+ site).

Shots of Me - Justin Bieber has invested in this 12+ "selfie-only" photo-sharing app in part because he was attracted to its "anti-trolling" aspect; it does not have a comment section under photos posted on the app. Instead of a public comment area, the app has a direct-messaging feature where users can only send private messages to one another. The anti-trolling feature might also help ward off cyberbullying among teens who like to put meanness on display (but teens could still be nasty via private message). The app does show a user's location and how long ago a photo was added unless those features are managed in the app's settings. Shots of Me is currently available only for Apple devices. It's not the only "selfie-centered" photo-sharing app—another one called Frontback has a split screen that allows users to simultaneously share a regular photo and a selfie (think: a photo of the ocean and a selfie of the photographer sitting happily in a beach chair), and easily reveal their location.

Snapchat - Snapchat is an app that allows users to send photos and videos that disappear from view within 10 seconds after they're received. It's rated ages 12+. Some kids are using the app to send racy pics because they believe the images can't be saved and circulated. But it turns out that Snapchat pics don't completely disappear from a device, and users can take a screenshot before an image vanishes in the app. And while recent studies revealed that "sexting" (sending sexual messages and images, usually via text message) is not as popular as parents had feared, "disappearing photo" apps like Snapchat might embolden kids to send more explicit photos and texts than they would have before through traditional texting.

Tinder - Tinder's developers describe the app as "the fun way to connect with new and interesting people around you." But it's mainly used as a dating tool or an anonymous hook-up (read: one-night stand) locator by 20-somethings, college students, and even younger teens and tweens. (Yikes!) The app is rated ages 17+ but Tinder's privacy policy allows teens as young as 13 to register (the app connects with Facebook — which is also technically for ages 13+ — to pull in photos for users' Tinder profiles).

Tumblr - Many children and young teens are also active on this 17+ photo-sharing app. It can also be used for sharing videos and chatting. Common Sense Media says Tumblr is "too raunchy for tykes" because users can easily
access pornographic, violent, and inappropriate content. Common Sense also notes that users need to jump through hoops to set up privacy settings — and until then, all of a user's photo and content is public for all to see.

Vine-Vine is Twitter's mobile app that allows users to shoot and share short loops of video (6 seconds or less). It's rated 17+, but children and teens are still downloading it. As with any multimedia app, the content on Vine runs the gamut from naughty to nice. "With the most basic creative searching, kids can find nudity, sex, drug use, offensive language, hardcore sexuality, and more," Common Sense Media says in its review of the app. "While there are plenty of cute, fun videos, even adults might be shocked at some of the things they find."

Yik Yak-The producers of this app call it "the anonymous social wall for anything and everything."

Whisper-This 17+ app's motto is: "Share Secrets, Express Yourself, Meet New People." It has a similar feel to the now-defunct PostSecret app, which was discontinued shortly after its release because it filled up with abusive content. Whisper lets users set up anonymous accounts to make their messages or confessions overlap an image or graphic (similar to e-postcards), which other users can then "like," share, or comment on. While it allows for creative expression, it can also take overly personal content viral. The app also shows a user's location. Although the app is geared toward older teens and adults, younger children are finding their way to it.

Facebook and Twitter-Do all these new social media apps mean that Facebook and Twitter are in decline? A 2013 survey by Pew Internet found that U.S. teens have "waning enthusiasm" for Facebook — in part because their parents and other adults have taken over the domain and because their peers engage in too much "drama" on the site. But Facebook still remains the top social media site among U.S. teens, who say that their peers continue to stay on the site so they don't miss anything happening there. Your child may keep a profile on Facebook but be much more active on newer platforms. Meanwhile, Twitter use is rising among teens. The 2013 Pew survey found that 24 percent of online teens are on Twitter, up from 16 percent in 2011. Twitter is more popular among African American teens than Hispanic and white teens.

Jailbreak Programs and Icon-Hiding Apps-These aren't social media apps — and they're confusing — but you should still know about them (especially if you have a tech-savvy teen or have had to take away your child's mobile phone privileges because of abuse). "Jailbreaking" an iPhone or "rooting" an Android phone basically means hacking your own device to lift restrictions on allowable applications — meaning, the user can then download third-party apps not sold in the App Store or Google Play store (read: sometimes sketchy apps). It's hard to say how many teens have jailbroken their mobile device, but instructions on how to do it are readily available on the Internet. Cydia is a popular application for jailbroken phones, and it's a gateway to other apps called Poof and SBSettings which are icon-hiding apps. These apps are supposedly intended to help users clear the clutter from their screens, but some young people are using them to hide questionable apps and violent games from their parents. Be aware of what the Cydia app icons look like so you know if you're getting a complete picture of your teen's app use.

Internet Filter/Accountability Software
Covenant Eyes accountability software (Ben Davidson)
Open DNS filter for your router, free
Accountable to You web browser
Circle filter ($99)
K-9 web browser, free (Ben Davidson)
BSecure (John and Angie Pacini)
Norton Family Safety (EJ and Stephanie Herron)
Open DNS (Seth Kempf)
Moment App

Resources
Preparing Your Son for Every Man’s Battle by Arterburn and Stoeker (a "gleaner")
DesiringGod.org, thegospelcoalition.org, challis.com (all highly recommended)
God Made All of Me by Holcomb (appropriate view of body and inappropriate touching)
Learning about Sex Series (6 books)
God’s Design for Sex Series (4 books)

Sources used:
http://www.techguide4parents.com/apps-and-websites-parents-should-know-about/