

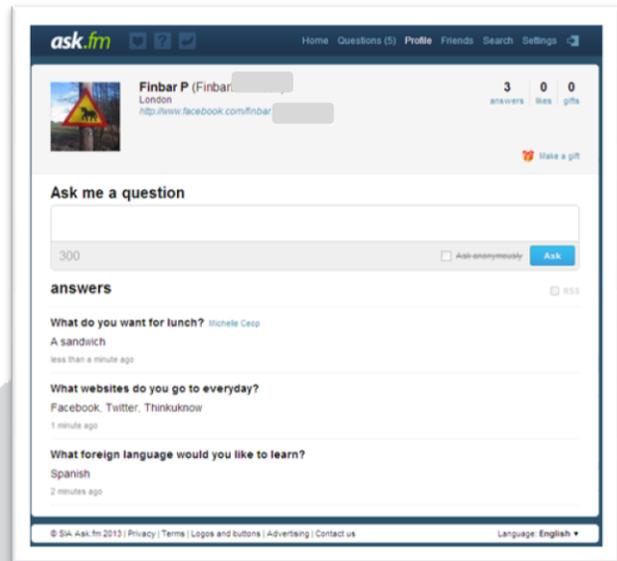
Thinkuknow about... Ask.fm?

A guide from CEOP's Thinkuknow education programme

What is it?

Ask.fm is an online social networking, question and answer site. To register with the site you can set up an account with Ask.fm or you can sign up using an existing social networking account e.g. Facebook and Twitter.

Users can respond to questions by text or by posting video responses. It is possible for people without, as well as those with an account, to ask users questions anonymously i.e. without revealing who they are. The default option for asking questions is to do so anonymously.



Does Ask.fm have any age restrictions?

Ask.fm doesn't ask for any age verification in its sign-up but it does give users the option to add their date of birth to their profile, although a user's age is not displayed on their profile. As part of its Terms of Service, to which all users must comply, it states that users of Ask.fm must be 13 years old or over.

More often than not the anonymous nature of Ask.fm leads to exchanges of hate speech and cyberbullying. As such we would not recommend it as an appropriate online environment for children whether they are over 13 or not.

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) is a piece of American legislation that states that websites allowing children under 13 years old or collect information from children, must comply with a number of procedures to protect that child's privacy including asking for parental permission and allowing parents access to the information collected about their child etc. This is why many popular social networking sites, e.g. Facebook and Youtube, have a minimum user age of 13 (often advising parental guidance of use up to 18), so that they are not required to comply with COPPA. This piece of legislation is not enforceable in the UK.

We would recommend that sites such as Youtube and Facebook are not appropriate spaces for primary school children as the social networks are mainly inhabited by adults, and in addition to the risks about inappropriate contact and potential grooming, the content and conversations had on such sites are usually unsuitable for younger users. Ultimately the decision as to whether or not a child under 13 is on Twitter, Facebook and similar sites lies with the child's parent or carer, who hopefully is well informed of the risks and the level of guidance that need to provide to their child should they permit this. We know that more parents and carers are not aware of this and we have created a website with practical information and advice about online safety for them, including films and factsheets they can share with other parents/carers: www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents.

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How do privacy settings work on Ask.fm?

The privacy settings on Ask.fm are limited. All profiles on Ask.fm are open and fully searchable on search engines such as Google and Bing.

It is possible to control whether or not you can be asked questions anonymously (the default is to allow anonymous questions). The anonymous asking of questions often leads to cyberbullying and exchanges of hate speech so it is recommended that this feature be turned off.

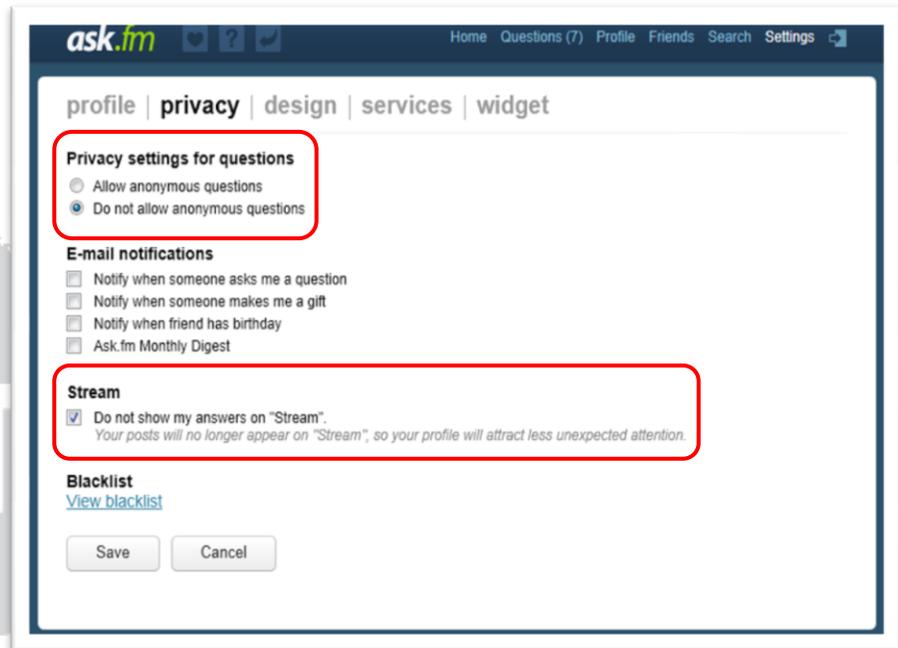
To stop receiving anonymous questions, when logged in to Ask.fm click on 'Settings' in the top right-hand corner of the page. Then choose 'Privacy' from the menu that appears at the top.

Under the heading 'Privacy settings for questions' select the option 'Do not allow anonymous questions' and then save your settings.

Ask.fm has a 'Stream' where recently posed questions and answers are highlighted and shared with the Ask.fm community. It is also a good idea to opt out of the 'Stream' to reduce the likelihood of receiving any unwanted contact, cyberbullying or hate speech being posted on your profile.

You can choose to not be included in Ask.fm's 'Stream' in the 'Privacy' settings area by checking the 'Do not show my answers on "Stream"' box.

On the 'Privacy' settings page it is also possible to view the list of people that you have blocked.

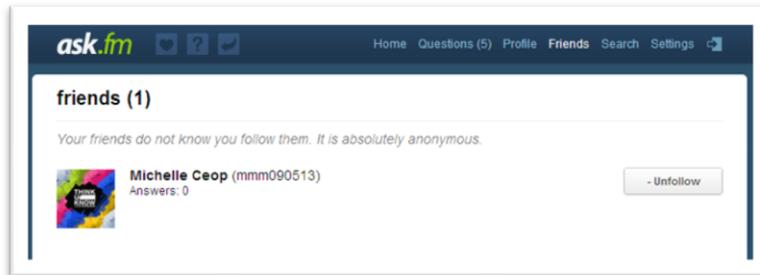


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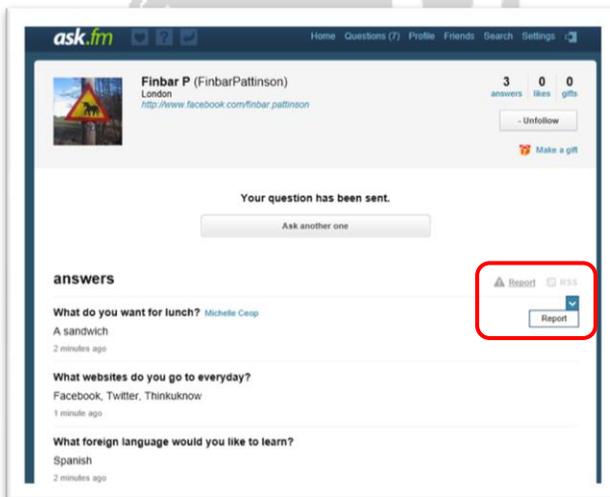
How do I know who is following me on Ask.fm?

Ask.fm operates a similar friend system to Twitter in that you can choose to follow someone. However unlike Twitter, Ask.fm users can never find out who is following them, only their overall number of followers.

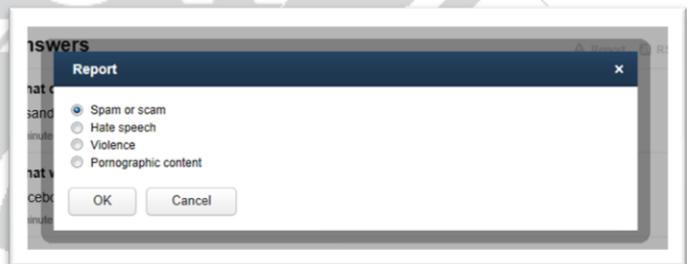


How do I report a post or profile to Ask.fm?

It is possible to report a profile or a question and answer post to Ask.fm for removal if you think that it is offensive. Each user profile has a 'Report' button at the top, as does each question and answer post.



When reporting content or a profile to Ask.fm you will be asked to give a reason for your report: 'Spam or scam', 'Hate speech', 'Violence' or 'Pornographic content'



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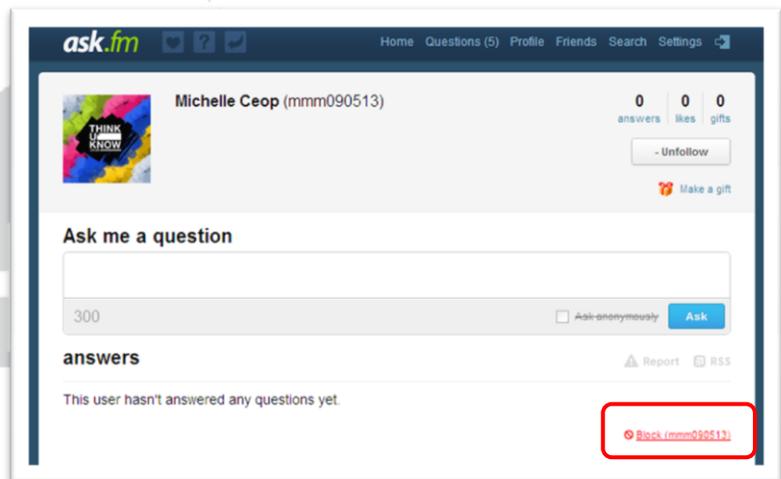
How do I block someone on Ask.fm?

In most cases you do not know the identity of the person who is asking you a question. It is still possible to block someone from asking you a question even if you don't know who they are.

On the bottom right-hand side of each question is a 'Block' button. If you choose to block someone you are asked to give a reason: 'I just don't want to receive questions from this user, 'Rude or harassing questions' or 'Spam'.

Once you have a blocked a user they will no longer be able to ask you questions or like your answers. Blocked users appear in a 'Blacklist' in your privacy settings.

It is important to note that even if you have blocked a user they are still able to follow you and view the answers that you post.



How can I disable my Ask.fm account?

If you want to leave Ask.fm you can disable your account, meaning that nobody will be able to find or visit your Ask.fm profile through search engines or Ask.fm's own community search.

When logged in to Ask.fm click on 'Settings' in the top right-hand corner of the page. Then choose 'Profile' from the menu that appears at the top. In the bottom right-hand corner of the page is a link to the 'Disable account' page. Once you have confirmed that you want to disable your account your ask.fm profile will be closed and no longer searchable.



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How do I unconnect my Ask.fm account from my Facebook account?

Facebook and Ask.fm are integrated through the Ask.fm Facebook app and it is also possible to sign up to Ask.fm using your existing Facebook account. If you have connected your Ask.fm and Facebook accounts this means that questions and answers posted on your Ask.fm profile are posted on to your Facebook profile.

To no longer use your Facebook details to sign in to Ask.fm you will need to close your Ask.fm account but you can remove the Ask.fm app from your Facebook profile. When logged in to Facebook click on the Padlock icon in the top right-hand corner of the page and choose 'See more settings' from the menu.



Select 'Apps' from the navigation bar on the right-hand side of the page. You will then see a list of apps that are connected to your Facebook profile. Next to each app is a 'X'. Click on the 'X' to remove the app.

Following this a window will appear asking you to confirm removal of the app, you are also given the option to delete all your Ask.fm activity from your Facebook profile. It is advisable to do if you have concerns about or have been upset by content questions and answers posted on to your profile. Click the 'Remove' button to confirm these changes.

