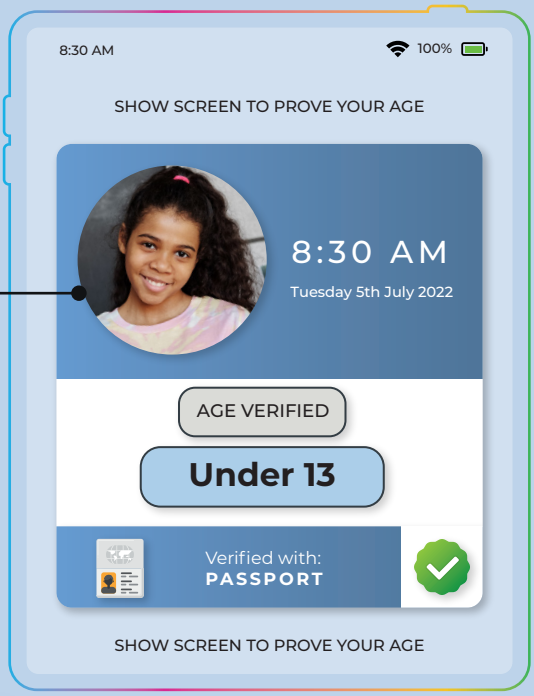
WHAT IS YOTI

Your guide to Yoti and Age Verification

INEQE SAFEGUARDING GROUP
oursaferschools.co.uk
July 2022
©IneqeGroupLTD2022

Wrinkles?..... ❌
Grey Hair?..... ❌
Verified?..... ✅



YOTI What is YOTI?

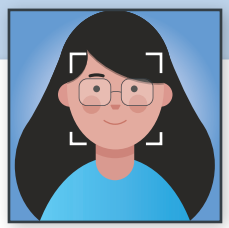
Yoti is a digital ID app that enables users to prove their identity to businesses and digital services. Alongside providing a way for people to prove their identity in places like cinemas and supermarkets, Yoti also provides age verification. Yubo and Instagram have both announced they will be partnering with Yoti.

According to Yoti, their age estimation system can

> *"affectively estimate the ages of **6 to 12-year-old** users **within 1.3 years** and those **between 13 and 19 within 1.5 years**"*

and is 98.9% effective.

HOW? How Does it Work?



Yoti uses facial analysis technology to verify age by asking the user to take a photo 'in real-time' and uses algorithms to verify that it is a photo of a real person. The algorithms read the pixels of the image for age identifiers (such as wrinkles, grey hair), but does not 'recognise' the image as a face.

Yoti's facial age estimation is built in accordance with the *'privacy by design' principle in the UK (GDPR)* and the photo is deleted from the system once analysed.

WHY? Why Use Age Verification?

There are several potential reasons why this type of age verification is important:

- To cut down on fake accounts.
- To ensure young people are communicating with people in the same age range.
- To prevent adults posing as someone underage.
- To protect young people from age inappropriate and harmful content.

On Instagram, the platform will be using Yoti to "provide appropriate experiences to different age groups, specifically teens."

WHAT? What are the Risks?

USERS BY-PASSING THE SYSTEM

An adult/abuser could ask or demand that a young person in their control poses for the photograph, with or without them knowing why, and then continue on to use the app themselves. Likewise, a child who is under an app or platform's age limit could ask someone older to take the photo, like a sibling or older friend.

A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY

Even if an age verification system like Yoti works with almost perfect accuracy, we strongly recommend to never leave the responsibility of safeguarding to technology. There are always people seeking workarounds to 'beat' the system and there is always room for error when it comes to AI or technology.

Young people may be misled into thinking that because another user is on the app, they have been verified as to their identity. However, they haven't been verified via ID – only facially analysed to verify their age – and, as discussed, there is potential for users to by-pass or abuse the system.

RACIAL BIASES AND FACIAL DIFFERENCES

Our online safety researchers were unable to find information by Yoti on whether they included faces of people with disabilities/ conditions that may cause facial differences or cranio-facial disorders, such as Treacher-Collin syndrome, Down Syndrome etc. Whilst racial bias is apparently limited, there is no further information on this.

TIPS Our Top Tips

Talk about where your young person is spending their time online. Just as you talk about what they're up to offline, get into the habit of discussing the online world they exist in too. You don't have to mention the app's name, but you can ask about social media and friend-finding apps in general. Talk about what social media you use and what you like and dislike about it/them – keep it an equal conversation in which you're both sharing.

Discuss modern day tech and developments. Ask the young person in your care how they feel about things like AI facial recognition and verification. This will also be a good opportunity to talk about the difference between the two and what it means when someone on an app or platform that has gone through age recognition, rather than identity verification.

Ask about how they make friends online. Almost all of us, no matter our age, will have made friends, or at least acquaintances online. For young people, building friendships with people online is extremely common. You may know their 'offline' friends well but have no idea who their online friends are. However, it's important not to get panicked or strict when it comes to online friendships – again, this is a perfectly normal part of the life of young people in today's digital world.

Learn about safety settings together. Many of us know that privacy and safety settings are available but sometimes don't 'get round' to enabling them due to busy lives or concerns about not understanding.