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A Facebook hoax from a year ago has resurfaced, claiming that the Talking Angela animated virtual cat app is a front for a paedophile ring collecting data on children, but this couldn't be further from the truth.Security firm Sophos Security, famed for detecting new types of malware attacks, thoroughly checked Talking Angela last year and found no problems with it, yet rumours continue to hound the app.However, if you're still concerned, we've gone through the various points of concern.What is Talking Angela?Talking Angela, launched in 2012, is a cute interactive iOS and Android app for smartphones and tablets, where users can interact with an animated Parisian cat by talking to it using text or microphone, and stroking or poking it by tapping and swiping the screen.The app is one in a series of Talking Friends animal apps by Outfit7 targeted at children and adults, which include a talking tom cat (the first original app launched in 2010 that is very similar to Talking Angela but a bit simpler), a talking parrot, giraffe, bird, dog and even a talking Father Christmas.The apps have been downloaded 1.2 billion times all over the world and Disney/Hollywood Records has a partnership with Outfit7 for YouTube videos featuring Angela and Tom singing synthesizer-heavy country songs. Text Chat Mode: It's only a Chat-BotUsers can say words into the device's microphone, which Angela will repeat back to you in a squeaky voice. You can buy the cat presents like clothes and other items using virtual coins paid for using in-app purchases, and there is a text chat option in the app too. Talking Angela Text Chat Mode However the developer actually doesn't mean for children to be using the text chat option. When users first launch the app, they are asked if they would like to switch on the Child Mode, which means that the child can only interact with the cat by speaking into the microphone or pressing buttons on the screen.The app has a "chat-bot" programmed into it to give responses to questions or statements asked to it.We've tested the app, and it's clear that the chat-bot's answers are programmed to respond with a statement somewhere in the general ball park of what the user actually asked, as Talking Angela often repeats herself and is sometimes not directly answering the question at all.For example, we asked: "Will you be my friend?"Talking Angela replies: "Of course we can be friends. I like you."We typed in, "I like to paint." Talking Angela's response: "Mary-Ann, do you like animals?"We then said: "I'm lonely."Talking Angela asks why we are lonely, and when we answer, "I have no friends", the app replies, "It is rainy in Paris so I can't go to the museums." When we say, "I'm lonely" again, the app responds, "Let's talk about friends. Who is your best friend?"The app also allows the user to answer quizzes. We played the "Valentine's Day" quiz, where Angela asks science-based trivia questions, such as "When you see someone you love, do your pupils get smaller? True or False".In-app Purchases & Camera Mode Talking Angela Child Mode - the developer practically teaches the child how to turn it off To encourage in-app purchases, the app periodically gives the user free virtual coins to spend on items and clothes for Angela. If the child runs out of virtual coins, the app puts up a picture advising the child to give the device to a parent to unlock and pay for the virtual coins.The problem though, is that the child can easily find the setting to switch the Child Mode option off by themselves, by clicking the smiley face icon right above Angela on the screen and sliding the option off, as explained by the picture put up by the app.Therein lies the danger that the child could wrack up a large iTunes bill by purchasing lots of virtual coins, so the developer really should sort this out, perhaps by putting the setting in a different menu, and definitely taking away the diagram, which all but acts as a "how-to" for a child wanting to turn the mode off.When it comes to the camera mode, it is possible to take photos with the app, but the only option you have is to share the images on Facebook or Twitter. The pictures don't go anywhere, they just get stored on the device.The child can also make expressions at the camera that the app can detect and have the cat respond to, but for one, the function doesn't work that well, and again, nothing is being recorded. Old Cat Tale Does an app called "Talking Angela" ask kids personal questions and take pictures of their faces? No, that's not true: This claim is resurfacing after having been debunked as far back as 2014. The app-based uses an animated cat to mimic the user's speech and gestures and game does not ask children questions and does not take photos of the user's face. In 2014 it had a text-chat version for adults that was accessible to children if the game was not turned to "child mode." That feature was removed from the app as of 2019. The claim appeared as a Facebook post (archived here) on January 12, 2022. It opened: WARNING TO ALL PARENTS WITH CHILDREN THAT HAVE ANY ELECTRONIC DEVICES , EX : IPOD,TABLETS ETC .... This is what the post looked like on Facebook at the time of writing: (Source: Facebook screenshot taken on Fri Jan 28 23:24:24 2022 UTC) The full message read: WARNING TO ALL PARENTS WITH CHILDREN THAT HAVE ANY ELECTRONIC DEVICES , EX : IPOD,TABLETS ETC .... THERE IS A SITE CALLED TALKING ANGELA , THIS SITE ASKS KIDS QUESTIONS LIKE : THERE NAMES , WHERE THEY GO TO SCHOOL AND ALSO TAKE PICTURES OF THEIR FACES BY PUSHING A HEART ON THE BOTTOM LEFT CORNER WITHOUT ANY NOTICES . PLEASE CHECK YOUR CHILDREN'S IPODS AND ALL TO MAKE SURE THEY DO NOT HAVE THIS APP !!! PLEASE PASS THIS MESSAGE ON TO YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS THAT HAVE KIDS !!!! The reference to an iPod shows how dated the claim is. While iPods are still available for sale, the iPod Classic was retired in 2014. Lead Stories downloaded the app on an iPhone on January 28, 2022. The only question the app asks is what year you were born. It then asks for microphone access and the game begins with an animated cat sitting at a cafe table. There are no questions asked by the cat. The point of the game is that the cute cat mimics the user. When the pink heart on the lower right of the corner is pressed, Angela is given a pink heart fortune cookie and an image of her pops up with various fortune texts that can be saved to the user's camera roll. It does not take a picture of the person playing the game. There is a movie-set camera at the top left of the screen that allows the user to talk; Angela will repeat the message in her high-pitched voice. Angela does not ask any questions. If the user is under 14 the app will only allow them to share the recording to their photos. For users over 14 there is an option to email the recording using their own account. The Guardian debunked the claim that the app was a front for a pedophile ring in a 2014 article titled, "What the Talking Angela app is really saying to your kids," and addressed the text-chat feature that seemed to be alarming parents: The point: children aren't meant to be using Talking Angela's text-chat feature, yet the app's developer hasn't taken any meaningful measures to prevent them from simply toggling the child mode off. There's not even the "swipe down with two fingers" or "write this sequence of numbers as figures" parental gate that's become common in children's apps in recent months. This feature is no longer available as of 2019, as a Politifact debunk reported. The description of Talking Angela on the company Outfit7 website says: Come join Talking Angela in Paris - the city of love, style and magic. There are so many surprises, you better sit down. ☺ Enjoy amazing gifts, pick the latest styles, and sip magical cocktails to experience special moments. And watch out for birds - you never know what might fly by. As of January 28, 2022, the app available on the iPhone states: This app is PRIVO certified. The PRIVO safe harbor seal indicates Outfit7 has established COPPA compliant privacy practices to protect your child's personal information. Our apps do not allow younger children to share their information. An article published in USAToday in 2014 had a quote from Outfit7 co-founder and CEO Samo Login, who said that the then-available text-chat option was run by chat bot software: 'It's quite easy to get the illusion you are talking to a real person, but it's physically impossible to have someone behind the app,' Login told USA TODAY Network. In response to the warnings on Facebook, Login said, 'These comments are so ridiculous.' See who is sharing it (it might even be your friends...) and leave the link in the comments.: Alexis Tereszcuk is a writer and fact checker at Lead Stories and an award-winning journalist who spent over a decade breaking hard news and celebrity scoop with RadarOnline and Us Weekly. As the Entertainment Editor, she investigated Hollywood stories and conducted interviews with A-list celebrities and reality stars. Alexis' crime reporting earned her spots as a contributor on the Nancy Grace show, CNN, Fox News and Entertainment Tonight, among others. Remember the "Momo challenge"? It stemmed from an unsettling ghoul-like figure known as "Momo" that reportedly appeared online and encouraged unsuspecting children to hurt themselves. Except it was a hoax — the "Momo challenge" isn't real. So we wondered when we saw a warning about another Internet-based threat. What appears to be a screenshot of a Facebook post was shared on the social media platform on May 7 encouraging parents to "take no chances." "Warning to all parents with children that have any electronics devices," the Facebook post says in all caps. "There is a site called Talking Angela, this site asks kids questions like: there (sic) names, where they go to school and also take pictures of their faces by pushing a heart on the bottom left corner without any notices. Please check your children's iPods and all to make sure they do not have this app!!! Please pass this message on to your friends and family members that have kids!!!!" This post was flagged as part of Facebook's efforts to combat false news and misinformation on its News Feed. (Read more about our partnership with Facebook.) We'll cut to the chase: As far as we can tell, the app doesn't take users' photos and Angela can't ask questions unless she's repeating back a question you asked her. The app once included a chat feature that let users text with Angela and she could ask questions there, but that no longer seems to be an option. Here's what we know. Talking Angela is an app from Outfit7. The company's website invites users to join Angela, a white cat with blue eyes, "in Paris — the city of love, style and magic." "There are so many surprises, you better sit down. ;)," the description says. "Enjoy amazing gifts, pick the latest styles, and sip magical cocktails to experience special moments. And watch out for birds — you never know what might fly by." Outfit7 didn't immediately respond to an email from PolitiFact asking about the Facebook post. But we downloaded the app to experience Talking Angela for ourselves. First, the app asks users for the year they were born and this writer confirmed that she is an adult. After allowing the app to access my microphone, Angela appears dressed in a blue, strapless dress. She's sitting at a cafe table, blinking and occasionally yawning. By touching the screen, I can make her giggle or reach for her tail with a shriek. Tap her nose and she sneezes. Because my microphone is enabled, Angela also repeats what I say. There's a button that directs users to YouTube and four buttons on the bottom of the screen that let users buy gifts for Angela or summons birds to fly across the screen. There is a pink heart, like the Facebook post says, though it's in the bottom right corner. Clicking on the heart brings a dog dressed as a waiter onto the screen and he presents Angela with a chocolate that she opens. A fortune appears on the screen and users have the option to save it to their phone's photos. ("Just because you don't have a prince, doesn't mean you're not a princess," one says.) Angela didn't ask me any questions unless she was repeating a question I asked her. But news coverage of the app in 2014 suggests parents then had valid reasons for concern. Back then there were rumors the app was a front for a pedohile ring. Writing for The Guardian, Stuart Dredge concluded that it was a hoax, but he noted that Outfit7 could improve the how children interact with the app. Talking Angela is for both adults and children but when Dredge wrote his story in 2014, there was a "child mode" setting (when we used the app, we couldn't find such a setting). "If you've read about Angela asking kids for their names, ages or engaging in banter about clothes-swapping parties, none of this can happen if Child Mode is on," he wrote. "The downside of this: it's far too easy to toggle it on and off." There was also a camera feature, he said in the article, "that encourages users to look into their device's camera and make specific gestures: nod, shake head, smile, yawn or stick your their tongue, so Angela can copy it." (This wasn't a feature when we used the app.) Lastly, Dredge wrote, when "child mode" is turned off, users can chat with Angela using a text box at the bottom of the screen. She asked him questions like, "How long have you been friends with your best friend?" and "I'm 18. How old are you?" When USA Today ran an article in 2014 about the pedophile ring hoax, Samo Login, Outfit7's cofounder, told the newspaper that the app is based on chatbot software and it isn't possible for a human to take over talking for Angela. The story goes on: When the text-chat feature is on, Angela asks the user for their name, age and personal preferences to determine conversation topics. Outfit 7 said the data from the app is "anonymized" and all personal information removed. In 2013, Sophos, a security software company, called warnings that the app steals children's names and details of where they go to school and takes secret pictures of their faces "bogus." A blog post about the rumors says: The chain letter warning about the "Talking Angela" iOS app is being unwittingly spread by Facebook users, presumably with the thinking of "better safe than sorry" rather than "maybe I should just check the facts before forwarding this scare onto my friends." The truth is "talking Angela" appears to be entirely benign, and there are no obvious privacy concerns that differentiate it from thousands of other iPhone apps. It seems that now the app doesn't have a chatting option at all, regardless of the users' age. A Change.org petition from 2017 complains that even though rumors about the app were false, the option for adults to chat with Angela was removed. "The game is now a shell of its former self," the campaign creator wrote, "but, with your support, we will tell Outfit7 we want it back!" Our ruling A Facebook post claims that the Talking Angela app asks children personal questions and takes their picture without warning. It's true that the app once allowed users to text with Angela if the app was not in "child mode," but that option appears to have been stripped of all versions, regardless of the user's age or settings. Pushing the heart in the corner of the app also doesn't take a picture, as the Facebook post says. Rather, it generates a fortune with a picture of Angela that users can save to their photos on their phones. We rate this Facebook post False. Despite recent Facebook chain letters to the contrary, the iOS Talking Angela app is innocuous. There's been a hoax making its way around Facebook for the second time, claiming that the iOS app Talking Angela is asking your child personal information about their location, and school, and then taking pictures of your child for nefarious purposes. However, none of this is true. According to both Sophos Security and Snopes, the fancy feline with the French accent is innocuous. Rumours that an app called Talking Angela is actually a front for a pedophile ring, a child pornography ring, a kidnapping front or is simply designed to be inappropriate, are spreading across social media. Again. We briefly spoke about this hoax in early 2013 but it has since gone viral again and again, and this time is warrants a more comprehensive debunking. Firstly, the rumours – of which there have been many over the last handful of years. Some claim that the App is the front-end of a pedophile ring wanting to ask children inappropriate questions or even to surreptitiously take photos of them. Others claim the App is used to accumulate personal details of the kids via the app for an unknown but likely malevolent reason. In 2015 further rumours arose claiming the app discusses molestation with children but is able to detect when a parent is using the app and thus "goes back to normal". Other latter variants of the rumour claim the app is used in conjunction with a child pornography and kidnapping ring. Other more silly rumours have previously claimed that you can see the image of a hacker/sex offender spying on the child using the app if you "look really carefully at Angela's eye" – a rumour clearly written by someone without any real comprehension of how a video camera operates. Some examples of the social media warnings can be read below – WARNING FOR TO ALL PARENTS WITH CHILDREN THAT HAVE ANY ELECTRONIC DEVICES, EX: IPOD,TABLETS ETC .... THERE IS A SITE CALLED TALKING ANGELA, THIS SITE ASKS KIDS QUESTIONS LIKE: THERE NAMES, WHERE THEY GO TO SCHOOL AND ALSO TAKE PICTURES OF THEIR FACES BY PUSHING A HEART ON THE BOTTOM LEFT CORNER WITHOUT ANY NOTICES. PLEASE CHECK YOUR CHILDREN'S IPODS AND ALL TO MAKE SURE THEY DO NOT HAVE THIS APP !!! PLEASE PASS THIS MESSAGE ON TO YOUR FRIENDS I cant even in words say what I just found out.. I am SHOCKED and want to tell and let my friends and family be made aware so they can make sure their children are safe!!! Angelica stayed home from school today and thank GOD she did. Because she was on her ipod playing a game called talking angela, which is similar to talking tom, anyway as she is sitting next to me this interactive cat says to her hi angelica where is your brother? She says o hes right here next to me the cat says o cool, then the cat says so what do you do for fun? Ang says I dont know, (now im being quiet and listening because I think its weird this angela cat knows she has a brother and is talking to her like a person) then its voice changes and in some weird robotic voice it says angelica when u date what do u do on your dates? She looked at me got red in the face and said nothing, then it said stick out your touunge, ill stick mine out too, it said what are some things u can do with your tounge? I can find many things to do with my tounge it said it said lets intrract w our toungues. I that point I had heard enough I zaid ang shut it off now! I was freaked out called the police departnrnt they came to the house saif they would have the internet investigations unit andpedofile investigations unit look into it, they called me an hour latet and said something is behind that cat!!! They dont know if it is local or over seas. While the police officer was there and ang was talking to him she told the police officer saturday night her cousin and her were on the app w angela and it asked the girls their names what her brothers name was what school they BOTH went to, and it took a picture of angelica!!! This is under serious investigation right now! When I googled talking angela I cant even begin to tell you what creepy stuff came up! Google it for yourselves please!! But some things are the cat asking girls for their phone numbers! And if theyve had their firat kiss!!! Take this app off your phone please! Theres a big chance thid cpuld be a door for pedofiles.the police said they have seen thing *like* this but never actually through a childs app but that they are not putting it past them! The girls told angela the cat on saturday their names and she had a brother and then on monday morning when angelica turned the app back on, It remebered her name and that she had a brother!!! These things ARENT supposed to ask you questions!!! and especially not questions about dating toungues or kissing!! I am disgusted! I dont feel safe at all right now! Knowing that there was some creep talking to my daughter and my neice through a talking app!!! Please if you have this app or any like it the police are saying take it off of your phone!!! Copy and share and send out PLEASE! This word needs to spread! I pray the ocean county investigators can crack this thing open!!!!! So please if your KIDS use this app please shut it down. Because SOME KIDS told them the name of the school they went to and is now on red alert at the school, and please PASS this on to ALL your friends. Firstly, to put the entire thing into some context – Talking Angela, the official App, is developed by a reputable and well known company called Outfit7, not a shadowy network of cyber criminals/deviants looking to prey on children. Outfit7 have many other Apps on the marketplace, which collectively have been downloaded over a billion times. They have an office, salaried employees, a website. Everything that a successful software development company would have. The Talking Angela App has been used, tested and reported on by many software testers, journalists and others, including ourselves, many in response to the rumours we spoke of above. And no, there is no malicious intent here. Talking Angela does not harvest the personal details of children, nor transmit them to third parties. It does not broadcast videos or images of children to networks of child predators. It does not attempt to engage children in blatantly inappropriate conversations. It is not a front for hackers or criminals to garner information about the child or the child's family. In this respect, the rumours are nothing more than a hoax. Sponsored Content. Continued below… Many have raised concerns however, albeit not to the same degree as many of these hoaxes would suggest. For example, when the child mode is off, the Angela character can indeed engage with the user and ask them personal information such as their name. Though this information isn't shared, many parents could feel uncomfortable with such features. Through the text engagement feature, kids can interact with Angela via a number of different conversational paths, most innocent enough. Yes, some of the rumours mention a clothes swapping party, which is true – and taken out of context many parents may deem this inappropriate, though we failed to see anything particularly risqué with any of it. The only really adult conversation is when Angela describes cat sex as "hair raising" and "purrfect" but these are only direct responses if the user themselves brings up the subject of sex. Sponsored Content. Continued below… The important thing to note is that the text engagement feature is not available when Child Mode is enabled, and thus none of the above types of engagement are possible when Child Mode is enabled. However another area of concern arises with how easy it is to enable Child Mode. With no preventative features, Child Mode can be enabled by clicking a smiley face on the screen. Ultimately if parents feel the App is not appropriate, they should not allow their children to interact with it, and for young children especially, adults should supervise when using apps they themselves have not tested first. Some parents feel that the App is "purrfectly" fine. Others have expressed concern as to how suitable it is for younger children. Ultimately it is up to the parent to decide. With that said, Talking Angela is not a front for criminals, nor does it employ any real malicious intent, and thus the rumours above should not be circulated. Continued below… Thanks for reading, we hope this article helped, but before you leave us for greener pastures, please help us out. We're hoping to be totally ad-free by 2025 - after all, no one likes online adverts, and all they do is get in the way and slow everything down. But of course we still have fees and costs to pay, so please, please consider becoming a Facebook supporter! It costs only 0.99p (~$1.30) a month (you can stop at any time) and ensures we can still keep posting Cybersecurity themed content to help keep our communities safe and scam-free. You can subscribe here Remember, we're active on social media - so follow us on Facebook, Bluesky, Instagram and X Claim: The Talking Angela app unsafely prompts children to provide personal information about themselves. "Talking Angela" is not a web site, but an iOS app available through iTunes that provides a cute interactive feature for youngsters: when children activate the app and respond to prompts to interact with it, Angela, a cat who inhabits an outdoor table at a Parisian cafe, responds to their gestures and mimics what they say back to them in her French-influenced stylings: Talking Angela, like numerous similar apps, can interact with users in several ways: She will repeat, in her squeaky French voice, what users say into their device's microphone; she can (if the device's camera is enabled) read facial expressions and react to them; she moves and gestures in response to being petted or poked via screen taps and swipes; and she can (if Child Mode is disabled) engage users in robotic text chats. Since Talking Angela was released in December 2012, rumors about its supposedly unsafe nature have grown and spread to the point that some of the more far-fetched information now circulating about it claims that the app is being used as a recruiting tool for pedophiles or is driven by "hackers" who engage children in live conversations: WARNING FOR TO ALL PARENTS WITH CHILDREN THAT HAVE ANY ELECTRONIC DEVICES, EX: IPOD,TABLETS ETC .... THERE IS A SITE CALLED TALKING ANGELA, THIS SITE ASKS KIDS QUESTIONS LIKE: THERE NAMES, WHERE THEY GO TO SCHOOL AND ALSO TAKE PICTURES OF THEIR FACES BY PUSHING A HEART ON THE BOTTOM LEFT CORNER WITHOUT ANY NOTICES. PLEASE CHECK YOUR CHILDREN'S IPODS AND ALL TO MAKE SURE THEY DO NOT HAVE THIS APP !!! PLEASE PASS THIS MESSAGE ON TO YOUR FRIENDS ATTENTION PARENTS & GRANDPARENTS! My future daughter-in-law just received this warning from a friend on her page. Do not let your child download the Talking Angela app! It is very creepy! Gracie downloaded it without asking to her kindle fire because it was free and a really cute cat. She brought it to me to answer the question it asked. I immediately noticed it had activated the camera. It had already asked her name, age, and knew she was in the living room! I immediately deleted it! The person who talks back is not your voice when you type something on talking Angela you know how it takes a second for her to say something there is a guy behind all of this that is a hacker typing all of that stuff my friend who wanted to see what the guy would say he said a typo he said I was talking a little cat rap instead of cat nap. Delete this app now he gets all of your information he asked me what my name was and he goes on saying other things when I ask a question. My friend typed to him I know you are a hacker and the person said I like complements. When you type the chocolate thing or cookie this I don't really know what it is it wants your picture so the guy can see what you look like. Parents do not get this game the game finds all of your information. Angela asks how old are you and when you take those quizzes the guy that answers back wants to know what you are like and finds your information there. DO NOT BUY THIS APP AND DELETE ALL TALKING APPS. All of this sort of misinformation is completely unfounded. We've spent a good deal of time testing the Talking Angela app, and it has shown no sign of being anything other than what it is supposed to be. Likewise, Sophos' Naked Security site also found warnings that the Talking Angela app is prompting children to behave in ways that raise privacy concerns to br unfounded: "Talking Angela" is just another entry in a series of similar harmless apps for kids created by the same developer: The truth is that "Talking Angela" appears to be entirely benign, and there are no obvious privacy concerns that differentiate it from thousands of other iPhone apps. Indeed, the "Talking Angela" app is no different from other similar popular children's apps from reputable iOS developer Out Fit 7 Ltd, including "Talking Tom Cat", "Talking Ben the Dog" and "Talking Gina the Giraffe". Yes, Talking Angela can engage in chat with users and upload photos taken through the app to social media, but none of the information revealed in that process in shared with anyone, and the latter occurs only with the user's permission: We wish to emphasise that no personal data whatsoever is being collected from the users of our app Talking Angela, which is available as an iOS, Android and Facebook app. The description clearly informs the user that one of the core functionalities of the app is chat, which requires two-way communication, where Angela (a chat bot, not a real person) answers with text and voice in English and talks to the user about a variety of subjects. The data collected by the app from the user is not shared with anyone and is actually sent to Out Fit7 only in the form of an anonymized data log (no names, no numbers, no personal data). This fact is clearly disclosed within the description of the app. The screenshots within the description clearly show that the app enables the user to take a picture of himself/herself and share those pictures to social media services like Facebook or Twitter. This is only done if the user wants to do it and the photos are not sent anywhere else. In all the time we've tried experimenting with Talking Angela app, deliberately trying to prompt it to be provocative (including directly asking it questions of a sexual nature, which it always responded to with a dismissive gesture or text response), we've been unable to reproduce any of the reported salacious behavior attributed to it in various online rumors. Yes, Angela may ask some questions involving the disclosure of personal information during text chats, but those questions are rather innocuous (e.g., "What's your name?" or "How old are you?"), the responses aren't forwarded or shared outside the app, and none of this takes place unless Child Mode is specifically disabled. As the Guardian noted about Talking Angela, the one legitimate criticism of the app is that it's too easy to toggle Talking Angela out of Child Mode, thereby enabling it to engage in conversations (about subjects such as dating) that parents may find inappropriate for younger children: The most important thing for parents to understand is that Talking Angela has a child mode. You're asked if you want to turn it on the first time you run the app, and at any other point you can toggle it on or off by tapping on the little smiley face at the top right of the screen. This is important, because the feature at the centre of the scary Facebook messages — Angela's ability to text-chat with users — is turned off when Child Mode is toggled on. If you've read about Angela asking kids for their names, ages or engaging in banter about clothes-swapping parties, none of this can happen if Child Mode is on. What can kids do when Child Mode is turned on, though? They can get Angela to repeat her words, stroke and poke her (in the non-inappropriate sense!) to see animated responses, and make birds fly onto the screen — don't worry, she doesn't eat them. There is also a camera feature, which has been referenced in some of the Facebook messages about Talking Angela. It's true that it encourages users to look into their device's camera and make specific gestures: nod, shake head, smile, yawn or stick out their tongue, so Angela can copy it. What happens if you turn child mode off — as any child can relatively easily — and start chatting to Angela using the text box at the bottom of the screen? It's this feature that's fuelled the Facebook hoax. While it's definitely not connecting your children to paedophiles, it does raise some issues. These are all genuine questions that Angela asked me while I chatted to her: "How long have you been friends with your best friend?" "I've met my best friends at school. Where did you meet yours?" "What will you do today?" "I'd like to be your friend. What's your name?" "I'm 18. How old are you?" "What do you do with your friends for fun?" And yes, Angela does ask at one point "You know what's fun too? A clothing swap party. Have you ever been to such a party?" before segueing into an anecdote about how she swapped clothes with her virtual boyfriend Tom for japes. It ends innocently — "Friends ROFLed and everybody at the party cheered at us. It was a cool night!" — but taken out of context with some of the questions above, it's no surprise that parents are spooked. The point: children aren't meant to be using Talking Angela's text-chat feature, yet the app's developer hasn't taken any meaningful measures to prevent them from simply toggling the child mode off. There's not even the "swipe down with two fingers" or "write this sequence of numbers as figures" parental gate that's become common in children's apps in recent months. By Jill Scharr, Tom's GuideThere's plenty to be scared of on the Internet today. Malware. Phishing. YouTube comments. But one thing you don't need to be afraid of is "Talking Angela," a totally harmless iOS and Android app that has become the center of a viral Facebook hoax.Despite what people passing along warning messages say, "Talking Angela" is not a front for pedophiles. It's just a harmless app of a talking cat — and, unintentionally, a lesson in why you shouldn't believe everything you read on Facebook.MORE: 7 Ways to Lock Down Your Online Privacy"Talking Angela" is a free smartphone app that lets kids "talk" with an animated cat named Angela. Similar to a chat bot, Angela has some basic artificial intelligence that allows it to respond to simple inquiries, and if you give the app access to your device's camera, it can do some basic facial and gesture recognition as well. The app also has some in-app payments, but that's about as insidious as "Talking Angela" gets.Yet "Talking Angela" has become the app that launched a thousand hysterical Facebook reposts, which claim that the app's computer-generated responses are actually pedophiles conversing with your children, and that the app uses the iOS or Android device's camera to spy on your children and your home."Take this app off your phone please! There's a big chance this could be a door for pedophiles. The police said they have seen things *like* this but never actually through a child's app, but that they are not putting it past them! … These things AREN'T supposed to ask you questions!!!" reads one particularly hysterical Facebook post.This scare has been around since February of last year, and even has its own page on the rumor debunking site Snopes.The developers, U.K.-based Outfit7, have also added a "child mode" for the app that disables the chat bot feature. In child mode, the app "can respond only to touch and repeat what she hears over the microphone, similar to other apps within the 'Talking Tom and Friends' series" that are also made by Outfit7, the studio wrote on a FAQ on its website.How one group of pedophiles could spy on all 230 million users of "Talking Angela" and the rest of the "Talking Tom and Friends" apps is a mystery all its own. That hasn't stopped thousands of people from emailing and reposting ridiculous warnings "just in case."It's probable that genuine concern, if misguided and misinformed, started this "Talking Angela" scare. However, this kind of fearmongering is far more harmful than the app around which it centers.For one, actual cybercriminals often use fear-baiting tactics like this one to trick people into clicking on bad links. If scammers haven't already created some malicious emails disguised as warnings about the evils of "Talking Angela," you can bet they're coming soon.U..K.-based security company Sophos advises people to be skeptical of anything they see on Facebook or in a chain email, particularly if it contains as many spelling errors and hyperbolic exclamations as these do. (We cleaned up the one quoted above.)"Hoaxes can be well-written, and truth can be written badly. But when everything about a written article screams, 'Why would I believe this?' then, to ask an obvious question, why would you believe it?," Sophos wrote on its blog Naked Security."Just in case" is not a good reason to forward anything and everything that comes across your screen, Sophos adds.If you're worried about an app or other potential online concern, check it out yourself. If you don't like anything about it, don't let your kids use it.As Sophos concludes in its post, "Security is a journey, not a destination." Doing your own research and being informed about new technologies and trends is far better in the long run than hitting "repost" and spreading misinformation.Email jscharr@techmedianetwork.com or follow her @JillScharr and Google+. Follow us @TomsGuide, onFacebook and on Google+.Copyright 2014 Toms Guides, a TechMediaNetwork company. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed. Example: [Gathered on Facebook in February 2019, archived here]WARNING TO ALL PARENTS WITH CHILDREN THAT HAVE ANY ELECTRONIC DEVICES , EX : IPOD,TABLETS ETC .... THERE IS A SITE CALLED TALKING ANGELA , THIS SITE ASKS KIDS QUESTIONS LIKE : THERE NAMES , WHERE THEY GO TO SCHOOL AND ALSO TAKE PICTURES OF THEIR FACES BY PUSHING A HEART ON THE BOTTOM LEFT CORNER WITHOUT ANY NOTICES . PLEASE CHECK YOUR CHILDREN'S IPODS AND ALL TO MAKE SURE THEY DO NOT HAVE THIS APP !!! PLEASE PASS THIS MESSAGE ON TO YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS THAT HAVE KIDS !!!!Parents, take no chances. The life you save may be your very own child's!!! AmenFindings: The "Talking Angela" warning is a hoax according to security software experts at Sophos, who described the warnings "bogus" in a February 25 2013 article:The truth is that "Talking Angela" appears to be entirely benign, and there are no obvious privacy concerns that differentiate it from thousands of other iPhone apps.Indeed, the "Talking Angela" app is no different from other similar popular children's apps from reputable iOS developer Out Fit 7 Ltd, including "Talking Tom Cat", "Talking Ben the Dog" and "Talking Gina the Giraffe".The Sophos article said that in 2013, the bogus warning was "spreading across Facebook, telling parents of young children to watch out for a rogue iPhone/iPad app that (the warning claims) steals children's names, details of where they go to school, and even takes secret pictures of their faces."This hoax was brought to light in 2013 but not many such warnings stay dead long. One year later it has risen from the ashes and people are posting all over Facebook.Sophos recommended parents play close attention to the Internet activity of their children saying, "it's always a good idea to keep a close eye on what children are doing on the internet – in case they get themselves into a spot of bother."Originally published: February 13 2014Updated: February 27 2019Article Sources + The app is riddled with both banner and video ads. There also is a strong push toward making in-app purchases. Talking Angela links to other apps in the series, which sometimes appear to be part of the game instead of an advertisement. Ads can be disabled via in-app purchase. > Products & Purchases The app is riddled with both banner and video ads. There also is a strong push t When Child mode is turned off, Angela asks about clothing-swap parties and talks about dating Tom, a male cat. > Sex, Romance & Nudity When Child mode is turned off, Angela asks about clothing-swap parties and talks Violence & Scariness Not present Drinking, Drugs & Smoking Not present

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