

**Ask.fm** is a social networking platform in which users can submit questions or "post" statements on the profile page of an individual user; questions and answers are limited to 300 characters. A user creates their own "page" or "profile" where other users submit a question. The individual posing a question can decide whether they wished to be "named" (all will know who asked) or completely anonymous. The user can then respond to the question on their profile. Other users and "guests" (those without profiles) can view and "like" the comment / question / answer / statement. The very nature of this website encourages users to be anonymous which allows for vulgar and inappropriate behaviour as there is not likely to be repercussions due to its anonymity. It is unmoderated (unless a user reports something), has no parental controls, and is an over-seas company (based in Latvia). Their Terms of Service (TOS) dictates "Terms of use are governed by Latvian laws and disputes are solved in Latvian courts." TOS *Minimum user age: 13 years old.*

### **Signing up**

Users can create their own unique "user name" for their profile; they can alternatively sign up through their existing *facebook* account. Once an *Ask.fm* account has been made, the user is encouraged to link their other social media accounts (facebook, twitter, instagram, tumblr, etc) to their *Ask.fm* account.

### **Next steps**

Users can follow other users similar to *facebook* and *twitter* platforms. In the *Ask.fm* application, users do not know who is following them – only the number of users following them. There are daily questions that are sent out to users (probably used to generate site traffic) and other users can also pose questions. The question "poser" decides if they wish to reveal who they are (show user name) or remain anonymous (no one knows who posed the question).

### **Problems**

The very nature of the site gives users a false sense of security by posing questions anonymously without fear of retribution. There is a ***blacklist*** feature where one can blacklist a user from posing questions on their profile...however, this only works if you know the other user's name; this will not work for anonymous posts. For an anonymous post, the user or any observer can report or "flag" the comment to notify *Ask.fm*. Users cannot increase their privacy settings.

### **Bottom line**

This is a social media / networking site based in and subject to laws of a country outside of Canada who enables users to pose or post hateful, hurtful and damaging words on another user's page. *Ask.fm* does not monitor the content or nature of posts until prompted by a user's report. Users cannot increase their privacy settings and blocked users can still monitor the blocker's profile. In response to the suicide of a 14 year old girl in Brittan, British Prime Minister David Cameron said, "There's something all of us can do as parents and as users of the internet and that is not to use some of these vile sites. Boycott them, don't go there, don't join them – we need to do that as well. I'm very keen we look at all the action we can take to try and stop future tragedies like this."

Links to the articles used for this information:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ask\\_fm](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ask_fm)

<http://www.hightechdad.com/2013/06/05/parents-be-warned-ask-fm-is-a-dangerous-deadly-social-site-for-teens-tweens/>

<http://www.webwise.ie/AskfmGuide.shtm>

<http://www.chicagonow.com/tween-us/2013/10/facts-about-ask-fm-parents/>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2261588/Ask-fm-Pupils-parents-warned-social-networking-website-linked-teen-abuse.html>