



What is it?

The purpose of the Saturn app (as described by the developers) is to provide high school students with a social utility that gives control over their schedules, activities, and connections.

Availability:

The Saturn app is currently only available as a mobile app on iOS devices. It received a review score of 4.7 out of 5, based on over 24,200 ratings. In addition, an article from 9to5Mac.com states that as of mid-August, Saturn was one of the top free apps on Apple's App Store. Currently, there is no mention of an Android version in production.

Terms of Service Age Requirements:

- Must be at least 13 years of age to use.
- If under the legal age of majority in the applicable jurisdiction, students may not use the website, app, or services without a parent/legal guardian reading and accepting the terms on their behalf.

How it works:

Students scan a photo of their class schedule, and Saturn uses basic optical character recognition intelligence to create a personal school calendar. They can then post and share their calendars with friends.

Other functions:

- bulletin board - students can post events and announcements to their entire school.
- status – students can see what friends are up to.
- calendar compare - students can find out when other students are in the same class, clubs, after school activities or “free” based on information provided.

Safety concerns:

In several reviews of the app, a common concern was that the protocols being used to verify identities were lacking. The issue was raised that almost anyone could create an account and use it to gain access and easily exploit the following items shared by students:

- student names.
- account photos.
- class times and teachers.
- links to Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and Venmo accounts.
- the ability to send private messages.

This issue gained attention on August 10, 2023, when a parent posted their concerns on Facebook. The parent described being able to join the Saturn app using a false profile as a high school student and then having the ability to interact with students. The parent was able to track students by their class schedule, view pictures of students participating in school events, and based on the profile they created, started receiving friend requests.

In less than one week, the post was shared over 100,000 times and generated numerous news investigations into the app and its security issues.

Saturn's response:

Based on the increased scrutiny of the apps and the concerns raised by parents, Saturn released the following blog post on August 16, 2023:

We're strengthening verification:

We've raised the bar for the amount of contact overlap users must have with other students at a school to be verified. New features in our backend system will also proactively flag and block phone numbers that we deem suspicious from registering for Saturn. If a user fails to verify using our improved protocol, their account will be restricted from participation in any school community and eventually removed.

Unverified users are walled off from verified users and their information:

Users who are not verified can't view any class details, students' profiles (including their list of classes or links to their connected social profiles), or access or post to the school's Bulletin.

These improvements are part of an ongoing effort, and we will continue to release new features to make the platform even safer.

We take seriously the trust that millions of students have put in us to help them take control of their days and feel more productive and fulfilled. We hope to continue to earn that trust every day as we help America's high school students better manage their time and safely engage with their communities.

On August 17, 2023, Saturn followed up with this post:

1. We have expanded and improved the systems we use to flag accounts that don't comply with Saturn's terms. We remain committed to removing all suspected non-students from Saturn promptly and have enhanced this process.

2. Moving forward, if someone attempts to sign up as a student and our systems flag them as a potential non-student, we will force them to go through an enhanced verification flow, which includes school email verification.

Because we've created a very strict set of rules for verification, we know we've locked out some real students. If you are reading this and you're one of them, please first update the app from the App Store. If you are still unable to verify using your school email, contact us and we will work to assist. For students who have already contacted us, we're working hard to help you as quickly as we can.

FCS Response:

The Saturn website is currently blocked on the FCS network. The following resources about online safety created by Common Sense Media are recommended for parents:

- [SEL IN DIGITAL LIFE - GRADES 9–12 FAMILY CONVERSATIONS PACKET](#)
- [Help Kids Make Friends and Interact Safely Online](#)
- [How to Tell Who Your Kid Is Talking to Online—and How to Keep Their Convos Cool](#)