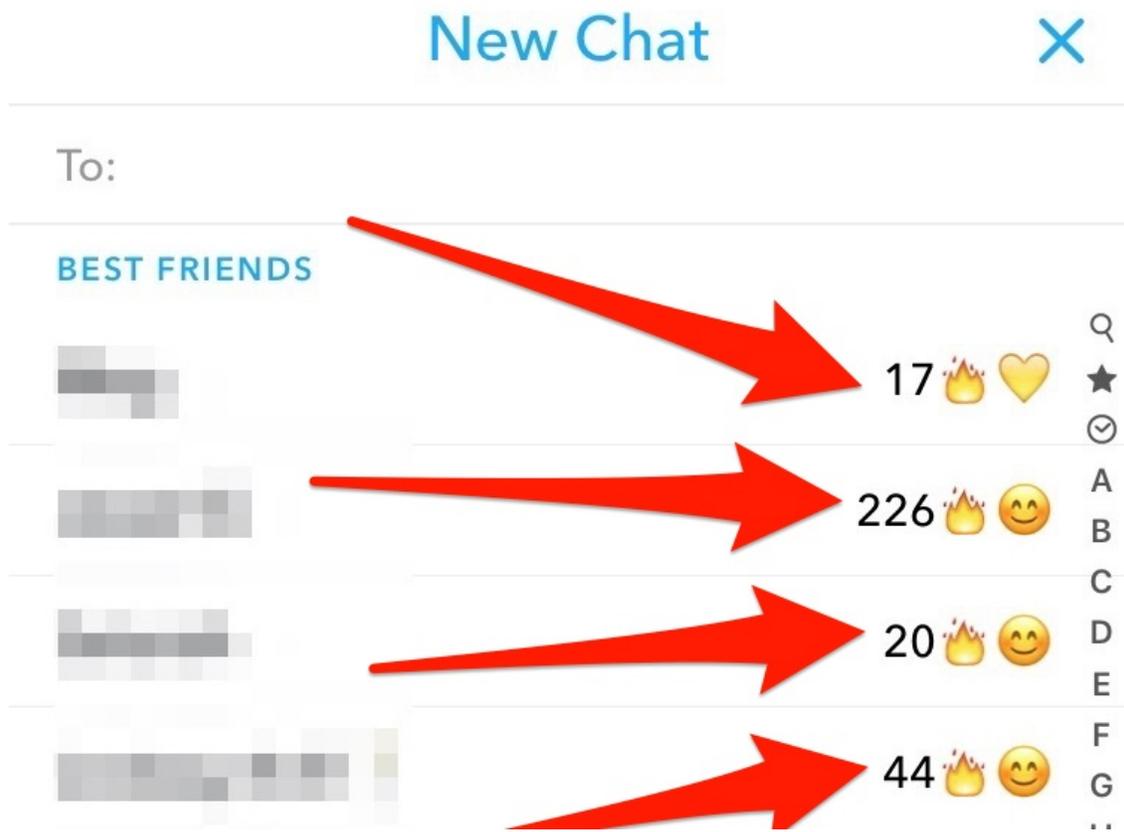


# Teens explain the world of Snapchat's addictive streaks, where friendships live or die

**BI** [businessinsider.com/teens-explain-snapchat-streaks-why-theyre-so-addictive-and-important-to-friendships-2017-4](https://www.businessinsider.com/teens-explain-snapchat-streaks-why-theyre-so-addictive-and-important-to-friendships-2017-4)  
Taylor Lorenz, Mic Apr. 14, 2017, 1:58 PM



One teen's Snap streaks.  
Cassidy Hopkins/INSIDER

Instagram likes are great, hearts on Messages are fine, but the one metric by which many teens live and die is the snap streak.

A Snapchat streak is when you send direct snaps back and forth with a friend for several consecutive days. The longer you go without breaking the chain of communication, the longer your streak is.

Snapchat rewards longer streaks with special emojis, such as the "100" emoji for streaks lasting 100 days, or a mountain emoji for an extremely long streak.

Many teens invest an inordinate amount of time keeping streaks alive. There's nothing more devastating than losing a streak you've put months of work into.

Snap streaks have become the default way to measure success on Snapchat, which is famous for its lack of a follower count. But before you go starting streaks with everyone in your recents, know that it's more about quality than quantity.

We spoke with 17 teens to find out what snap streaks mean to them and why they've become the most important metric in social media.

## Streaks are proof of friendship

---

"If you lose the streak you lose the friendship," Peter Santa Ana, an 18-year-old in Honolulu, joked. "Some people I don't live next to, so if I didn't have the snap streak going I wouldn't talk to them. Maybe if my streak with them ended, I'd start a new one, but it depends on how much I like them."

Catie Clarke, a 13-year-old on Cape Cod, agreed that streaks are critical to keeping friendships alive. "On Snapchat, streaks develop a level of friendship between people. The longer your snap streak is, the better friends you are," she explained.

"I think in some weird way it makes concrete a feeling of a friendship," Jules Spector, a 16-year-old from Brooklyn added. "Like, you can talk to someone every day, but a streak is physical evidence that you talk every day."

Having proof of long-term friendships with meaningful people can be validating for high schoolers who are acutely aware of social dynamics.

"A big part of it is social acceptance," Will McKelvain, a 15-year-old from Arlington, Virginia, admitted. "Having more streaks makes you feel more popular."

He added: "I think streaks are a way of showing how many people you talk to. It's like a score. If you see your friends have a lot of streaks, you're like, 'Whoa, that guy knows a lot of people.' It shows their social status to see how many streaks they have. But also, some people don't care."

High school friendships can be anxiety-inducing, and many said that snap streaks are a way to show you're committed to a relationship.

"Snap streaks are just a cool way to connect with my friends every day," says Rafael Singer, a 14-year-old in Los Angeles. "It's a commitment on both parts to keep the streak going and see how far you can take it. Once you start a streak with someone, you've got to be committed to just send a quick message every day. If you stop it, it shows that you don't really care about that person."

"Streaks are sort of proof of commitment to someone," Kelly Bell, a 15-year-old in San Diego, said.

"My friends get freaked out if I don't keep up a streak, so I just do," Spector added.

"It's a way to measure your friendship in a good way," Samantha Barkho, a 15-year-old from Oakland, New Jersey, said. "It's a cool way to see how long you've been talking to someone."

## Streaks are like a business transaction

---

Yes, you need regular contact with "friends" to keep a streak up, but the threshold for what passes as communication is low.

Many teens told us how some people have been known to wake up a few minutes early for school just so they can blast out a blank screen that says "streaks" to everyone in their recent contacts, thereby keeping their numbers up.

Sam DeMaria, a 15-year-old from Dobbs Ferry, New York, said he guesses that he spends about five minutes every morning "setting up his streaks."

"I send one message to all my streaks," he said. "I do a pic that says 'streaks' or take a picture of something that represents how I'm feeling right now."

"If I add someone new, they'll be in my recents," DeMaria added. "I go through all my recents and do streaks for all my recents. Maybe I look up someone I haven't spoken to in a while who I want to catch up with, then I'll re-start a streak with them. I don't like to let them end because of the amount of time I've put into them."

"I have friends who treat it mostly like business," Kelly Bell, a 15-year-old in San Diego, said. "It's something they just have to put in work to maintain. They send snaps every morning or every night that just say 'streak.'"

Because teens invest so much time in their streaks, it's common to ask friends to streak for you if you're unable to log on — for example, if you got your phone taken away.

For many bored teens, keeping streaks alive is also just another form of entertainment.

DeMaria said that if he can't do his streaks, he'll let other people log on and handle maintenance; he's happy to repay the favor.

"One time, my friend Madison got her phone taken away, so she asked me to do her streaks. It was easy, I just logged in and sent streaks to all her recents."

"I have a friend who went to Australia, and before he left he gave me his info so I could keep up his accounts," Fallon Villarreal, a 17-year-old in Honolulu, said. "I know a lot of people use their siblings' phones to keep their streaks up if their phone gets taken away."

## Ending streaks can have consequences

---

And what happens if a streak is unintentionally broken? One teen equated the feeling to missing a free-throw in a basketball game. There's momentary disappointment, but at the end of the day the world isn't over.

"One of my friends actually called me while I was sleeping to make sure our streak would still be going," DeMaria said. "He called me four times and woke me up to keep the streak alive. He was like, 'Are we still streaking?'"

"Some of my streaks have been broken and I usually just send a message like, 'What happened!?" Rafael Singer said.

"Most of the time they just forgot about it, which is totally understandable. Personally, I don't take it so seriously that I'd get in an argument about it, but I know some people who would get really upset, especially if the streak had been going for like 400 or 500 days."

"If you have a long streak with someone and you lose it or they lose it, that sucks," Barkho said.

"When I went to D.C. and was busy for a semester, I couldn't check my phone as much and lost all my streaks," Spector said. "I had some 200-day streaks that I lost. My friends were all mad at me, but I don't take it that seriously."

But while streaks can seem superficial or gamified, below the surface they're often just a way to get closer to friends.

"I think streaks are really just an excuse for interaction with certain people," Michael Sheldon, a 16-year-old from Arlington, Virginia, said. "People use it as sort of an excuse to talk to someone. Maybe you just want to be closer friends with them, or you like them — you'll start a streak."

"My streaks are more important to me than views on Snapchat," Campbell Weeks, a 12-year-old from Augusta, Georgia, said. With streaks you get to have a conversation. With views it's just people who see your story; you don't talk to them."

"When I send streaks, my friends will snap me back and I end up talking to them, so it's a way to have conversations with friends," Weeks said. "I have become better friends with people because of my Snapchat streaks."

Get the latest Snap stock price [here](#).