

Digital Safeguarding



Helping to keep you informed on the online world



ONLINE GAMING

In this section we will look at the online gaming world, in particular 'In-game chat'

Check all of this out on page 2.

SOCIAL MEDIA / APPS

Here we will highlight the most popular social media and apps used by children & young people.

Check all of this out on page 4.



TRENDING NEWS

ROBLOX - Within this popular game there is user created content, some of this content is of an adult nature and not suitable for children. This user created content is known as "Condos" and is of a sexual nature.

ONLINE GAMING

Online games are social activities. Some are co-operative, encouraging players to work together to achieve their goal. Others are competitive, pitting teams or players against one another to emerge victorious. And then there are games designed with socialising in mind to allow people to connect and have fun.

But, as with any space for talking online, there is a possibility that the chat tools used to bring players together can be abused. That's why it's important to take an interest in any online game children play to identify risks.



IN-GAME CHAT A QUICK GUIDE

Online games are social activities, and there are different ways that players can talk to each other:

- **Built in chat functions** let you talk through voice (via a headset) or text (by typing on a keyboard) with other people in the game.
- **Quick chat functions** have set phrases, so you can send short automatic messages to a team mate or player.
- **External chat or messaging apps** can be used to talk to each other during the game, for example, Discord, Twitch or WhatsApp.

What are the risks?

- **Chatting with people they don't know.** Gaming is different to social networks, as players often play against people they don't know. This may include adults.
- **Inappropriate or unmoderated chat.** In some games swearing and insults are common, especially when a player hasn't performed very well. Mean comments or insults can hurt, and competitive criticism might feel like bullying for some children.
- **Requests to chat in private.** Once a child moves to private chat, it may not be monitored by the game. They might share personal information or feel pressured to do something that they don't want to do.
- **Offering gifts or trades.** Some people may offer to trade - or give - your child in-game items or currencies to earn their trust and persuade them to have a separate conversation outside of the game.

Keeping your child safe

- 1. Play with them .** Play, or watch your children play, online games to understand how they talk online, who they talk to online and what you're comfortable with. Look at the privacy settings together.
- 2. Talk to them.** With older children, who may not want you to play with them, have regular chats about the games they play, who they talk to and how.
- 3. Use family controls.** Use family controls and in-game settings to manage, limit or turn off in-game chat to make sure that you're confident interactions are right for your children.
- 4. Encourage reporting.** To catch potential problems early, encourage your children to report inappropriate chat in game and to tell you if anything in the game makes them feel worried or uncomfortable.

SAFETY FEATURES FOR CONSOLES

Microsoft XBOX

I recommend downloading and using the XBOX Family Settings App which you can set up on your phone, the app will allow you to keep track of your child's activity whilst on the XBOX in real time and allow you to alter the privacy settings.

You can find out more here: <https://www.xbox.com/en-GB/community/for-everyone/responsible-gaming>

Sony PlayStation

You can find out how to set up parental controls for the PlayStation 5 here: <https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/support/account/ps5-parental-controls-spending-limits/>

Also you can see how to set up parental controls for the PlayStation 4 here: <https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/parental-controls/>

Oculus - VR Headsets

For the Oculus VR Headsets you can find out how to set up parental controls here: [Introducing Future VR Parental Supervision Tools to Help Support Families \(oculus.com\)](https://www.oculus.com/support/articles/introducing-future-vr-parental-supervision-tools-to-help-support-families/)

SOCIAL MEDIA / APPS

Apps are a great way for children to keep in touch with friends and family, watching video clips, gaming and a many number of other social activities.

It's important to be mindful of who they are communicating with, what information they may be sharing and what digital groups they are part of. Many apps allow users to share photo's, videos, messages, documents as well as being able to form large groups with people all over the world.



POPULAR APPS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



Instagram: Is a free photo and video sharing app available on iPhone and Android. People can upload photos or videos to our service and share them with their followers or with a selected group of friends. They can also view, comment and like posts shared by their friends on Instagram. Anyone aged 13 and over can create an account by registering an email address and selecting a username.



Snapchat: Is an application used to share photos, videos, text, and drawings. It's free to download the app and free to send messages using it. It has become hugely popular in a very short space of time, especially with young people. There is one feature that makes Snapchat different from other forms of texting and photo sharing: the messages disappear from the recipient's phone after a few seconds.



TikTok: Is a social media platform for creating, sharing and discovering short videos. The app is used by young people as an outlet to express themselves through singing, dancing, comedy, and lip-syncing, and allows users to create videos and share them across a community.

TikTok has a minimum user age of 13 years-old.

In Ireland the Digital Age of Consent has been set at 16 years-old. For children under that age consent must be given by the parent or guardian of the child.



Twitch: Is a live streaming platform for gamers. Non-gamers may not see the appeal of watching other people play video games, but with 15 million users everyday Twitch is hugely popular.

The primary focus on Twitch is video games. Users can watch other people playing games, interact with other viewers, or live stream their own gameplay to the world. Lots of different games are streamed, with popular titles such as Fortnite, Teamfight Tactics, League of Legends, and Grand Theft Auto V being among the most watched.



Discord: Is a free to access chat app similar to Slack or Skype that allows users to chat in real time using text, voice or video. Initially created for video gamers to interact with each other while playing games, Discord has grown in popularity with over 100 million users currently. The app hosts servers/chatrooms on different topics, however games, music, anime and memes tend to be the most popular.

Discord can be accessed via desktop computer, browser or by mobile app. Users can set up or join a chatroom, which Discord refers to as a 'Server'.

Users can join groups they've been invited to or create their own private chat server and invite their friends - they can then use text, or voice to chat, with other people using that server or chatroom. There are also public servers that anyone can take part in.

Each server can be broken down into 'Channels', which are smaller spaces or chatrooms, to discuss specific topics. These Servers and Channels also may have different levels of access permissions for different users. It can range from having the permission to ban other users, to having the ability to upload files and images to the channel.

As with all of the mentioned Apps and the many others that are out there it's important that parents/guardians perform their own research into them. By visiting the apps main website they will be able to access the 'Help Centre' which will give information on age ratings, parental controls/settings and will take them through the safety features.

See you next time!

