

Roblox

What is 'Roblox'?

Are the days of children building Lego houses on the kitchen table over? Roblox is the new online way of building, with 48 million players building and creating complex virtual empires monthly. Players earn "robux" (virtual currency) to buy the tools, materials and skills required to further enhance their empire.

With Lego like characters (avatars) and a tool box, players get their own piece of real estate to build their own virtual world. Players can join each other for game play, chat and more sinister activities like online bullying and grooming.

Roblox is a free App designed for ages 8 years and over. It is available on any device; iOS, android, Xbox one, PlayStation, Windows and Mac, but be aware there are in App purchases that cost real money to enhance the game play.

Is 'Roblox' Safe?

Whilst the concept of the game itself is age appropriate, do be aware that the games within Roblox are designed and created by the users themselves and therefore might not be suitable for your children to play in. There is no control over the details submitted when registering to play so children could be playing online with anyone of any age.

As with any social gaming platform, the chat capability is where your children are most at risk of harm. The app does have a 'chat moderation' system in place. This uses software to recognise whitelist words suitable for under 13's and blacklist of words for use by over 13's. Blacklist words are replaced with hashtags ###, but the context of the sentence will probably still be identifiable to most users. When you sign up you are required to give your age and this determines what words you can see. Please remember that it is possible to sign up with false details. Users are also becoming fast aware of the list of words and can change the way they have written something to "pass" the moderation. This leaves your children open to become the victim of online bullying, grooming and more.

Using 'Roblox' safely

- **Communicate your expectations** – As a parent or carer, it is your responsibility to make clear what is and is not acceptable online behaviour. You need to accept that allowing your child access to online apps and games requires trust and boundaries, for their own safety and well-being.
- **Privacy** – Users can control who they chat with. The key here is to impress upon your child how important it is to only have real life friends within the game but be aware that whilst playing a game unless your child sets the chat function to no one, EVERYONE can chat, there is no friends option here.

- **Not that Private** – Even setting ‘who can message me’ to ‘friends’ poses risks. Be aware players can still see what others in the game are saying and can still chat with them.
- **Usernames** – Use creative usernames that do not identify your child's real one on screen. Do NOT describe your child where asked to do so. You can never be sure who is playing the game.
- **Passwords** – Make them strong, use Upper and lower case, numerals and characters.
- **Check age visibility** - Look top right in game play to ensure your child's account is set to under 13 if it's not, they could have set up a new account! Take action and delete the account!
- **See something** – Report it, you can report both a user and or a particular game.
- **Set up a verification email** – to your email address, use two step verification for additional security.
- **For ultimate safety of game play - set up a parental PIN** and turn off chat completely.
- **Play the game** – Create and play with your child, explore the worlds they play in to make sure they are age appropriate.
- **Check** – If you have enabled chat and messaging, download it on another device, log in regularly and check who they are talking to. **This is not prying, it is parenting.**
- **Read the privacy policy** – This will tell you everything you need to know and help you make decisions about how you will allow your child to use Roblox as safely as possible.
- **Look and you will find** – If you have a look around for long enough, you will find material that is not appropriate for anyone to see online.
- **Making a decision** – You are a parent and you will know your child well enough to decide about using Roblox.
- **Roblox is designed to be fun** and educational, and it is no surprise that so many children use it. By following the simple steps outlined above you have a better opportunity to ensure your child is staying safe online.

Remember the internet should be a fun and liberating experience for all, but take the right steps to make it a safe one!