

It can be challenging for parents and carers to know whether children are spending too much time on their devices. Furthermore, it's even more of a challenge to know whether a child is addicted to the internet and social media. As technology is becoming more pervasive, children and young people are experiencing tech-related dependencies. Do we as parents and carers have the knowledge to identify and support children and young people who may be developing an addiction to their devices?

47% of parents said they thought their children spent too much time in front of screens

What parents need to know about SCREEN ADDICTION

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Children as young as 13 are attending 'smartphone rehab' following growing concerns over screen time. There are now help centers in the UK which deal with screen addiction for children and adults showing the seriousness of device addiction. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has officially recognised gaming addiction as a modern disease. The condition was confirmed as part of their International Classification of Diseases (ICD) which serves as an international standard for diagnosing and treating health conditions.

7 out of 10 children said they had missed out on sleep because of their online habits and 60% said they had neglected school work as a result. It is important that children get the sleep they need in order to focus the next day.

LACK OF SLEEP



LOSS OF INTEREST IN OTHER THINGS



Your child may become less interested in anything that does not include their device. You may notice that your child is missing school time and generally being less engaged with other activities in the home. It is important to discuss this with your child as soon as you notice a behaviour change.

CONFIDENCE, SUPPORT & ADVICE

The Children's Commissioner report 'Life in Likes', explored how children aged 8-11 are using social media today. It showed that children are using their devices to speak to their online friends about their problems and seek acceptance and support, removing face to face interactions.

APPS CAN BE ADDICTIVE

Apps have been designed with 'psychological tricks' to constantly keep grabbing your attention. One example of this is on the app Snapchat, where you can gain streaks when interacting with your friends. If you don't respond, you lose the streak. This addictive nature of apps aims to engage children and keep them coming back for more.

LIMIT SCREEN TIME

In today's digital age, technology is an important part of a child's development so completely banning them from including conversations and communication with their friends; rather than banning them from using their devices, we suggest setting a screen time limit. Work out what you think is a suitable and healthy amount of time for your child to be on their device per week. Remember that your child may need to use devices for their school homework so only set screen limits on recreational time on their device. Once you have established this, have the conversation with them to discuss why you are implementing a screen limit. There will be others in your child's friendship group who will not have screen limits set and will be sending messages when they do not have access to their phones.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Children model their behavior on their peers, so if their parents are constantly on their device, they will see this as acceptable. Try limiting your own screen time and follow the same rules you have set for them. If you have asked your child to not use their device at the table, make sure you don't. Try setting house rules that the whole family abide by.

LESS TIME MEANS LESS EXPOSURE

There are many risks associated with devices, such as cyberbullying, grooming, sexting, viewing inappropriate content etc. Less time spent on a screen means that a child will be less exposed to these risks.

MOBILE-FREE MEAL TIMES

Have you tried to settle your child by giving them a tablet at the dinner table or restaurant? This may seem like a quick fix to calm them down but in reality, it is engaging them and dealing with their emotions. We suggest removing all technology from the dinner table and having conversations with your family about how their day has been.

ENCOURAGE ALTERNATE ACTIVITIES

It may seem like an obvious solution, but encouraging children to play with their friends, read a book, or playing outdoors will help them realise they can have fun without their device. Playing football, trampolining, camping, going for a walk or swimming are all healthy replacements for screen time. Try to join them in their outdoor activities to show your support.

STATISTICS

52% of children aged 3-4 go online for nearly 9hrs a week

82% of children aged 5-7 go online for nearly 9.5hrs a week

93% of children aged 8-11 go online for nearly 13.5hrs a week

99% of children aged 12-15 go online for nearly 20.5hrs a week

REMOVE DEVICES FROM THEIR BEDROOM

Setting a rule about removing devices from bedrooms will help your child to get the sleep they need and be more focussed the next day at school. 20% of teenagers said that they wake up to check their social network accounts on their devices. Even by having a device switched off in their bedroom, they may be tempted to check for notifications.

Top Tips for Parents



SCREEN ADDICTION

What parents need to know about

It can be challenging for parents and carers to know whether children are spending too much time on their devices. Furthermore, it's even more of a challenge to know whether a child is addicted to the internet and social media. As technology is becoming more pervasive, children and young people are experiencing tech-related dependencies. Do we as parents and carers have the knowledge to identify and support children and young people who may be developing an addiction to their devices?

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INSTAGRAM

What parents need to know about



Instagram is a hugely popular social networking app with over 1 billion snap happy users worldwide. The app, which is accessible on iOS and Android devices, allows users to upload images and videos to their feed, like an online gallery. Images and videos can be transformed with an array of filters to edit the shot before sharing. Anyone with an account can see others' online galleries, if their account is not private. To make posts easier to find, users can include searchable hashtags and captions to their uploads. The app has additional features like an 'Explore Page', which contains videos and images tailored to each user based on accounts and hashtags they follow.

HOOKED ON SCROLLING

Instagram revealed that young users spent a minimum of 32 minutes on the app per day. Many social media platforms, including Instagram, have been designed in a way to keep us scrolling for as long as possible. Behavioural psychologists have found that something they are looking for. Children may quickly lose track of time as they get deeper into their Instagram feed.

SLIDING INTO DM'S

Direct messages (or DM's) on Instagram allow users to share posts, images, videos and voice messages and calls between each other privately (or in a private group). Even if your child's account is set to private, anyone has the option to message them and send the message content. If the person is not on your child's friends list, the message will still be sent to their inbox but the user has to accept their request to see the message.

INFLUENCER CULTURE

Influencers are sometimes paid thousands of pounds to promote a product, service, app and much more on social media. When celebrities or influencers post such an advert, they should add a disclaimer somewhere in the post which states that they have been paid for it. Commonly, this is well-hidden in the hashtags or in the comments of their post, making it unclear that their photo/video is actually an advert. This can be very misleading to young people who may be influenced into buying/wanting something promoted by somebody they admire. Dr Danielle Wagstaff, a psychology professor from Federation University Australia, said that social media and influencer culture can sometimes lead us to "define a false sense of what everyone else is doing" and that this "can definitely have a negative effect on our mental health and wellbeing."

LOOK OUT FOR #ADS

In January 2019, the UK's Competition and Markets Authority launched an investigation into celebrities who were posting adverts on social media and not declaring that they were paid for. Influencers must clearly state that they have been paid for their posts, for example using a hashtag like #ad or #sponsored. Read your child's feed for the signs of a paid advert and discuss with them that not everything they see from celebrities is their personal choice and opinion.

REMOVE PAYMENT METHODS

If you are happy for your child to have a card associated with their Instagram account, we suggest adding a PIN which will also prevent unauthorised purchases. This can be added in the payment settings tab.

DAMAGE TO CONFIDENCE, BODY IMAGE & MENTAL HEALTH

In a recent report by the RSPH, Instagram was ranked the worst for young people's mental health. Using filters on photos on Instagram can set unrealistic expectations and create feelings of inadequacy. Children may strive for more 'likes'. By using reality-checking photos, judging their confidence or self-worth. In early 2019, Instagram boss Adam Mosseri promised to ban images of self-harm, reportedly been looking at such material on the platform.

LIVE STREAMING TO STRANGERS

Live streaming on Instagram allows users to connect with friends and followers in real-time and comment on videos during broadcast, but this feature can be turned off. If your child's account is private, only their approved followers can see their story. It is important to note they may have accepted a request from someone they don't know, which means they could be live streaming to strangers. Children also risk sharing content they later regret, which could be re-shared online for years to come. Public accounts allow anybody to view, so suggest your child blocks followers they don't know. In February 2019, the MSPCC demanded a crackdown on Instagram's failed self-regulation after it was revealed grooming and abuse via the app had more than tripled. 5,000 cases of sexual communication with children, some as young as 5, took place in 18 months.

IN-APP PAYMENTS

Instagram allows payments for products directly through the app. It operates under the same rules as Facebook Payments, which state that you are under the age of 18, you can only use this feature with the involvement of a parent or guardian.



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Top Tips for Parents

RESTRICT DIRECT MESSAGES

If your child receives a message from somebody they do not know, encourage them not to accept the message request and block this person; this is the only way to stop them messaging your child again.

TURN OFF SHARING

Even though this feature will not stop people from directly sharing photos and videos from a story as a feature which automatically shares photos and videos in the settings. We also recommend turning off the 'message to another user'. This feature can be turned off from a story to a Facebook account.

PROTECT THEIR PERSONAL INFORMATION

Your child may unknowingly give away personal information on their profile or in their live streams. Talk to them about what their personal information is and make sure that they do not disclose anything to anyone during a live stream, comment, direct message or any other tool for communication on the platform, even to their friends.

USE A PRIVATE ACCOUNT

By default, any image or video your child uploads to Instagram is visible to anyone. A private account means that you and only people you approve will see your posts and videos.

FILTER INAPPROPRIATE COMMENTS

Instagram has an anti-bullying filter, which hides comments relating to a person's appearance or character, as well as threats to a person's wellbeing or health. The filter will also alert messages to repeated problems so they can take action against the user if necessary. This is an automatic filter, but it can be turned off. Make sure it is turned on in the app's settings.

SCROLLING

Instagram added a 'You've completely caught up' message in late 2018. This message breaks up the feed and notifies you you are up to date and there are no more new posts from followers. This feature is enabled automatically, but have the conversation with your child about how much time they are spending on the app and set healthy time limits.

COMMENTS

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IGTV

Instagram TV (IGTV) works similarly to YouTube. Users can create their own channel and post their own videos, or watch videos from favourite accounts on the platform. It's important to note anyone can create an Instagram TV channel and doesn't have to be friends with a person to follow an account and watch their videos. In 2018 Instagram apologized and removed some of its TV content which featured sexually suggestive imagery of children. As the feature may encourage spending more time using the app, it's important to set time limits to avoid children's sleep or education being disturbed.

HJACKED HASHTAGS

Like Twitter, hashtags are also an extremely prominent tool in Instagram and with that comes dangers for your child. One person may use a seemingly innocuous hashtag with one particular thing in mind, and before you know it hundreds of inappropriate or dangerous things that your child certainly shouldn't be exposed to.

EXPOSING LOCATION

Public locations can be added to a user's photos/videos and also to their stories. While this may seem like a good idea at the time, it can expose the location of your child. This is particularly more of a risk if it is on their story, as it is real time. Posting photos and videos is Instagram's biggest selling point, but with sharing images comes risks. A photo which includes landmarks in the area, their school uniform, street name, house and even tagging in the location of the photo uploaded to Instagram can expose the child's location, making it easy to locate them. If their account is not set to private, anyone can access their account and see their location.

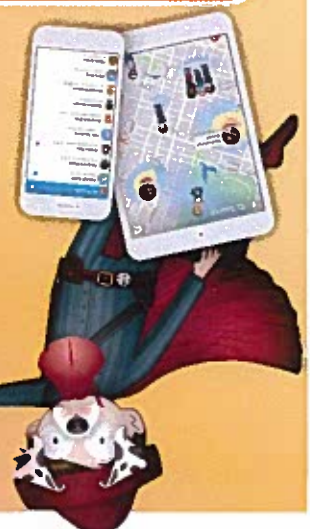
DON'T FORGET TO BE VIGILANT & TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT THEIR ONLINE ACTIVITIES!

From a story to a Facebook account.

SNAPCHAT

What parents need to know about

Snapchat is a photo sharing app for mobile phones and tablets. The app allows users to share images, videos and chat with friends through voice call or text message. Users can share images and videos directly to specific friends, or through a 'story' shared with their entire friend list, which documents the previous 24 hours. In a study, Snapchat was ranked the 4th most negative app in terms of having an impact on young people's health and wellbeing, with children feeling that they can use the app Snapchat to 'make you look pretty'.



EXPOSING YOUR CHILD'S EXACT LOCATION

The 'Snap Map' lets you share your EXACT location in real-time through a map on the app. The user's location updates when the app has been opened on the device. There is a warning on the Snapchat website about uploading images and videos to 'Our Story', stating that snaps you submit to 'Our Story' can still show up on the Map, no matter which location setting you choose! When uploading to 'Our Story', your child's image or video could appear in 'Search results and Stories on or off Snapchat - today or in the future.'

ADDICTIVE SNAPSTREAKS

'Snap Streaks' are gained when snaps have been sent back and forth consecutively between friends. The longer the streak becomes, furthermore, Snapchat rewards users who have achieved high Snap Streaks, by gifting emojis, adding incentives for users to keep the streaks. Children invest time into making their streaks as long as possible, which can put an incredible amount of pressure on both themselves and their friendships.

SEXTING

While Snapchat's gimmick is that all photos, videos and text disappear eventually, users still have the capability to screenshot or record anything which has been sent to them. Users may sometimes forget that screenshots is possible and send a compromising image or message to somebody who they think they trust. Due to 'Snap' disappearing (users can even send a one-second photo or video), Snapchat has become the chosen platform for children and young people to send sexually explicit images or selfies; Once a photo/video has been screenshot, or recorded using another device or software, this can lead to further dangers, such as blackmail and cyberbullying. It is illegal to make, possess, download, store and share sexual images, photos and videos of a person under the age of 18. This also includes any sexual images, photos and videos that a child may have taken of themselves. However, if a young person is found creating or sharing images, that a crime has been committed, and the police can choose to record. Snap Streaks are a feature of the app that encourage users to send snaps to each other. While this is a fun feature, it can also lead to children feeling pressure to send snaps to their friends. This can lead to children feeling that they are being judged or that their friends are not accepting of them. This can lead to children feeling that they are being judged or that their friends are not accepting of them.

EXTRAS TO MAKE YOU STAY

Aside from taking photos and videos, Snapchat has other elements to keep users coming back for more. 'Snap Games' is a feature within the app where users can play mini-games with others on their friends list. The game function is easily accessed by tapping on the rocket button during a conversation. Another feature on the app is 'Snap Originals', which allows users to watch content created by Snapchat, celebrities and other accounts, including a mixture of comedy shows, drama, news and more. These features are designed to encourage users to stay on the app, which may be quite addictive.

DAMAGETO CONFIDENCE

Snapchat's selection of filters and lenses are seen as a great way to enhance your 'selfie game'. Although the filters are often created to promote entertainment and humor, using the 'beauty' filters on photos can set unrealistic expectations and create feelings of inadequacy. Children may strive for admiration and appreciation by sending these 'edited' photos to their friend list. Judging themselves against other users on the app might threaten their confidence or self-worth.

THE RISKS OF SEXTING

It can be slightly awkward talking about this topic with your child, but it helps them protect themselves. It is worth it. Talk to them about the consequences of sexting and make sure that they're aware of the risks. Ensure your child knows that snaps can be screenshot. Teach them that if they post anything potentially embarrassing or harmful (either of themselves or someone else) it can have severe consequences as the message, image or video can be shared further.

REPORTING A STORY, LENS, FILTER, SNAP OR MESSAGE

If your child comes across inappropriate Snapchat content sent directly to them or in another person's story, advise them to report it immediately. This may include an inappropriate lens, filter, message or snap. To report an inappropriate lens, they should open the app and select the lens they want to report. An info button will appear above the lens. Click the 'Report' button. This will send the report to Snapchat for further investigation. Reports can also be made on the Snapchat support website.

TURN OFF QUICK ADD

Quick Add helps friends find each other on the app. This is based on mutual friends or their number in their phone profile. Explain to your child that this feature can open up their profile to strangers. We highly recommend that your child turns off the Quick Add feature. This can be done in the settings.

HOW TO DELETE A MESSAGE

Advise your child never to send any negative messages or images through gallery in the chat on the app, as screenshots can still be taken. You should also advise your child to screenshot any negative comments they receive as the sender can also delete them. To delete a message, simply press and hold the sent message and press delete.

USE 'GHOST MODE'

We highly recommend enabling 'Ghost Mode' on the app so that your child's location will no longer be visible to anyone on the Snap Map. To enable this, go onto the Snap Map and tap the cog in the top-right corner. Here, change the setting to 'Ghost Mode'.

RESTRICT STORY VIEWS

Your child can add videos and images to their 'Story' throughout the day which will last for 24 hours. By default, anyone in a user's friends list can see their story. We recommend checking the privacy settings to ensure that this has not been edited. This can simply be done in the apps settings under the 'Who Can View My Story' section. The options to choose from are 'My Friends', 'Everyone' or 'Custom'. We suggest that it is set to 'My Friends'.





TikTok is a video-sharing social media app available on iOS and Android which lets users create, share, and view user created videos much in a similar manner to Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. It's main draw, however, is that users can record and upload bite-sized looping videos of themselves lip-synching and dancing to popular music or soundbites, often for comedic effect, which can then be further enhanced with filters, emojis and stickers. TikTok has been designed with the young user in mind and has a very addictive appeal. At the beginning of 2019 it skyrocketed in popularity to become the iOS store's most downloaded app with over 33 million downloads. Estimates suggest that it now has anything between 500 million and over 1 billion monthly active users worldwide.



What parents need to know about TIKTOK

MATURE CONTENT

On the iOS store, TikTok is rated as 12+. On the Google Play Store it is rated as 'Parental guidance recommended' when signing up for the app. It's possible in the about your age without any form of verification, as children access recommended 'family-friendly' content. However, there has been a number of reports of inappropriate content, including sexual content, drug use, alcohol abuse, self-harm and sexual content, including young boys dressing overly sexually and behaving suggestively. Given the danger of material uploaded to TikTok every day, it's impossible to moderate everything and it can be quite common to come across explicit content on the for you feed when logging into the platform.

ONLINE PREDATORS

As a social network, TikTok makes it easy to connect with other users. This includes the ability to comment and react to other users' videos, follow their profile and download their content. Be aware that by default, any user can comment on your child's video if they have an account but as an app, TikTok is prone to predators because of the abundance of younger users.

ADDICTIVE NATURE

Social media is designed to be addictive and TikTok is no different. It can be fun and highly entertaining, however, it also has the ability to keep you hooked. The short, punchy nature of the looping video format, the app's ability to keep you guessing what will come on screen next makes it easy to turn a five-minute visit into 45-minute visit. Aside from the content, there is also the option to purchase in-app items called 'TikTok coins'. Prices range from £0.99 for 100 coins to £39.99 for 10,000 coins. TikTok coins are used to purchase different amounts of virtual gifts for other users. In the iOS version of the app you can disable the option to buy TikTok coins but this sadly doesn't seem to be a feature in the Android version.

IN-APP PURCHASES

TikTok is very image focused and there is a notable preoccupation with appearing cool and a attractive. Many teenagers try attempt to go viral and become 'TikTok famous' (and its predecessor 'musically') famous. TikTok (and its predecessor 'musically') has spawned its own celebrities – social media stars Loren Gray and Jacob Sartorius have been captured to fame through their initial exposure on the app. Obviously, most budding influencers looking to become the next big thing will be disappointed, but they may have and more drastic lengths to get noticed.

TIKTOK FAME

TikTok revolves around creating music videos through lip-synching and making 'challenges' by users. It will continue to grow and become more popular as it gains traction. Given the unpredictability of the internet, it's hard to say how long this trend will last, but it's clear that TikTok is here to stay. It's a fun and addictive app that can be used to connect with friends and family, but it's also a platform where predators can find their way to younger users.

TALK ABOUT ONLINE DANGERS

Assuming your child is above the age limit to use the app, make sure you also take the time to talk to them about what they are seeing on the app. Have a dialogue, get them to give you their opinion on what is appropriate and model the correct behaviour for them. Go over why they shouldn't give out private information or identifiable photos and be positive and understanding of them. In the long run, getting them to think critically about keeping them social media savvy.

EXPLORE AND LEARN YOURSELF

Understanding and learning the app yourself is a great way to get to grips with TikTok. You could even use the app with your child and watch some videos with them. If you are the parent of a teen, even if it does not make you popular, keep a close eye on what they're viewing and sharing. That said, it's a brilliant chance to turn it into a bonding opportunity with your child also. You could even unlash your inner performer and make videos with them while (more importantly) keeping them safe online.

USE PRIVACY SETTINGS

Undoubtedly, the easiest way to safeguard your child on TikTok is to make sure their account is set to private. This means only those users your child approves can view, like, and follow their content. Setting the account to private may clash with your child's goal of social media superstardom, but it will keep their account secure from strangers. This safety menu by passing the ellipsis in the top tab of the app. To be extra safe, there are additional controls available to toggle such as who can send comments and messages, among other options.

BLOCK INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

With the proper privacy settings in place, TikTok can be a safe space for your child to express themselves. However, just in case something does manage to slip through, make sure your child knows how to recognise and report content that isn't appropriate and get them to come to you about what they have seen. TikTok allows users to report offenders and comments within the app. You can also block individual users by going on their profile.

LEARN HOW TO REPORT AND BLOCK INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

As entering as TikTok, you can help your child moderate their time on the app by making use of the digital wellbeing section. Under the screen time management option, you can limit the daily allotted time allowed on the app in increments ranging from 45 to 120 minutes. You can also lock this preference behind a PIN number which has to be inputted in order to then exceed the daily time limit. This way your child can get their daily dose of memes without wasting away the day.

MODERATE SCREEN TIME

Meet our expert
 Pete Badi is a writer with over 10+ years in research and analysis. Working within a specialist area for West Yorkshire Police, Pete has contributed work which has been pivotal in successfully winning high profile cases in court as well as writing as a subject matter expert for industry handbooks.

Roblox is a multi-platform online gaming platform which allows children to play and create a variety of games in a 3D world. Roblox is free to play and available on all modern smartphones, tablets, desktops, Xbox One, Oculus Rift, and HTC Vive.

According to the Roblox website, 'Roblox is the world's largest interactive social platform for play; for those of you who are unfamiliar with the game, it is a multi-player online gaming platform which allows children to play and create a variety of games in a 3D world. Roblox is free to play and available on all modern smartphones, tablets, desktops, Xbox One, Oculus Rift, and HTC Vive.'

IS YOUR CHILD UNDER 13?
 Unfortunately, there are hundreds of YouTube videos showing children how to change their age settings on Roblox, so firstly, you should talk to your child to set up some rules/agreement. There are additional safety features for children under 13, for example having their posts and chats filtered for inappropriate content and has set up their account with the correct age. You can find this in their account settings.

DISABLE IN-GAME CHAT
 Roblox is great for children to play together and chat to each other. However, if you want to completely turn off in-game chat for your child (meaning they cannot contact anyone, including their friends) you can do so by following these steps: When logged in, go to the Account Settings page by clicking on the gear icon at the top right corner of the page, then click Settings. Next, click on the Privacy tab and under 'Who can chat with me in game?' select 'No one' and this will disable in-game chat.

HAVE A CHAT ABOUT 'GRIEFING'
 Griefing is when someone purposely upsets another player in a game. This can be done by setting traps, damaging or stealing something from another player, intentionally killing them and generally doing something in the game to spoil their gameplay. Essentially, Griefing is a form of cyberbullying and can be extremely frustrating and upsetting for players.

RESTRICT PAYMENT METHODS
 Roblox is a free to play game, but there are still options to make additional in-game purchases. If you do not want your child to make payments, ensure your card is not associated with their account. If you are happy for your child to make payments in the game, but want to restrict gift card. These can be purchased in specific amounts, which will enable you to restrict how much your child spends and removes the need for a credit/debit card to be used with their account.

CHECK SHARED INFORMATION
 In the account settings, check that your child is not giving away any personal information in their bio/profile. For example, their full name, phone number or snapchat name. If you see that they have, explain why this is potentially dangerous and remove immediately.

UNLIST SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS
 Make sure your child's social media accounts are not listed in the settings/account information. If they are, advise them to set them to private or remove them from their account. This will ensure that nobody will be able to find and contact them on their social media platforms outside of Roblox.

ALERT!
 Tell your children to be careful and to think twice before they click any random advert or popup. There is a lot of phishing scams that advertise free Roblox etc. with the intent of stealing your child's personal information.

Top Tips for Parents



ROBUX ONLINE PAYMENTS
 When a user creates a game, they earn something called 'Robux', which works as a currency within the platform and enables the purchase of upgrades and memberships. If the created game is of good quality and attracts multiple players and in-game adverts, children have the ability to earn a lot of Robux. Once a user has earned a certain amount of Robux, they can convert this to real cash and withdraw it to a PayPal account. To withdraw money, users need to be over 13, have a PayPal account and have paid for the Roblox premium subscription.

CHATTING & FRIEND REQUESTS
 Whilst the games in Roblox are aimed at 8 to 18-year-olds, there are currently no age restrictions for signing up. This means that both adults and young people can play and communicate with each other and send friend requests through the platform. Once a friend request is accepted, this means that they can communicate with each other outside of gameplay.

ROBLOX STUDIO
 The Roblox Studio allows users to create their own games and 'worlds' for others to play on the platform. As the games are user generated, it gives users the freedom to potentially include things you do not want your child to be exposed to, for example, weapons, violence and even pornographic content. There are no age restrictions on the games created in the Roblox Studio and to remove games from the platform Roblox relies on people reporting negative/violent content.

What parents need to know about ROBLOX

AGE RESTRICTION 13+

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Powering Imagination