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Dear Parent/Carer

The school will help children to learn about staying safe online, but recognises that the primary responsibility for online safety at home lies with parents and carers. Your help is now needed to help your children adopt safe use of the digital technologies at home.

It is important that we are all vigilant when children are using devices and act to ensure they are protected from people who may pose a risk to them. Children can accidentally or deliberately be exposed to illegal, unwanted or unpleasant content, comments or activity online and there are steps you can take at home to minimise this risk.

We know that new apps and sites appear daily online and it would be unrealistic to ask parents and carers to understand all of them. The sites and services that your child likes to use may change regularly, but the messages they need to keep themselves safe will remain the same - think before you post, be kind online and ask for help if something makes you feel worried, upset or uncomfortable.

If your child wishes to download a new app then we would recommend considering some of the following points:

#### Listen

- Take an active interest in your child's online life and talk with them about how they use technology.
  - Ask your child why they want to use the app? How did they hear about it?
- Discuss with them how they will keep themselves safe and make sure they know:
  - How to block and report other users and content
  - To speak to a trusted adult if they see anything or something happens online that makes them feel worried, upset or uncomfortable.
  - About websites such as ChildLine and CEOP? [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) and [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

#### Functionality

- Make sure that you understand how the app works so you can decide if you are happy for your child to use it. You may even wish to set up an account yourself first.
- Consider:
  - Does it allow video chat or the sharing of images?
  - Does it allow user to communicate with 'random' strangers?
  - Does it allow anonymous chat?





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- Does it allow in-app purchases?
- Can you restrict access to the content that your child shares?
- How will your child's personal data be used by the app?

### Reviews

- What do other people (i.e. other parents and carers) have to say about the app?
  - Ask your friends and family members or take a look online. You may be able to find reviews via search engines or using tools such as [www.net-aware.org.uk](http://www.net-aware.org.uk) and [www.common sense media.org](http://www.common sense media.org)

### Age Restrictions

- You can usually find age restrictions within the apps terms and conditions. This is not the same as the app/google store rating.
- The age limit for many popular social networking sites is thirteen. This is due to American Legislation called COPPA. The age limit is not based on suitability of content and instead applies to any website, app or online service which collects, stores or uses children's personal information. Some apps will have age limits of 18+ as they are exclusively designed for use by adults.
- If children use apps that are aimed at an older age group then this may leave them vulnerable to being exposed to unsuitable content (including advertising), as well as being contacted by strangers.

### Safety

- Many popular apps will have 'help' and 'safety' sections, either within the app itself or via its website. Some apps will even have content specifically designed for parents and carers.
  - [www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk) has some useful parent guides which highlight safety tools on popular devices, and signpost to report mechanisms.
- Does the app have any privacy settings? If so then help your child to apply them appropriately - for example is it possible to set the app so that only trusted friends can see information they post?
- Explore the block and report features. Can your child block or report concerning users or inappropriate behaviour?
- If the app doesn't have safety or help sections or doesn't provide the ability to report and block then you may wish to consider if it is safe for your child to use.

### Boundaries

- Talk to your child about safe and appropriate online behaviour.
- Consider setting up a family agreement regarding how their internet use will be supervised and how long they can spend online. Resources to help can be found at





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[www.childnet.com](http://www.childnet.com) and [www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/share-aware/](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/share-aware/)

- Apply appropriate parental controls to all devices: [www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk) and [www.internetmatters.org](http://www.internetmatters.org)
- Discuss your expectations about the types of content and information they should share online, rules relating to adding friends and meeting people in real life.
- Do they understand:
  - That content posted online should never be considered to be private and may be copied and shared?
  - That they should behave online the same as they would in "the real world" and be kind?
  - How to be secure online such as by using safe and strong passwords. You can visit [www.getsafeonline.org.uk](http://www.getsafeonline.org.uk) for more advice

If you are worried that your child is at risk of harm or criminal offence has been committed then you can report your concerns to the Police or First Contact (Durham County Council). Please do not notify suspicious profiles of your actions, as this could enable them to delete material which might be required for any Police investigations. You can contact the Police via 101 or via 999 if there is an immediate risk to a child's safety or First Contact (Durham County Council) on 03000 26 79 79. You can also report online sexual abuse to CEOP by visiting [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk) and using the "Click CEOP" reporting button.

Miss Boe (Online Safety Lead), and I (The School Designated Safeguarding Lead) are available to discuss any help you may need or concerns regarding online safety that you may have.

Yours sincerely,

Ann Kane

Head Teacher

## What is Roblox?

Roblox is a gaming platform where multiple players interact and play together online. The site has a collection of games aimed at 8-18 year olds, however players of all ages can use the site. Roblox is currently available on PC, phone, tablet and Xbox One.

Every game on Roblox is created by users, and there are a wide variety to choose from. These can vary from delivering pizzas, to roaming a kingdom as a medieval knight, to even starring in a fashion show. This variety is one of the reasons that Roblox is so popular with young people.





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## Key things for parents to be aware of

### 1. Communication: how users can communicate with others

Whilst the games are aimed at 8-18 year olds, there are no age restrictions. This means both adults and young people can play and communicate with each other on the platform.

All games are multiplayer and include a written chat feature, which is visible to players within each individual game. Users can also make and receive friend requests during gameplay and this means that they can chat to each other outside of the game.

You can read more about the Roblox chat features and the way that these are moderated on the [Roblox community guidelines](#) and [within their safety features](#).

### 2. Content: what content is available that might not be suitable for children

The Roblox Studio is a section where players use their imagination and skills to create their own games and share these with others. The ability to create and play games can be very appealing to young people who like to create the content they see online.

However, because content is user-generated it can mean that some games might not be appropriate for young children. For example, whilst the graphics are not very life like, some of the games feature weapons and blood.

### 3. Costs: How children might accidentally run up costs

By creating games, users can earn Robux, the in-game currency. You can also buy Robux in the game. Players can spend money on items, such as membership to the Builders Club. .

If game creators attract players and in-game adverts, they can earn a lot of Robux, which they can convert into real money. To do this, players must be over the age of 13, have paid for Roblox's premium subscription, and have access to a Paypal account. This means that younger players would need to talk to an adult to be able to exchange their Robux for real money.

## Top tips for parents

Whatever gaming sites your children use, our advice remains the same. It is important to have a conversation with your child about the sites they use and carry on having open discussions. This will encourage them to come to you with any concerns they may have.

Involve your child in discussions and decisions about online safety and their internet usage. This will help them understand the importance of staying safe whilst having a great time online. It will also help to educate them about how they can keep themselves safe online and know what to do if something goes wrong.

### 1. Stay engaged and have regular conversations





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- Show an interest in the games your children are playing. This could be **through having a conversation** about what they like to play or could be through watching them play the game. You could even have a go at playing the games yourself! If children know you have an interest in the game, they may feel more comfortable talking to you about it or coming to you for help if they need it.
- 2. Help them understand the importance of personal information**

- Check that your child understands:
    - the importance of **keeping their personal information safe**
    - that they should speak to an adult straight away if the chat goes from being about the game to meeting up offline, personal information or sending images.
- 3. Set rules around spending money in games**

Have a conversation with your child to make sure they realise that it is possible to spend real money on the game. Make promises that work for your family; perhaps your child will have to ask you for permission before they make an in-game purchase.

If you want more help to create these promises for your family's internet use, **please refer to our family agreement.**

**4. Make use of the safety features available**

- **Block and report:**  
Make sure your child knows how to find and use the report and block functions. Use the **Roblox how to make a report page** to learn how to do this.
- **Safety settings:**  
Set up the parental controls that are right for your family. You can also disable chat, set up the Parent PIN and use the Account Restrictions within Roblox. **Click here** for more information on how to use the Safety features.
- **Settings for under 13s:**  
There are additional safety features for under-13s, so it's worth checking your child's account is registered with the correct age. Players under the age of 13 have a <13 symbol next to their username on the game at all times, however this is not displayed to other players.

**5. Encourage them to tell you about concerns**

- Remind your child that they should come to you if they ever see something inappropriate, mean comments or if anything worries them within the game. If you know how to report this type of content within Roblox, you will be in the best position to help them if they need it.

For more detailed instructions and guidance on how to use the safety features of Roblox **visit the Roblox website.**

Information from UK safer internet centre

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/roblox-guide-parents>

