

Online Safety News

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Roblox & Google Team Up

Google and Roblox have teamed up to create a new gaming experience that teaches young Roblox players how to navigate the internet safely. Called **Be Internet Awesome World**, this initiative is part of Google's Be Internet Awesome program. It invites players into a vibrant, magical world filled with "Internauts" who guide them through real-life online safety scenarios.

Google are hoping to reach some of the millions of children who use Roblox to help raise awareness around some key online safety issues such as scams, phishing and how to be a kind and responsible online citizen.

Roblox Reminder: Roblox is a game creation platform that hosts approximately 45million different games created by its users. **Many of these are not suitable for children.** Roblox also functions as a social platform, allowing players to chat, interact, and collaborate within the games. Users can join groups, add friends, and participate in virtual events. It has its own in-game currency, called Robux, which can be used to purchase virtual items like clothing, accessories, and special abilities.

Roblox has faced serious concerns over online safety, given its popularity with young children. **There are risks such as exposure to inappropriate content, online predators, and cyberbullying.** Close parental supervision and monitoring is required and it is recommended to only allow game play to happen in central areas of the home, not bedrooms, to minimise the risks outlined above.

Impact of screen time on sleep

Screen use, especially in the evening, is associated with delayed bedtimes and poorer quality sleep. The interactive nature of many apps and games keeps children awake longer than intended, pushing bedtime later into the night. Social media platforms, in particular, with their constant stream of updates and notifications, can pull kids into a cycle of endless scrolling.

Keeping devices out of bedrooms is also likely to significantly reduce the chance of your child accessing inappropriate or harmful content or people online.

Having a clear rule in place for when devices shut off and where they are stored overnight can help both sleep quality and safety



Age Ratings on The App Store & What Parents & Carers Need To Know

When it comes to apps on the App Store, there are so many out there that it can feel impossible to keep up with what's safe, what's not, and what your child might be exposed to. Whilst there is educational and creative content available there are also a number of apps that can expose children to cyberbullying, inappropriate content, privacy violations and even potentially grooming.

Watch Outs! 

Age-Appropriate Content

The App Store has age ratings for each app (e.g., 4+, 9+, 12+, or 17+), but these are often broad and might not give you the full picture. For instance, a game rated 9+ could still have in-app chat features where older users are interacting. There are also

numerous body and face editing apps which are only rated 4+

It's important to do a bit more research beyond just looking at the age rating. Look up reviews from other parents, check the app's description thoroughly, and see if there are any red flags about inappropriate interactions, hidden messaging features, or easy access to harmful content.

App Purchases and Ads

Many apps, especially free ones, are packed with in-app purchases and ads. Ads often appear in games or apps that seem kid-friendly, and sometimes these ads are not properly regulated. This means your child could be exposed to inappropriate content, whether that's violent imagery, sexual content, or just things that aren't age-appropriate for them.

Make sure you have parental controls or password requirements in place to prevent unauthorized purchase

Privacy and Data Collection

Many apps ask for permission to access things like your child's location, contacts, camera, and microphone. While some of these permissions are necessary for the app to function, others might be used to collect personal information for marketing purposes or even sold to third parties. This can lead to targeted ads and invasive tracking that might make your child vulnerable.

Look closely at the privacy policies of any app before allowing your child to use it. Apps that require too much personal information or seem unnecessarily intrusive should raise red flags. It's also a good idea to teach children not to give away personal details like their real name, school, or location when using apps, even if the app seems safe.

Predatory Behavior and Grooming

Unfortunately, some apps make it easier for predators to contact children. Social media platforms, gaming apps with chat functions, and anonymous messaging apps can all be used by predators to groom children. Predators may pose as children themselves or as friendly adults, gradually gaining trust before attempting to meet in person or exploit the child in some way.

Regularly check the apps your child is using and who they're communicating with. Many apps have parental control settings that allow you to monitor chats, block specific users, or limit who can contact your child.

