

Online Safety News

December 2024

New Tech Under The Tree

If your child is getting any new technology or related games over Christmas, it's a good idea to set up all parental controls **before** they receive it.

A family tech agreement is also great to have on hand to ensure all rules of use are agreed and boundaries in place before the access is given. Keep it simple with a few rules about where and when the device can be used, what applications or games are allowed and what time restrictions are going to be put in place.



Even if you don't celebrate Christmas or your child is not getting any new technology, chances are they will be friends, or in a class with someone who is. This makes the holidays a great time to have some chats around online safety.



The Rise of AI Tools and Deepfake Technology

AI tools like ChatGPT, MidJourney, and deepfake generators are becoming increasingly sophisticated. While they can be fun and educational, they also come with risks, such as deepfake videos being used for cyberbullying, blackmail, or misinformation.

What can you do?

- Teach your child to question what they see online and look for credible sources, such as BBC Bitesize and Newsround.
- Monitor for apps or websites that allow AI manipulation, as children could inadvertently become victims or perpetrators. There are numerous AI Buddy, Chat and Boyfriend/Girlfriend apps on the App Store. Some with an age requirement of only 4+ so blocking specific apps in your child's age range may help.
- Have conversations about the positive and ethical use of these tools such as great creative and learning tools, but also help them recognise where they may be used in less positive ways.



New Parental Controls on Roblox

Parents can now manage Roblox parental controls directly from their own devices instead of using their child's, even when apart. Verification via credit card or ID is required.

Here's a summary of the key controls available:

- **Friends List:** View who your child is friends with on Roblox.
- **Screen Time:** Set daily playtime limits. Kids will receive a notification when their time is up.
- **Chat Settings:** Users under 13 cannot send direct messages in-game by default, but parents can adjust this setting. Messaging outside games remains restricted. Public broadcasts within games are still accessible.
- **Content Maturity:** Experiences are categorized by labels—minimal, mild, moderate, or restricted. Content access is limited by the child's age, with stricter controls for users under 9 and restricted content available only to verified users aged 17 and older.
- **Spending Limits:** Manage monthly spending caps on in-game purchases.

Parents must also approve new activities not previously allowed, providing added oversight of their child's Roblox experience.

Keep in mind that parents must have a Roblox account in order to access these parental controls.



You may have seen the recent investigation about Roblox by Hindenburg, which highlights very worrying concerns about the content that can be seen on Roblox, even when users have listed their age as under 13.

You can read the full report here:

<https://hindenburgresearch.com/roblox/>



Parental Controls on Nintendo Switch

One of the most requested gaming consoles at Christmas. It's good to know that Nintendo Switch has some pretty robust parental controls available.

On the device itself, you can restrict web access, disable the ability to communicate with strangers, and set a PIN to protect your parental settings.

For an added layer of custom controls, you can download the Nintendo Switch Parental Controls app. This app offers screen time controls, content restriction settings, and the ability to monitor your child's usage.

Check out the full controls here **<https://www.nintendo.com/us/switch/parental-controls>**

Remember!

No Parental Controls are 100% effective all of the time.

It's really important to have regular chats with your child about their time online and how to stay safe.