

Online Safety News

November 2025

AI Companion Bots

AI Chatbots and wellness apps are being created at a rapid rate and many children and teens are already accessing them. It is important to remember that this is an incredibly fast moving area and regulation and safety guardrails are not currently in place to keep young people safe on these apps.



Risks to be aware of:

- Inaccurate, inappropriate or dangerous 'advice' may be given.
- Privacy and data concerns over how information is collected and used
- Children and teens turning to AI instead of a trusted adult or friend for these important conversations
- The ease at which children can feel a 'genuine connection' with an AI bot and start to believe this is their 'best friend' who is always there for them, always on their side.
- Becoming reliant on these apps for completing homework or research.



GROK: Characters like "Bad Rudi" may look cute and friendly, but many of these bots can quickly move into inappropriate, sexualised or manipulative conversations if a young person asks about relationships, feelings or "being a girlfriend/boyfriend". There is no real age verification, which means children can access adult-themed AI chats easily. It's important to talk with your child about who or what they are speaking to online, remind them that AI companions are not real friends, and encourage them to come to you if anything feels uncomfortable or confusing.

Platform Spotlight: **Discord**

Discord is a popular chat and voice platform used by many children and teens to talk while gaming or to join communities based on shared interests. It can be a positive space when used in **private, well-moderated servers** with real-life friends but it is important that parents and carers understand the risks.

Despite an age requirement of 13, Age is self-reported, which means younger children can easily access it, and many public servers contain strong language, bullying, sexual content or contact from strangers.

Discord now offers a Family Centre that lets parents see who their child is talking to which is a useful starting point. Discord users can connect directly through friend requests, which allow private direct messages (DMs), or chat with other members of a public server using two types of channels:



- **Text channels:** Written messages, links, and photos
- **Voice and video channels:** Talk or stream in real-time



**The most important
safety tool is
conversation.**

Try asking: "Who do you chat to on Discord?" | "Are these people you know in real life?"

And make sure you have used the privacy settings as tightly as possible. You can restrict who can send messages and friend requests to your child.

Let your child know they can come to you if anything feels uncomfortable — no judgment, no trouble. Just support.



Helping Kids and Teens Spot What's Real Online

Children constantly encounter images, headlines and posts online and may not always know when something has been edited, exaggerated or manipulated. The key is to help children and teens develop critical thinking rather than just "don't believe anything" (which isn't realistic). Here are some tips you can use this month:

What to say & do:

- **Ask questions together.** Try: "Does that headline sound a bit too dramatic?" or "What evidence is there for this?"
- **Check the source.** Show your child you can look together — who posted it? Is it a well-known website or someone random?
- **Look closely at the image.** Ask: "Does anything look odd or unnatural?" (e.g., shadows are wrong, people cut out, text overlaid badly).
- **Pause before sharing.** Teach: if it makes you emotional — either very excited or very angry — stop and check it before passing it on.
- **Use trusted resource sites.** Bookmark places like BBC Bitesize, or the fact-check pages of major news outlets, so your child knows there is somewhere to go.



RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

- BBC Bitesize "How to spot fake news and misleading images" (for you and to share with older children)
- Childnet and Internet Matters guides for parents and children about media literacy
- Make a short family habit of "two minutes check" before sharing content online: open the post, ask the questions above, decide together.

This is about making critical thinking normal in your home so your child learns to pause, reflect and ask questions. The more you model it together, the stronger their digital literacy and confidence will become which is an important skill in today's world.

Game Focus: Adopt Me!



Adopt Me! is one of the most popular games on Roblox, with tens of millions of monthly users, largely younger children. In the game, players adopt and look after virtual pets, decorate homes and trade items. While much of this is benign fun, there are several aspects parents should keep on their radar:

- **In-game trading and spending:** Rare pets become highly desirable. Some children, eager to collect them, may feel pressure to spend real money, or become involved in trades.
- **Scams & unsafe trading practices:** Some players claim they can "clone" pets, or offer Robux or external purchases in return for high-value items. These are not supported by the game and can lead to loss or grooming risks.
- **Social/chat element:** While chat is moderated and more restricted for younger players (especially under 13), the social nature of the game means children may communicate with people they don't know.
- **Time investment and pressure:** To reach the rarest pets legitimately, hours and days of play are required—this can drive longer screen sessions and stronger "must collect" mentalities.

What you can do:

- Sit with your child and check their profile: what age have they set up, how many hours they spend in the game, and whether trading is enabled.
- Talk through the concept of value: "Yes, that pet looks amazing but if you traded something you really liked, would you regret it?"
- Set clear boundaries around spending: enable device or app spending limits, ask your child to explain why they want a purchase or trade, and help them weigh the decision.
- Encourage shifts to cooperative play rather than purely collection: ask if they'd like to show you their favourite pets, invite a sibling to join in, or decorate a house together.
- Reassure them that they can come to you if something doesn't feel fair: a trade that went wrong, someone offering "special deals," or a sudden urge to spend more money.



For a detailed overview of this game
[Everything you need to know about Adopt Me! | Parent Zone](#)