

Online Safety

20 apps and games parents should be aware of - and how to keep children safe online

The NSPCC and O2 have provided safety advice for the most popular apps and social networks youngsters are using, as research reveals children are giving out personal details online

1. Minecraft - Minecraft is a game that lets you build and create a virtual world using building blocks. Other activities include using the multiplayer function to explore the worlds created by other users and to combat, chat and play with them. Minecraft has a PEG age rating of 7+. Children told Net Aware there are in-app purchases, you might play with people you don't know and they can message mean things, there is some violence which might be upsetting to younger players.

Advice: Look for child-friendly servers. See the Net Aware [website](#) to find out how to identify them

2. Roblox - Roblox is an online game and app where you can create your own games or play games that other users have made. There's the option to chat to other players, but you can change this to private or friends only. Young people told Net Aware you can receive or see bullying messages in the chat, there are in-app purchases and you can be contacted by people you don't know.

Advice: Explore the parental controls together and adjust chat privacy to block unwelcome and unfiltered chat.

3. Fortnite - Fortnite is a popular survival action game where up to 100 live players can fight each other to be the last one standing. The game includes heavy violence but with little blood or gore. You can talk to other players using public, private and voice chat.

Advice: Talk to your child about turning off voice chat in Fortnite's settings to protect them from inappropriate language.

4. Friv - Friv is a free gaming site that offers a wide variety of games to play including puzzles, car games and dress up games. Some of the games do include low-level violence.

Advice: Some games on Friv contain mild violence, so explore the app yourself to see if it's appropriate.

5. Kik - Kik is a free instant messaging app that lets you send text, photo and video messages to individuals or groups. You can also play games and talk to chatbots. There's a Meet New People feature that lets you start a conversation with

random users. The main things youngsters told Net Aware were that they could be contacted by people they didn't know and could be sent nasty messages.

Advice: In settings, show your child how to report or block contacts.

6. Monkey - This is a social chatting app that uses live-streaming to randomly connect you with other users. By using the app, you can collect bananas which can be used to buy merchandise.

Advice: Your child can use the report button if they come across anything inappropriate. Explore this together and talk about what they might want to report.

7. MovieStarPlanet - MovieStarPlanet is an online game and app. You can create a famous movie star character to talk to others in the chat room, play games and watch videos. Anyone can chat to you or add you as a friend.

Advice: Sign up with your child and decide whether to enter a parental email which lets you control access to certain features, like chat.

8. Pokemon Go - Pokémon GO is a free smartphone game where users find and catch Pokémon to add to their collection. The game is designed to be played outside, with players finding Pokémon in different locations.

Advice: Usernames are visible to other players on the map, so make sure your child doesn't use a real name or personal information when setting one up

9. Sarahah - Sarahah is a website and app where you can send anonymous comments and feedback to other users. There have previously been reports of bullying on the platform.

Advice: Check the privacy settings with your child and make sure the 'appear in search' and 'close inbox' functions are turned off, so only people they know can talk to them.

10. TikTok - TikTok (formerly called Musical.ly) is a social media platform that lets you create, share and discover 15 second videos. You can use music and effects to enhance your videos and you can also browse other people's videos and interact with them.

Advice: Explore the settings with your child and discuss switching the account to private to make sure videos are only shared with friends.

11. CoinMaster - Coin Master is a game where players raid and attack other people's villages. You also spin a slot machine to win coins, with the aim of building up your Viking village. There are no in-game chat features but the game does link out to a Facebook group where people can connect with each other.

Advice: This game involves spinning a wheel to win coins. As gambling is an adult theme, explore this before your child plays.

12. WeChat - WeChat is one of the world's most popular social networks. It has multiple features, including text, audio and video chat, games and location sharing. WeChat also has a feature called time capsule, which, similar to Instagram stories, lets you share short videos for 24 hours.

Advice: Explore WeChat with your child and show them how to block or report other users.

13. Yubo - Yubo (previously called Yellow) is a free social network that lets you connect and chat to new people. Users can swipe right on someone else's profile to 'like' them, and swipe left to pass on to see other people's profiles. You can direct message, video chat and livestream. Children told Net Aware that people do and say things that are inappropriate, you don't know if people are who they say they are and you can be contacted by random people.

Advice: Show your child how to report or block other users if they see anything inappropriate. Remind them they can talk to you about anything online.

14. Harry Potter: Wizards Unite - This is a free smartphone game where users explore the world of Harry Potter using augmented reality (AR). In a similar way to Pokémon Go, users travel around the real world to find and capture items and creatures. Players work together to overcome wizarding foes and complete assignments.

Advice: Your child's wizarding name is visible to other players on the map, so stay away from real names and personal information

15. Dubsmash - Dubsmash is an app which lets you create videos of yourself that are dubbed over with audio from songs, movies, TV shows and internet trends. You can share these videos, known as Dubs, with your friends, watch their videos and explore other trending videos.

Youngsters told the Net Aware team there were sometimes nasty or bullying comments written on people's videos.

Advice: On Dubsmash, you need to change the privacy settings for each video. Together with your child, tap on the lock icon to keep things private.

16. Clash of Clans - Clash of Clans is a combat game where players build their own armies (clans) and battle against other armies from around the world. You can join forces with other armies or battle against others on your own. There is also a chat feature where you can talk to other players.

Advice: Explore how to mute and report other players with your child. Let them know they can come to you with any issues or concerns.

17. Smule - Smule is an app that lets you record and upload your own karaoke versions of popular songs. You can do this by yourself or join other users. You can also livestream your singing and connect with other users in real-time to record together.

Advice: Show your child how they can block a user in the settings if they're receiving unwelcome messages or they can report them by 'flagging' their profile.

18. Miniclip - Miniclip is a free website that hosts a large collection of solo and multiplayer games that you can play on your mobile or computer. You can play against others, instant message people and comment on the games.

Advice: If you're unsure about this site, explore the games together with your child and agree what is and isn't appropriate.

19. Tellonym - Tellonym is an app that lets you ask and answer questions about each other anonymously. It's easy to come across adult themes including sex, drink, drugs and abusive comments if filters are not switched on. The official age rating is 17+.

Advice: Tellonym lets users share anonymous messages which could be inappropriate or upsetting, so show your child how to report.

20. Steam - Steam is an entertainment platform and app where you can play, discuss and create games. You can chat to other members of the community, through groups, clans or in-game chat features. Users can also livestream on Steam.

Advice: Check out Steam's parental controls feature - Family View - and agree with your child which parts of the platform should be accessible to them.

Reference: <https://www.chroniclelive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/20-apps-games-parents-should-16885889>