Online Safety Newsletter January 2023

Minecraft

Check the age ratings: Minecraft is rated by PEGI as 7+ or 12+ depending on which game version you are playing. The App store rate it as 9+ and the Google Play store rate it as 10+.

It is important to remember that when rating games, PEGI do not take into consideration the communication features of a game. Minecraft does include a chat facility, which adds further risks of seeing inappropriate language/content. This can be switched off.

Minecraft remains ever popular and can be a great learning tool that is often used in schools to teach planning skills, recreate famous buildings in 3D and coding. Players use building blocks (a bit like Lego) to create their own worlds.

Which mode?

You can choose between Creative or Survival mode - creative mode removes the survival elements of the game (no mobs appearing at night) so may be a more appropriate mode for your child to play.

What else do I need to be aware of?

- **Multiplayer –** children can interact with others (including strangers), you can switch this option off within settings or choose to play offline.
- **Block and report players** – if your child is playing with others, make sure they know how to block and report players within the game.
- **Additional purchases –** be aware of in app purchases and the purchase of additional items (skin packs) to support (although not needed) game play.

In addition, protect your child's privacy by using a nickname (don't include their age/birth year) rather than their real name for their profile and chat to your child to make sure that when playing online they know not to share personal information. **Also, make sure they know they can talk to you or a trusted adult if anybody or anything is making them feel uncomfortable.**

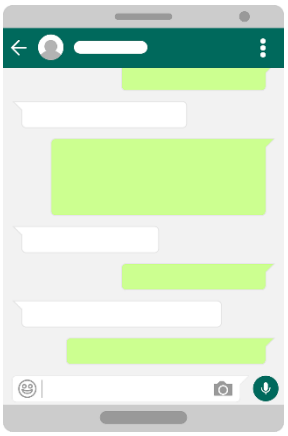
Do not forget to make sure you have set up appropriate parental controls on the device your child is using to play Minecraft as well.

Further information

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-blog/is-minecraft-safe-for-children/

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into.
Current as of the date released 1.1.23.

WhatsApp



You must be at least 16 years old to register for and use WhatsApp. WhatsApp is a free messaging app that allows you to send messages, voice notes, photos and videos.

What are the features of WhatsApp?

Group chats: One of the key features is the group chat function. Everybody in the group, even if they are not one of your child's phone contacts, will be able to see all messages within that group. *If your child is added to a group with someone that they have previously blocked, that person can still see their messages and send them messages within the group chat.*

In settings, you can change who can add your child to groups, for example, you can change it to 'my contacts', which means that only those in your child's contacts can add them to a group. You can leave a group chat at any point so talk to your child and encourage them to leave any chat that makes them feel uncomfortable. You can leave groups silently (only the admin will be notified).

Location sharing: you can share your location on WhatsApp. Talk to your child about when this would be appropriate to use but also the potential danger of sharing their location, for example with strangers.

Blocking/Reporting: Show your child how to block and report.

Online Bullying: WhatsApp has been used in instances of online bullying, e.g. to send nasty messages or share images of other children without their permission. It is important to have regular chats with your child about their online life and that they understand that they must talk to you or another trusted adult if they are being bullied. This is a helpful article from Family Lives, which talks about what to do if you are being bullied: https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/bullying/cyberbullying/what-to-do-if-you-re-being-bullied-on-a-social-network

Disappearing messages: With disappearing messages, you can control how long a message can be seen for before it is deleted – 24 hours, 7 days or 90 days (once set, this will only work for new messages).

View once messages: when sending a photo or video, you can set it so it can only be viewed once by respondents. Screenshots are also blocked when using this function.

Choose who can see your profile pic and when you're online: In settings (privacy), you can choose who can and can't see when you're online and your profile pic. You can choose either Everyone, My Contacts, My Contacts except and nobody.

Further information

https://parentzone.org.uk/article/whatsapp

TikTok refresh

Parent Zone have worked with TikTok to produce a series about safety when using TikTok. You can find out more here:
https://parentzone.org.uk/article/tiktok