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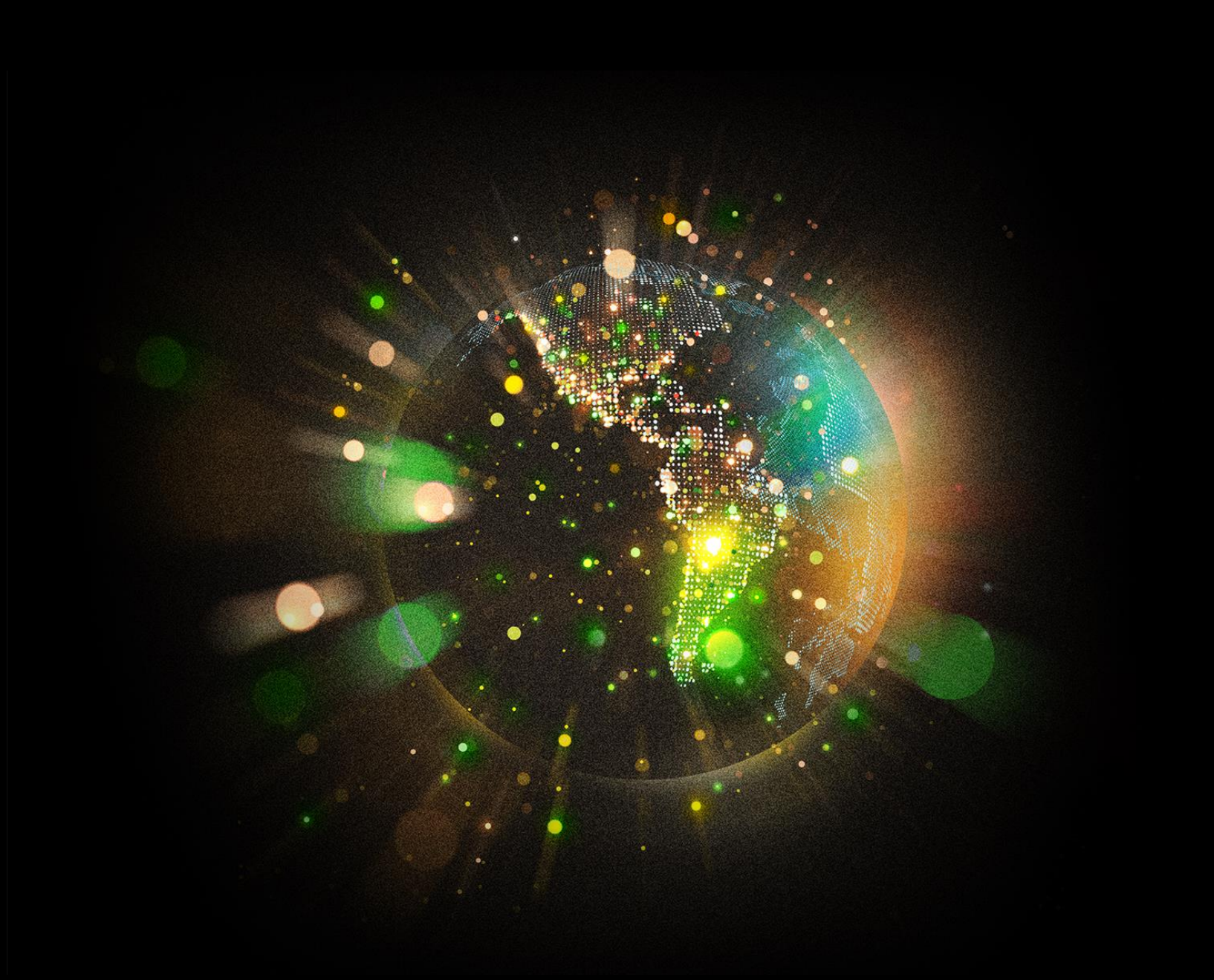


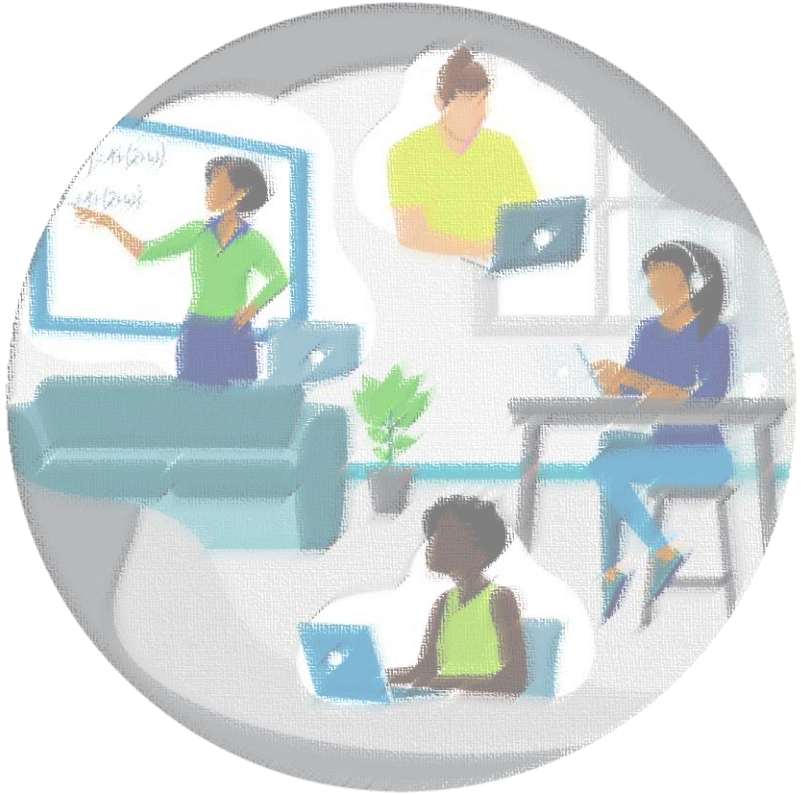
Online Safety – Parental Awareness

January 2023

Overview

Children are amongst the biggest users of technology, using apps, websites and games on their phones, laptops and games consoles. Whilst these offer many exciting features, there are risks that parents need to be aware of.

Today, we want to share the features, uses and safety concerns of popular apps, websites and games that children are increasingly using. We will cover the parental controls available and provide an overview of how these are enabled and what they do. We will try to answer any questions throughout the session.



Application / Website / Game	Slide No.
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Online Activity: What are some of the Risks?

Whenever we use online apps, websites and games, there are risks. These can impact the safety and enjoyment of those who play, browse and chat online.

Trolling

Definition: to deliberately antagonise by posting offensive comments online

Key Stats:

- 1 in 3 young people aged 14-18 received offensive online comments
- 1 in 10 have admitted to trolling

Scams

Definition: fake online scheme that takes money from an unsuspecting person

Key Stats:

- According to the FBI, 14,919 scam incidents were reported by people aged 19 and younger in 2021. These scams resulted in losses of $101.4 million

Talking to strangers

Definition: people can be anonymous online, meaning you do not know who you are talking to

Key Stats:

- In the last year, 1 in 6 children aged 10 to 15 say they've spoken to someone online that they had never met before

Unauthorised spending

Definition: many apps/games offer 'in-app' purchases, so people may spend money without permission

Key Stats:

- A Microsoft survey of 2000 adults found that 28% of their children had made in-app purchases without their permission

Offensive/adult content online

Definition: content that is offensive or contain adult themes can include violence, sexual content, hate speech and misinformation. This content is increasingly common on popular apps and websites.

Key Stats:

- 56 % of 11-16 year olds have seen explicit material online

Snapchat

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Snapchat is a popular messaging application that lets users send photos, videos and messages to friends that disappear from devices after a period of time.

Key Features…

- **Send 'snaps'** (photos and videos) that can be edited with filters and stickers
- **Chat/message or video call** with friends
- **Upload stories** (photos and videos) with all friends or the public for 24 hours
- **Explore popular stories** from influencers and browse articles

Available on…

Mobile devices

Safeguarding Concerns…

Snapchat is a photo based message app, with additional features including videos, messages and location settings. Users are required to create an account and username, then add friends to begin communicating. Key concerns include:

- Children adding strangers and sending / receiving messages from them
- People 'screenshotting' images that they are sent (images automatically vanish after a certain period of time)
- Children (un)intentionally sharing their location through the 'SnapMaps' feature

Parental Controls….

1. Open Snapchat on your child's device
2. Tap on the profile icon in the top-left corner of the screen
3. Tap the gear icon in the top-right corner of the screen to access settings
4. Scroll down to privacy settings
5. From here, you can access a variety of privacy controls including:
   - Who can send your child snaps,
   - Who can see their story,
   - Who can see their location,
   - Who can contact them.
6. Additional guidance can be found on snapchats website under family centre, which provides additional controls

NOTE: As there is currently no parent account option in Snapchat it would be possible for these settings to be undone

Discord

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Discord is a popular communication platform for groups/communities. These include gaming, education and workplaces. Discord offers text, voice and video chat for users.

Key Features…

- **Communicate** through message, voice calls, video calls in 'servers'
- **Integration with other apps** such as Spotify and Twitch
- **Share** media and files
- **Explore 'servers'**, a collection of constant chat rooms and voice channels

Available on…

Mobile devices

Computers/laptops

Safeguarding Concerns…

Discord is an instant messaging social platform which additional features including sharing files, text and voice messages,

- Real time communication is difficult to control. Audio and video streams disappear after a certain amount of time which may contain adult content.
- Reported problems take time and your child may be exposed to adult content before it can be taken down
- Low-level of content moderation as Direct messaging is not moderated
- Risk of cyber bullying with disappearing content and by creating closed groups to exclude certain kids and share cruel memes and photos

Parental Controls….

1. Sign-up for Discord on the Discord website
2. Access "Parental Controls" and turn on the toggle switch
3. You can add a child's existing account from this menu to control their privacy settings
4. Set the controls you want to enable, including
   - Who your child can add as friends,
   - Who can send them direct messages,
   - Whether they can access explicit content.

Roblox

Roblox is a popular gaming platform for children and teenagers. Roblox lets users create, play and share games with other users.

Key Features…

- **Wide variety of games** and activities to choose from
- Ability to **create and publish games** for others to play
- **In-game chat** and **messaging** features
- **Integrations** with social media

Available on…

- **Mobile** devices
- **Computers**
- **Game Consoles**

Safeguarding Concerns…

Roblox requires the user to create an account, and make a username that is not their real name. Users then declare their age and gender, with parental consent required if the user is under 18. Users are able to 'chat and party' (i.e. message, call) with anonymous users. Users then create or play a variety of games. Key concerns include:

- Roblox encourages users to make friends with other *anonymous* users and privately message them
- Usernames created may contain names, ages or suggestions of gender/sex
- Users will be of all ages (it is not just children using the platform)
- Games may contain adult content

Parental Controls….

1. Sign-up for a parent account on the Roblox website
2. Use the "Family" menu to link your child's account. Return to "Settings" menu and click "Privacy"
3. Under the "Privacy Setting for Kids" section, you can set various controls:
    - Who can send friend requests,
    - Who can chat with your child in game,
    - Who can send your child messages
4. Under "Account Restrictions" you can limit access to online multiplayer games, whether they can buy virtual items with real money, and whether they can access user generated content

TikTok

TikTok is a popular video sharing platform, letting users create, upload and engage with content and other users.

Key Features…

- **Create, upload and share videos** with other users
- Watch and comment on videos uploaded by others
- **Privately message** other TikTok users
- **Integrations** with social media

Available on…

Mobile devices

Computers/laptops

Safeguarding Concerns…

TikTok is a video streaming app that lets users share and watch short videos. Users are required to create an account and username, and follow friends, celebrities and others. Key concerns include:

- A “For You” page which cannot be controlled by the user or parents
- It is rated 12+, so there is a blanket assumption that all the content on the platform is suitable for teenagers
- No control over content like “Challenge videos” where other users ‘dare’ followers to try challenges
- Risk of unknowingly sharing personal information such as current location and surrounding through videos

Parental Controls….

1. Create an account on the TikTok app
2. Navigate to account settings and privacy
3. Open the family pairing option and select as a parent
4. On your child’s device, follow the same steps and select ‘teen’ and scan the QR code shown on your device to link the account
5. Set limits on your child's watch time
6. Limit who can send messages to your child
7. Manage privacy and safety settings
8. Choose whether their account is public or private

Instagram

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Instagram is a popular photo and video sharing social networking service that lets users create, upload and share photos and videos with other users including a direct messaging service.

Key Features…

- **Create, upload and share photos and videos** with other users
- **Watch and comment on photos and videos** uploaded by others
- **Privately message** other Instagram users
- **Integrations** with social media

Available on…

Mobile devices

Computers/laptops

Safeguarding Concerns…

Instagram is a social media app that lets users share photos and videos to the followers. Users are required to create an account and username, and follow friends, celebrities and others. Key concerns include:

- Public accounts means that anyone can see, like and comment on the photos and videos shared
- Public accounts also mean that users can receive private direct messages from anyone
- The platform allows you to share your location with others on the app
- Users may be exposed to adult / inappropriate content on the platform

Parental Controls….

1. Ensure your child's account is set as 'Private'. By default, all under-18 accounts are set to 'Private' but they can be changed.
2. To change the account privacy setting, navigate to Settings > Privacy > then toggle 'Private Account'.
3. Your child can control who messages them. Navigate to Settings > Privacy > Messages, and look at the Message Controls.
4. Adults are blocked from sending messages to people under 18 who don't follow them.

Useful Links

The following sets out a series of useful links from the developers websites providing more information on how to secure the platforms for children.

Snapchat

- Snapchat Support
- Family Center – Snapchat Support

Discord

- Parent's Guide to Discord
- Discord Support

Roblox

- Parents, Safety, and Moderation – Roblox Support
- Safety Features: Chat, Privacy & Filtering – Roblox Support

Useful Links

The following sets out a series of useful links from the developers websites providing more information on how to secure the platforms for children.

TikTok

- Guardian's Guide | TikTok
- User safety | TikTok Help Center
- Privacy Policy for Younger Users | TikTok
- TikTok Help Center

Instagram

- Parental Guide for Teens on Instagram | About Instagram
- A Parent and Carer's Guide to Instagram
- Help Center (instagram.com)

Other Useful Links

- Keeping children safe online | NSPCC
- Use Parental Controls to Keep Your Child Safe | NSPCC
- Individuals & families - NCSC.GOV.UK
- Parents and Carers - UK Safer Internet Centre
- Guides — The Cyber Helpline
- Report Remove holding page | Childline

Wrapping Up

Online games, apps and websites are a great way for children to connect, learn and have fun. However, there are risks and it is important that parents understand the features of the technology their children are using, and how to control it.

1. Technology controls are not a substitute for hearing concerns directly from your child. Even if it seems unfamiliar or strange, try to keep lines of communication open with them, to learn what they're experiencing online

2. All popular applications, websites, and games have some level of safeguarding and parental control which can help to protect children online

3. Technology changes rapidly and what is popular today may not be tomorrow. Understanding what your children are using online and staying aware of new apps, websites and games, is important

4. If things go wrong, there are resources, specialists and organisations who can support you. There is always help available

Questions

Please ask us any questions

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