

ICS Safeguarding Newsletter 6

Keep your child safe online

MINECRAFT - What is it?

A game where children explore an online world. They can use 'building blocks'.



What potential risks should I be aware of?

Minecraft can be a good way for children to be creative and try out new things, but there are some risks you should be aware of too.

Inappropriate content: Minecraft has a PEGI rating of 7, but there may be **violent content**, or content that might not be age-appropriate for your child. Users can generate their own content – for example, when the TV show 'Squid Game' (rated 15) was popular, some users recreated it in Minecraft, meaning other users could see its violent contents without watching the show

Contact: **strangers might try to talk to your child** using in-game chat functions. This could be harmless, but some adults could use platforms like Minecraft to contact children, build relationships with them and later cause them harm. Your child might also download Discord (which has an age rating of 13) to voice and video chat with others while playing

Bullying and griefing: other children (or adults) could use chat functions to exclude, bully, or intentionally ruin the game in multiplayer mode for others (known as 'griefing')

In-game purchases: children can use 'Minecoins' to make purchases in the game. These are bought through the app store on the user's device

Key terms children might use when talking about Minecraft include '**realms**' (an online server players can use through paying a subscription), and '**whispers**' (a private chat function).

6 steps to keep your child safe

1. Limit in-game communication and content for your child (e.g. to friends only)

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Xbox

First, set up a family group under your Microsoft account, following the steps on the [Minecraft website](#). Then, follow the steps for [managing multiplayer game access and online communication](#).

PlayStation (PS)

First, set up accounts for your family members on [the PlayStation website](#). Then, [restrict chat and messaging features](#).

Nintendo Switch

First, set up a family group following the steps on [the Nintendo website](#). Then, [follow these steps to restrict communication](#).

2. Tell your child to be careful about talking to people they don't know

Anyone can pretend to be a child online, so they should be careful about what they share. Tell them not to share personal information like their phone number or what school they go to.

3. Make sure your child knows how to mute or block players

[Xbox](#)

[PS4 and PS5](#)

[Nintendo Switch](#)

4. Set spending limits or require approval for purchases

[Xbox](#)

[PS4 and PS5](#)

[Nintendo Switch](#)

5. Talk regularly with your child about what they're doing online

Make this an ongoing conversation – this means they're more likely to talk to you if something goes wrong or upsets them. See tips from the NSPCC on talking to your child about online safety:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/talking-child-on-line-safety/>

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INSTAGRAM

What's the problem?

There have been many media stories about **bullying** on Instagram, and about children seeing **harmful content** about weight loss, self-harm and suicide

Children can feel pressurised to look a certain way – they might feel like they should look like other users who share weight-loss content

Research shows that young children are coming across violent material on social networking apps like Instagram.

Instagram is used for online 'grooming' – gangs use it to recruit children, and strangers can use it to contact your child and ask them for naked pictures, or to send photos to your child

News stories have highlighted how it's also used for 'sextortion', often targeted at children – the child is tricked into sharing an intimate image, which the abuser then threatens to share if the child doesn't pay or perform some other favour

The minimum age to have an account is 13. Instagram has added features to make it harder to lie about your age, but it's still possible.

7 ways to help your child use Instagram safely

1. Check that your child is on a 'teen' account

This new feature is still being rolled out, so your child may not yet have a 'teen' account.

When they do:

- Children under 16 will automatically be switched to a 'private' account (more on these below)
- Children under 18 won't be able to receive messages from, or be 'tagged' or 'mentioned' by, anyone they don't 'follow'. They will see less '[sensitive content](#)' (though this feature might not always work, according to [news reports](#))



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If your child is under 16 and wants to change their 'teen' safety settings, they'll need to add you to their account as a parent or guardian, and you'll be able to decide which features to change.

Older children can change these settings themselves, unless their account is supervised by a parent or guardian (read more about supervision in number 6 below).

2. Set their profile to 'private' to limit what strangers can see

'Teen' accounts and any Instagram account created by a child under 16 since July 2021 will automatically be set to 'private', but older accounts will have been set to 'public' by default.

Encourage your child to keep their profile 'private' so that only people who they approve will be able to 'follow' them and see content they share, including 'stories' and 'reels'.

Anyone can send your child a message directly, though (unless they have a 'teen' account). Tell them to only approve 'Follow requests' or view 'Message requests' from people they know and trust in real life.

To set an account to 'private' on an iPhone follow the instructions from the [Instagram Help Centre here](#)

To set an account to 'private' on an Android device follow the instructions from the [Instagram Help Centre here](#)

3. Restrict harmful comments and interactions on your child's posts

Open 'Settings', scroll down to 'How others can interact with you', and then 'Comments'. Here, your child can:

Decide who can comment on their 'Stories' using the [instructions here](#)

You can also:

Automatically hide comments that might be offensive and offensive words or phrases, as well as custom words, phrases or emojis by following the [instructions here for iPhone](#) and [here for Android](#)

4. Make sure your child knows about restricting, blocking and reporting

Restricting is a feature designed to protect children against bullying.

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If your child restricts someone, that user won't be able to see when your child is online or if they've read their messages. Other people won't see the restricted person's comments on your child's posts, and your child won't be notified about comments or messages from them. Your child can choose to view the user's comments and approve or delete them.

To **restrict** someone:

Follow the [instructions here for Android](#) or

Follow the [instructions here for iPhone](#)

Young people are often reluctant to block others, so reassure your child that **blocking and reporting is anonymous**.

To **block** an account follow the instructions [here for iPhone](#) and [here for Android](#)

To **report a comment** follow the instructions [here for iPhone](#) or [here for Android](#)

To **report a post** or to **report a profile**, follow the [instructions here for iPhone](#) or [here for Android](#)

To **report an abusive photo, video or message your child has received directly**, follow the [instructions here for iPhone](#) or follow the [instructions here for Android](#)

5. Remind your child to be careful about what they share and who with

It's easy for others to screenshot messages or images and share them outside of the original poster's control. So remind your child to think carefully about what they share. Before they share anything, tell your child to ask themselves: "would I be happy for other people to see this?"

In particular, make sure your child knows that taking, sharing or viewing naked or sexually explicit pictures of themselves or another child (anyone under 18) is illegal. They should ignore any pressure from others to share nude or semi-nude pictures of themselves.

6. Consider setting up supervision

Instagram allows parents or carers to supervise their child from their own account. You can set this up by going to 'Settings' on your or your child's account, then selecting 'Family Centre'.

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You and your child must both consent to using supervision before you can access any of the features.

Once you've enabled supervision, you can:

- See who your child follows, and who follows them
- Monitor how much time your child is spending on Instagram
- Receive notifications if your child reports a post or an account

7. Tell the school about any bullying or grooming concerns you have

It isn't always easy to spot signs of cyberbullying. Be alert to the following signs:

- Changes in your child's behaviour
- Your child is upset especially after using the internet
- They are unwilling to talk about their online activities
- You notice that many new phone numbers, texts or e-mail addresses show up on their device
- Your child doesn't want to go to school or meet up with their friends
- They avoid formerly enjoyable social situations
- Your child has difficulty sleeping and low self-esteem

Signs children may be being targeted by a gang, or groomed for other reasons, can include:

- Having new and unexplained possessions
- Changes in friendship groups, behaviour and/or mood
- Unexplained injuries