



SAFE ON SOCIAL TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Roblox

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Roblox

Roblox is a popular online gaming platform that is immensely popular among young people. The platform allows users to create, play, and share their games and experiences in 3D. Roblox is an interactive, multiplayer, user-generated 3D world with over 43 million active users daily, with exactly half of those 43 million daily users aged under thirteen years.

One of the main reasons why kids love Roblox is its creative and interactive nature. The platform offers tools and features that allow users to create their own games, avatars, and other online experiences. Users can experiment with game development, coding, and design, which can help them develop skills and knowledge in these areas. Kids also love Roblox for its social and multiplayer aspects.

Roblox can be a fun and engaging way for kids to explore their creativity and imagination online. It is a free-to-play platform that offers in-game purchases in the form of Robux. This in-game currency can be used to buy accessories, clothes, and gear to customize avatars and access in-game bonuses. The ability to personalize avatars and access exclusive content can appeal to kids and add to their gaming experience.

There have been reports of children being asked to be someone's boyfriend or girlfriend in the game, being asked to act as parents in role-playing games in exchange for free Robux, and being subjected to in-game abuse. Parents should educate their children about online child predatory behaviour and make sure they know it is safe to speak up if they are the target or witness any suspicious activities immediately.

What you need to know if you are the parent of a child playing Roblox.

Roblox is free to download and play, but it does contain in-game purchases in the form of 'Robux.' Purchasing Robux is not a requirement to play, and you can still enjoy the game without spending a cent.

The current recommended age rating for Roblox in both the Apple store and Google Play stores is 12+, and the game is downloadable on all smartphones, tablets, devices, and desktop computers, Xbox and Nintendo Switch, etc.

Parents should ensure their child's Roblox account is set up safely and appropriately by not using real names, their actual date of birth to engage the relevant restrictions, providing the parent's email address, and setting up parental controls.

Limit or disable friend requests and online chat capabilities within Roblox and restrict access to certain games. To set this, log into your child's Roblox account and click the Settings (gear) icon on the far right of the Roblox toolbar at the top of the window.

Parents can further limit or disable friend requests and online chat capabilities within Roblox and restrict access to certain games. To set this, log into your child's Roblox account and click the Settings (gear) icon on the far right of the Roblox toolbar at the top of the window.

Play with your children and know how to block and report inappropriate content. Encourage children to talk about their online experiences and any concerns they may have. Create a safe and non-judgmental space for their children to share their thoughts and feelings about online gaming.

What you need to know now about the risks.

Children may come across nude or semi-nude avatars within the platform and simulated sexual acts between avatars within certain role-playing games. Parents should activate Roblox child safety filters, but also monitor their child's online activities and usage of the platform.

Regular supervision, education, and discussions around online gaming safety will assist in protecting and keeping your children safe while playing Roblox.

Parents must educate their children to never share private information online, such as their full name, address, phone number, or school name. Check your own socials to ensure you are not sharing your children's personal information through things like Happy Birthday posts, photos in school uniform, sports or dance classes or anything that may piece together to tell a bigger story if your account is not set to private.

Discuss with children when and where they can play Roblox and for how long. Set boundaries and establish rules about online gaming. Keep gaming consoles and internet-connected devices out of the bedroom or set a curfew.

Parents should know that their children may ask to buy Robux to purchase new clothes, accessories, and gear to individualise their avatars and access in-game bonus content and certain user-created content games. The minimum Robux you can buy is 400 for \$4.95, and there is a monthly subscription called the 'Roblox Builders Club,' which gives users a daily Robux allowance and further access to exclusive bonus goodies. Make sure your children know that clicking on links advertising "free robux" is more than likely a scam that may gather personal information or infect devices with viruses.

Roblox updates its platform regularly. Stay up-to-date with the latest updates, features, and changes to ensure your child's safety.

What you can do to decrease the risks.

Be Aware of Role-Playing games. Some of the most popular games on Roblox are role-playing games, such as Bloxburg and Brookhaven. Monitor your children's activities within these games and educate them about appropriate behaviour and boundaries.

Disable the chat function on your child's Roblox account to limit your child's exposure to inappropriate language and messages from strangers.

Parents should use strong passwords to protect your child's Roblox account from being hacked or accessed by unauthorised users. The password should be at least eight digits long with upper and lower-case letters, plus a number included. Review your child's privacy settings to limit their exposure to strangers and inappropriate content.

Stay informed and engaged with their children's online activities, communicate openly and regularly, and seek support and guidance when needed.

Monitor screen time while playing Roblox or any other online game to ensure that they are not spending too much time on the platform.

encourage their children to make safe and positive online relationships and treat others respectfully and kindly.

Teach your children how to report cyberbullying, whether they are the victim or they witness it happening to others.

If your child experiences trauma or distress from inappropriate online behaviour, seek professional support from a qualified therapist or counsellor.

Why we should reconsider using the term 'playing'

The language we use when discussing online gaming and social media with children needs revision. It's no longer simply "playing" but more like "visiting places." These interactive platforms provide opportunities for learning, social interaction, and competition, but they also present serious risks like online predation, scams, and sextortion. We need to help children understand that these online activities have real-world consequences.

Consider the concept of the Metaverse, highlighted by the popularity of games like Roblox. The Metaverse, as depicted in Neal Stephenson's 1992 novel "Snow Crash," refers to a three-dimensional, immersive online world that resembles a massively multiplayer online game. Our children are at the forefront of this transformation as we enter this era of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies.

Children's interactions with the online world are changing rapidly. Based on my recent interactions and workshops with children in Australia, it's clear we need to update our language. Rather than referring to it as "playing online games", we should discuss it as "visiting places". Instead of saying they're "playing Roblox," we can describe it as "Going to a Roblox world."

A language shift can help children understand they're engaging in a realistic environment with tangible implications. For this to be effective, it's crucial that parents, educators, and authorities adopt the same language.

By eliminating the term "play", we help prevent the normalisation of inappropriate and harmful activities, such as online predation, sextortion, and bullying.

In 2021, I learned of a couple of alarming incidents highlighting the serious potential consequences of these online interactions. Both incidents involved children coming into harmful contact with adults through these platforms, proving that these are not isolated occurrences but are becoming increasingly common.

The first step to addressing these risks is a shift in language. We should talk about these online environments as 'places' children visit, rather than games they play. This can help children understand that their actions in these spaces can have real-world implications, and that the same principles of safety, respect, and responsibility apply online as they do offline.

During our sessions, we encourage children to discuss their experiences in these online 'places' like Roblox. We ask them questions such as:

- Who has been asked to be someone's boyfriend or girlfriend?
- Who has been offered free in-game currency to play the role of a Mum or Dad or Doctor or Nurse?
- Who has been asked to connect on another platform like TikTok, Snapchat, or Whatsapp?
- Who has been offered free Robux to lay down next to someone else's Avatar?

The prevalence of these experiences amongst children is startling, underscoring the need to change how we discuss online activities.

We must encourage children to critically evaluate their online interactions and feel comfortable expressing their concerns to trusted adults. Creating an environment of trust, open communication, and being non-judgemental empowers children to navigate their online lives confidently and to speak up without fear when things go wrong. To a child, online and off is the same thing...It's just life.

Our approach to online safety must adapt as we move towards a metaverse-dominated online culture. The complexity of these online 'places' is set to grow, and so must our methods of educating children about online safety. The Metaverse isn't just the future of technology; it's the future of childhood. Our responsibility is to prepare children to navigate this new world confidently and responsibly.

If you suspect online grooming contact local law enforcement immediately.

In Australia

If you suspect online grooming and you are in Australia, contact www.acce.gov.au immediately.

Online grooming is a serious problem in Australia, and the Australian government has taken several steps to address it through legislation. Here's a summary of the online grooming laws in Australia:

Criminal Code Amendment (Protecting Minors Online) Act 2017: This law makes it a criminal offence to use a carriage service (such as the internet or social media) to groom a child under the age of 16 for sexual activity. The offence carries a maximum penalty of 15 years imprisonment.

Enhancing Online Safety (Non-consensual Sharing of Intimate Images) Act 2018: This law makes it a criminal offence to share intimate images without consent. It also provides a scheme for victims to apply to have the images removed from social media platforms.

Crimes Legislation Amendment (Sexual Crimes Against Children and Community Protection Measures) Act 2020: This law amends various offences related to child sexual abuse, including grooming offences, to increase the maximum penalties and create new offences.

Online Safety Act 2021: This law establishes a new regulatory framework for online safety, which includes provisions to combat cyberbullying, online harassment, and harmful online content. The law creates a new eSafety Commissioner who has the power to issue removal notices to online services that host prohibited content, including grooming material.

Carly's Law is an Australian law named after Carly Ryan, a 15-year-old girl who was murdered by a man she met online. The law was passed in 2017 and makes it a criminal offence for an adult to use the internet to lie about their age and identity in order to meet a minor for sexual activity. The law carries a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment. Carly's Law is an important step in protecting children from online grooming and exploitation, and serves as a reminder of the dangers of online predators.

In Hong Kong

Under the Crimes Ordinance (Cap. 200) of Hong Kong, it is a criminal offense to engage in any behaviour that is considered to be child grooming, including online grooming. Section 161E of the ordinance states that anyone who communicates with a child with the intention of committing a sexual offense against the child may be found guilty of an offense.

The ordinance defines a child as a person under the age of 16 years. The law prohibits a range of activities, including communicating with a child for the purpose of obtaining their trust, encouraging a child to engage in sexual activity, and making arrangements to meet with a child for sexual purposes.

If convicted, an offender can face a maximum sentence of 14 years imprisonment. The punishment can be more severe if the offender commits any other sexual offense against the child.

In New Zealand

In New Zealand, online grooming is addressed under the Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015. This law makes it illegal to send or publish harmful digital communications, including those that are intended to cause distress, incite violence or self-harm, or target individuals with harassment, threats, or invasive messages. Online grooming is considered a form of harmful digital communication, and therefore, it is a criminal offence to groom a child online with the intent of engaging in sexual activity. The maximum penalty for an individual who is found guilty of online grooming is up to 7 years imprisonment.

In the UK

In the UK, online grooming is addressed under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. This law makes it illegal to communicate with a child under the age of 16 for the purpose of meeting with them with the intention of committing a sexual offence. The law also criminalizes the use of the internet or other electronic communication devices to groom a child for sexual activity. The maximum penalty for online grooming is 14 years imprisonment.

In addition to the Sexual Offences Act, the UK government has established the National Crime Agency's Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Command, which is dedicated to identifying and combating online child sexual abuse.

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