

# FARINGDON INFANT SCHOOL

Faringdon Learning Trust

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*Our Vision for FIS –*

*Future of Faringdon; Including all; Supporting everyone to grow*

Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Dear Parents and Carers,

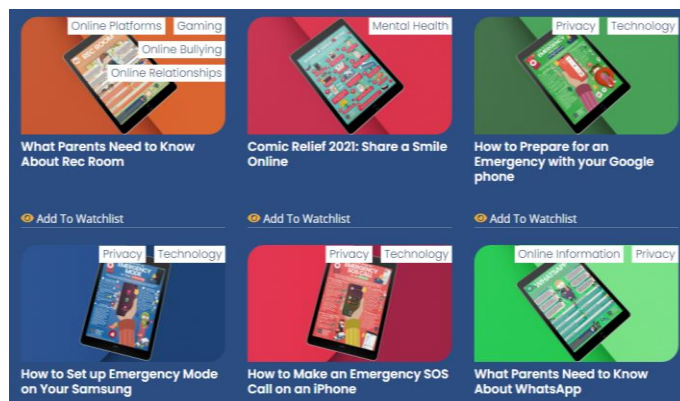
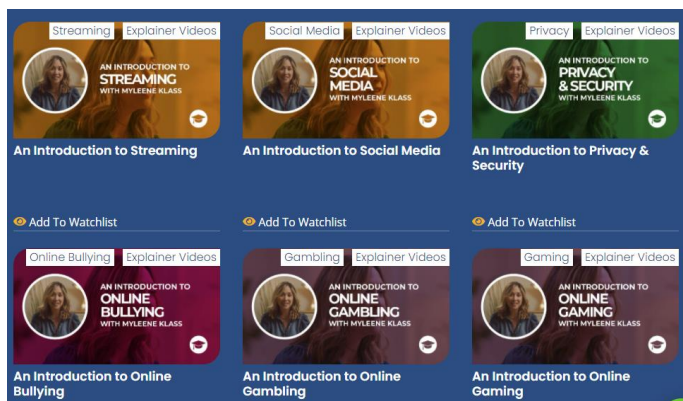
It has come to our attention that a number of children are sharing **online safety concerns** at the moment particularly when using websites, games and apps like **Roblox, Fortnite** and **TikTok**. All of these websites have been given an age recommendation of 12+ or 13+ and are therefore not age-appropriate for children attending our school.

We have attached to this letter Parent Guides about Online Content, Roblox, Fortnite and TikTok to explain what to look out for, concerns that these sites can raise and how to monitor online behaviour and content.

We know that the online world has a lot to offer to help educate and entertain children but just wanted to raise your awareness about the suitability of online content.

All of these guides are available through the National Online Safety website which we have subscribed to as a school. Just click on <http://nationalonlinesafety.com/enrol/faringdon-infant-school> and complete your details. When you're set up, you'll be able to set 'Parent/Carer' as your user type.

As parents and carers you can access this fantastic resource which offers you short 'Explainer Videos' that are only a few minutes long and 'Guides' on a range of online safety topics such as the latest games, websites, mental health, social media and streaming. Here are a couple of screenshots showing just a tiny handful of the vast range of resources you can access as parents:



Please take advantage of this fantastic resource and take the time to read the guides about Online Content, Roblox, Fortnite and TikTok and talk with your children about whether these online platforms are appropriate for their age.

Yours Sincerely

Mrs Robins  
Headteacher

Miss Cossey  
Online Safety Lead

# ONLINE CONTENT

## 10 tips to keep your children safe online

The internet has transformed the ability to access content. Many apps that children use are dependent on user-generated content which can encourage freedom of expression, imagination and creativity. However, due to the sheer volume uploaded every day, it can be difficult for platforms to regulate and moderate everything, which means that disturbing or distressing images, videos or audio clips can slip through the net. That's why we've created this guide to provide parents and carers with some useful tips on keeping children safe online.



### 1 MONITOR VIEWING HABITS

Whilst most apps have moderation tools, inappropriate content can still slip through the net.



### 2 CHECK ONLINE CONTENT

Understand what's being shared or what seems to be 'trending' at the moment.



### 3 CHECK AGE-RATINGS

Make sure they are old enough to use the app and meet the recommended age-limit.



### 4 CHANGE PRIVACY SETTINGS

Make accounts private and set content filters and parental controls where possible.



### 5 SPEND TIME ON THE APP

Get used to how apps work, what content is available and what your child likes to watch.



### 6 LET CHILDREN KNOW YOU'RE THERE

Ensure they know that there is support and advice available to them if they need it.



### 7 ENCOURAGE CRITICAL THINKING

Talk about what people might post online and why some posts could cause distress.



### 8 LEARN HOW TO REPORT & BLOCK

Always make sure that children know how to use the reporting tools on social media apps.



### 9 KEEP AN OPEN DIALOGUE

If a child sees distressing material online; listen to their concerns, empathise and offer reassurance.



### 10 SEEK FURTHER SUPPORT

If a child has been affected by something they've seen online, seek support from your school's safeguarding lead.

 **National Online Safety**  
#WakeUpWednesday



**Fortnite: Chapter 2 has finally landed!** With a whole host of new in-game features including a brand-new map, more water-based activities, upgraded character skins and a more streamlined arsenal of weapons, this Fortnite is promising to be the best yet. Almost all of the changes are cosmetic which means the concept of the game remains the same, with players still aiming to be the last man standing. Players will no doubt find the game much more enjoyable with so much more to explore. For parents and carers however, it pays to remain vigilant.



## What parents need to know about

# FORTNITE

## CHAPTER

# 2

### BATTLE ROYALE

Battle Royale games have become very popular over the last couple of years, and most tend to follow a very similar setup. Taking Fortnite as an example, 100 players drop into a map, loot buildings for weapons and armour and attempt to beat all the other players to be crowned victor at the end. If you've ever seen the Hunger Games movies, you'll have an idea of what this entails. Each game can take up to 20 minutes (assuming you last to the end) and can be restarted relatively quickly once 100 live players have been found.



### IS FORTNITE ADDICTIVE?

Fortnite is at the forefront of gaming addiction discussions because it is so popular with young people. But whether it actually contributes to gaming addiction is up for debate. WHO (World Health Organisation) have classified gaming as a legitimate addiction, but this is not solely a concern with Fortnite. Signs of addiction can include irritability when not playing, lying about the amount of time played and a preoccupation with thoughts of the next gaming session. Realistically, it must be down to parents and carers to recognise these symptoms and act accordingly if they think they are developing.



### FREE TO PLAY... OR IS IT?

While Fortnite is technically free to play (in that you can download and play it without paying) it does come with the caveat that spending money on things like skins and emotes in-game is heavily pushed to players. The currency used in-game is called 'V-Bucks' and can be bought with real money through the game's online store. It's worth remembering that these purchases are absolutely not necessary, are cosmetic only and that V-Bucks can be earned in-game with enough play time.



### SEASONAL UPDATES

Every 10 weeks or so Fortnite is updated with a new season. This essentially adds new things like skins and emotes to the game, while also sometimes changing up the game map in interesting ways. These seasons are free to everybody and don't require additional money to play, though battle passes for each season can be bought with V-Bucks. A battle pass will typically allow a player to earn experience faster and gain fun in-game items by completing a host of daily challenges.



### CROSSPLAY IS AVAILABLE

One of the wonderful things about Fortnite is that it can be played cross platform. This means that no matter what platform a person plays on (PC, PlayStation 4, Xbox One etc) they can play with friends who own the game on a different platform. To do this, an Epic Games account must first be created online (which is free) and then linked with your platform account. Doing this removes the age old boundary of not being able to play together because you don't have the same console and opens up a whole new world of playing online with friends.



### IS FORTNITE VIOLENT?

Fortnite has been rated by the ESRB (Entertainment Software Ratings Board) as teen, as it contains cartoon violence and the weapons and acts depicted in the game are some way removed from their real life inspirations. Characters don't draw blood when shot and instead of dying, they are simply boomed up off the map. Naturally, players younger than the recommended age limit will want to play the game and that should be at the discretion of parents and carers.



## Top Tips for Parents

### BUYING V-BUCKS

As mentioned, Fortnite does contain in-game purchases and microtransactions in the form of V-Bucks which can be bought with real money. If you do decide to let your young one spend money in the game, be sure to check your card information afterwards as it can be very easy to purchase more items at the press of a few buttons. It's important to set a limit on any purchases (as mentioned they are absolutely not necessary to play the game) and a suggestion would be capping the spending at around £50 - this is the normal retail price of a game.



### GAMING WITH STRANGERS

Fortnite Battle Royale is an online game, and as such, there is a chance that young children could come into contact with strangers who are randomly placed into their groups in a game. It's difficult to predict what another person might say or do in a game, so it's a good idea for friends playing together, to be grouped together. The only real countermeasure to interacting with strangers offered by Fortnite is to turn off all mic communications, which can be done in the game's settings. Using outside chat apps, like Skype or Discord while playing, is a great way to make sure you know who you're talking to and that nobody else is listening in.

### LIMIT TIME, BUT BE FLEXIBLE

A game of Fortnite can last up to 20 minutes, so be flexible when it's time to put it away. The amount of time (more games) as opposed to '10 more minutes' will stop any complaints that a match is still ongoing. Better still, play with your child and take it in turns that way you're helping control the time played and can keep an eye on what they're experiencing.



### TALK TO OTHER PARENTS / CARERS

If you're concerned about play time or spending money in the game, talk to other parents and carers of your child's friends. If you approach as a collective, it will be easier to know when their friends are online and you don't have to worry about who they're playing with. It can also help our expectations on spending money on battle passes and skins if you stick together.



### CAN DEVELOP SOME IMPORTANT SKILLS

It's often overlooked just how good gaming can be for young people. Fortnite encourages team play, quick and complex problem solving and communication; that's not to mention the lightning fast reflexes gamers can develop. While taking breaks to do other activities is of course important, there are benefits to screen time which might not be immediately obvious.



### PLAY THE GAME YOURSELF

There's no substitute for sitting down and playing the game yourself to learn all about it. Fortnite is available for free on almost anything you can imagine, even your smartphone, so there's never been a better time to get involved and see what all the fuss is about. You never know, you might even be able to impress your child on when you show them your impressive Victory Royale tally!



### Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGBible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.



<http://www.thegaminginsider.com/games/2019/04/22/fortnite-battle-royale-parents-guide-video-game-galaxy> <http://www.unilad.com/gaming> <http://www.gamingbible.com>



TikTok is a video-sharing social media app which lets people create, view and download looping 15-second clips. Typically, these are videos of users lip-syncing and dancing to popular songs or soundbites (often for comic purposes), enhanced with filters, effects and text. Designed with young people in mind, TikTok skyrocketed in popularity in 2019 and has featured near the top of download charts ever since. It now has around 800 million active users worldwide.



## What parents need to know about



# TIKTOK



### AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Most videos appearing on a child's feed are light-hearted and amusing. However, some clips have been reported for featuring drug and alcohol abuse, themes of suicide and self-harm, or young teens acting in a sexually suggestive way. The sheer volume of uploads is impossible to moderate entirely – so it is possible for a child to be exposed to explicit and age-inappropriate content.



### EXPLICIT SONGS

TikTok primarily revolves around videos of users lip-syncing and dancing to music. Inevitably, some featured songs will contain explicit or suggestive lyrics. Given the app's young user-base, there is a risk that children may view older users' videos and want to imitate any explicit language or suggestive actions.



### TIKTOK FAME

The app has created its own celebrities: Charli D'Amelio and Lil Nas X, for example, were catapulted to fame by exposure on TikTok – leading to many more teens attempting to go viral and become "TikTok famous". While most aspiring stars hoping to be "the next big thing" will find it difficult, setbacks may in turn prompt them to go to even more drastic lengths to get noticed.



### HAZARDOUS VISIBILITY

Connecting with others is simple on TikTok – including commenting on and reacting to users' videos, following their profile and downloading their content. The majority of these interactions are harmless, but – because of its abundance of teen users – TikTok has experienced problems with predators contacting young people.



### ADDICTIVE NATURE

Like all social media, TikTok is designed to be addictive. It can be hugely entertaining – but that also makes it hard to put down. As well as the punchy nature of the short video format, the app's ability to keep you intrigued about what's coming next mean it's easy for a 5-minute visit to turn into a 45-minute stay.



### IN-APP PURCHASES

There's an in-app option to purchase 'TikTok coins', which are then converted into digital rewards for sending to content creators that a user likes. Prices range from 99p to an eye-watering £99 bundle. Buying coins is now restricted to over-18s – but TikTok doesn't require users to verify their age on sign up, so a young person could easily access this feature if they were determined to.



## Advice for Parents & Carers

### TALK ABOUT ONLINE CONTENT

Assuming your child is above TikTok's age limit, talk to them about what they've viewed on the app. Ask their opinion on what's appropriate and what isn't. Explain why they shouldn't give out personal details or upload videos which reveal information like their school or home address. In the long run, teaching them to think critically about what they see on TikTok could help them to become social-media savvy.



### MAINTAIN PRIVACY SETTINGS

In early 2021, TikTok changed the default setting for all under-18s' accounts to 'private'. Keeping it that way is the safest solution: it means only users who your child approves can watch their videos. The 'Stitch' (which lets users splice clips from other people's videos into their own) and 'Duet' (where you build on another user's content by recording your own video alongside their original) features are now only available to over 18s. This might clash with your child's ambitions of social media stardom, but it will fortify their account against predators.



### LEARN ABOUT REPORTING AND BLOCKING

With the correct privacy settings applied, TikTok is a relatively safe space. However, in case something does slip through, make sure your child knows how to recognise and report inappropriate content and get them to come to you about anything upsetting that they've seen. TikTok allows users to report anyone breaching its guidelines, while you can also block individual users through their profile.



### ENABLE FAMILY SAFETY MODE

'Family Safety Mode' lets parents and carers link their own TikTok account to their child's. Through your mobile, you can control your child's safety settings remotely – including limiting screen time, managing their ability to exchange messages (and with whom) and blocking a lot of age-inappropriate content.



### USE RESTRICTED MODE

In the app's 'Digital Wellbeing' section, you can filter out inappropriate content (specific content creators or hashtags, for instance) using 'Restricted Mode'. This can then be locked with a PIN. You should note, though, that the algorithm moderating content isn't totally dependable – so it's wise to stay aware of what your child is watching.



### MODERATE SCREEN TIME

As entertaining as TikTok is, you can help your child to manage their time on it in the 'Digital Wellbeing' section. Under 'Screen Time Management', you can limit the daily permitted time on the app (in increments ranging from 40 minutes to two hours). This preference can also be locked behind a PIN. That way, your child can get their regular dose of TikTok without wasting the whole day.



### Meet our expert

Parveen Kaur is a social media expert and digital media consultant who is passionate about improving digital literacy for parents and children. She has extensive experience in the social media arena and is the founder of Kids N Clicks: a web resource that helps parents and children thrive in a digital world.



SOURCES: [www.tiktok.com](http://www.tiktok.com)



[www.nationalonlinesafety.com](http://www.nationalonlinesafety.com)



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Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 24.02.2021



**ROBLOX**  
Powering Imagination

According to the Roblox website, 'Roblox is the world's largest interactive social platform for play.' For those of you who are unfamiliar with the game, it is a multi-player online gaming platform which allows children to play and create a variety of games in a 3D world. Roblox is free to play and available on all modern smartphones, tablets, desktops, Xbox One, Oculus Rift, and HTC Vive.



AGE RESTRICTION  
**13+**

# What parents need to know about **ROBLOX**



## ROBLOX STUDIO

The Roblox Studio allows users to create their own games and 'worlds' for others to play on the platform. As the games are user generated, it gives users the freedom to potentially include things you do not want your child to be exposed to, for example, weapons, violence and even pornographic content. There are no age restrictions on the games created in the Roblox Studio and to remove games from the platform Roblox relies on people reporting negative/violent content.

## CHATTING & FRIEND REQUESTS

Whilst the games in Roblox are aimed at 8 to 18-year-olds, there are currently no age restrictions for signing up. This means that both adults and young people can play and communicate with each other and send friend requests through the platform. Once a friend request is accepted, this means that they can communicate with each other outside of gameplay.



## ROBUX ONLINE PAYMENTS

When a user creates a game, they earn something called 'Robux,' which works as a currency within the platform and enables the purchase of upgrades and memberships. If the created game is of good quality and attracts multiple players and in-game adverts, children have the ability to earn a lot of 'Robux.' Once a user has earned a certain amount of Robux, they can convert this to real cash and withdraw it to a PayPal account. To withdraw money, users need to be over 13, have a PayPal account and have paid for the Roblox premium subscription.



**National Online Safety**

# Top Tips for Parents

**ALERT!**  
Tell your children to be careful and to think twice before they click any random advert or popup. There a lot of phishing scams that advertise free roblox etc. with the intent of stealing your child's personal information.

## UNLIST SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

Make sure your child's social media accounts are not listed in the settings/account information. If they are, advise them to set them to private or remove them from their account. This will ensure that nobody will be able to find and contact them on their social media platforms outside of Roblox.



## CHECK SHARED INFORMATION

In the account settings, check that your child is not giving away any personal information in their bio/profile. For example, their full name, phone number or snapchat name. If you see that they have, explain why this is potentially dangerous and remove immediately.

## 2-STEP VERIFICATION

Roblox has a great two-step verification security feature which we recommend you enable to add an extra layer of security to your child's account.

## HAVE A CHAT ABOUT 'GRIEFING'

Griefing is when someone purposely upsets another player in a game. This can be done by setting traps, damaging or stealing something from another player, intentionally killing them and generally doing something in the game to spoil their gameplay. Essentially, 'Griefing' is a form of cyberbullying and can be extremely frustrating and upsetting for players.

## RESTRICT PAYMENT METHODS

Roblox is a free to play game, but there are still options to make additional in-game purchases. If you do not want your child to make payments, ensure your card is not associated with their account. If you are happy for your child to make payments in the game, but want to restrict spending, we suggest using a games console gift card. These can be purchased in specific amounts, which will enable you to restrict how much your child spends and removes the need for a credit/debit card to be used with their account.

## DISABLE IN-GAME CHAT

Roblox is great for children to play together and chat to each other. However, if you want to completely turn off in-game chat for your child (meaning they cannot contact anyone, including their friends) you can do so by following these steps: When logged in, go to the Account Settings page by clicking on the gear icon at the top right corner of the page, then click Settings. Next, click on the Privacy tab and under 'Who can chat with me in game?' select 'No one' and this will disable in-game chat.

## IS YOUR CHILD UNDER 13?

Unfortunately, there are hundreds of YouTube videos showing children how to change their age settings on Roblox, so firstly, you should talk to your child to set up some rules/an agreement. There are additional safety features for children under 13, for example having their posts and chats filtered for inappropriate content and behaviour, so it is worth checking that your child has set up their account with the correct age. You can find this in their account settings.

SOURCES

corp.roblox.com and press kit - All images shown belong to Roblox ©2018 Roblox Corporation. Roblox, the Roblox logo, Roblox, Bloxy, and Powering Imagination are among our registered and unregistered trademarks in the U.S. and other countries.

