



What Parents & Carers Need to Know About CLUBHOUSE



Clubhouse is an audio-only social media networking app that is currently available only to Apple users. The app encourages conversation between users, in various rooms discussing topics from the serious (health, sports, cryptocurrency, etc) to the more frivolous (favourite cereals, corniest jokes and so on). Clubhouse is like an interactive podcast that allows real-time two-way communication. The app is still in beta-testing stage and is invite only – you can only join if someone sends you an invite.

Fear of Missing out



Clubhouse's exclusivity has created significant curiosity and FOMO ('fear of missing out') among internet users still awaiting their invite. Many have turned to Reddit forums and social media for a way in. Scammers are exploiting this excitement: there have been people with the same username selling invites on different platforms. This is a red flag, since any one person only gets two invites to use.

Lack of Moderation



Clubhouse wants to be a safe environment for its users and aims to assign a moderator to every room. However, as users are able to create their own rooms at will, it is hard to see how all of these could be appropriately moderated. Hence, a young person listening in could easily be exposed to adult language or comments that could be deemed offensive.

Recorded Conversations



There has been no evidence to date of Clubhouse conversations being leaked onto the wider internet. But the possibility cannot be dismissed that someone could easily record a conversation and then circulate it online. This would become a problem if a young person used their real name on the app and discussed a potentially sensitive issue in any of the rooms.

No Age Verification



The app is targeted at users aged 18 or over. However, there is no age verification system in place (as yet), so anyone under 18 could easily join the app if they received an invitation. As Clubhouse encourages forthright discussion among adults, a young person signing up to the app would be highly likely to hear vigorous discussions of age-inappropriate subjects.

Insufficient Safety Protocols



Although the app condemns hate speech and online abuse – and is working hard to keep these off the platform – there have been some safety concerns about Clubhouse. The speakers in some rooms, for instance, have been found to be taking advantage of the lack of moderation to incite hate against minority groups.

Accidental Exposure



There are three types of room: open (anyone can join), social (only for someone's 'friends' on the app) and closed (the room creator decides who is allowed in). A child could easily be invited to join rooms by their friends or by someone they follow. This may result in them accidentally joining rooms that aren't age appropriate. There is currently no way to prevent this from happening on the app.



Advice for Parents & Carers

Use 'Closed' Rooms



If your child is determined to use Clubhouse, emphasise that – in privately created rooms – they should only chat with people who they actually know. When creating their own chat room, encourage them to always set it to 'closed' (so only they can decide who can listen in or join the conversation) and don't allow strangers to have access.

Block or Report



Even as just a listener you can block someone or report them for abusive behaviour. If your child comes across a speaker in Clubhouse that is being offensive or abusive, then encourage them to block and report that user. It's good practice to always walk your child through blocking and reporting on any app with those facilities, giving them a method to protect themselves.

Emphasise Digital Etiquette



There are no text-messaging or image-sharing options currently available on Clubhouse; speakers whose presentation needs a visual element change their profile picture as a way to show the image. But it is still possible that conversations (even in private rooms) may be recorded by another user. Remind your child of the importance of maintaining good digital etiquette and behaviour.

Avoid Linked Social Media



When creating a profile, users can link it to their Twitter or Instagram account. Many people have used this to then connect with or message others users directly. You can protect your child's personal information by keeping any other social media accounts they might have separate from Clubhouse. This will reduce the potential of a stranger privately messaging your child away from the app.

Talk about the App



Clubhouse is for over 18s. So if a young person really *does* want to use the app, assess whether they are mature enough to handle some of the conversations they might encounter before allowing them to download it. Prevent them being misinformed by encouraging them to research the speakers they follow – making sure that they are credible people who are qualified to present on a particular topic.

Explore It Yourself



If your child is interested in Clubhouse, perhaps the best way to understand how the app works, and its format and content, is to download it yourself before they do. Trying the app will help you to decide if it is appropriate for your child to use. If you're not happy that it's suitable, explain your reasoning to your young one and possibly cooperate in researching more child-friendly alternatives.

Meet Our Expert

Parven 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.



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