



# APRIL: ONLINE SAFETY BULLETIN

## Roblox

Roblox is one of the most popular video games on the market. Roblox offers a huge amount of creative freedom: it lets players create their own gaming experiences with the Roblox studio to build custom levels and games, which can be shared other players online. Roblox fosters creative thinking and enjoys a robust online community of fans. There are however, some issues that parents should be aware of.

### **What age is Roblox for?**

Roblox doesn't specify a minimum age. Users of any age can create and join groups, chat, and interact with others. Such an open approach can pose some risks to children, especially younger ones. And though Roblox has some safety precautions in place, it remains a target for people with less-than-good intentions.

Still, because of the learning potential Roblox offers, Common Sense Media rates it OK for users age 13+. Help your children protect themselves by enabling privacy settings and teaching them how to be safe online.

# What are Robux?

Robux are Roblox's in-game currency. You use them for a range of things, including special outfits or animations for your avatar, unique abilities in games, and weapons and other objects. There are different ways to get Robux: You can buy them, get them as part of a Premium membership, trade for them, or have someone donate them to you. You can also earn them by charging Roblox users to play games you've created and by charging for items in your games.

## How much does Roblox cost?

Roblox uses a freemium/premium model. Doing anything beyond the basics requires Robux.

Are there parental controls for Roblox?

Roblox offers account controls that let adults restrict how children can interact on the site and the types of games they can play. The controls are optional, and children of any age can create an account on Roblox with no parental restrictions. On accounts for children under 13, Roblox automatically defaults to stricter settings, but a child could change these if there's no parent PIN.

## Can you make real money from Roblox?

Yes, you can make real money on Roblox. In fact, dedicated creators can earn a lot of money. Roblox offers a few different revenue-generating models, including charging others for access to games you create, charging incremental fees within your game, and trading rare items that other players are willing to pay for. To earn money, you have to be 13 or older, hold a Premium membership, and have at least 100,000 Robux in your account. Then you can trade the Robux in to the company for real money.



## Is there chat on Roblox, and is it safe?

Roblox encourages users to interact through its Chat & Party function. All chat is filtered, which means inappropriate language is replaced by symbols. Chatting for accounts of children under 13 is more heavily filtered. Roblox also employs human monitors who keep an eye out for inappropriate language and content. However, even with the monitors and filtered chat, people have figured out ways to bypass this, so knowing who you're talking to is vital for safe interaction.

## What are "ODers" in Roblox?

"OD" stands for "online dater." These are folks who join social networks, including gaming sites like Roblox, to find romantic partners. Games on Roblox can even be designed expressly for ODers. Roblox doesn't explicitly forbid ODers, and ODers aren't necessarily preying on children. (They may be solely looking for other ODers.) Roblox's monitors look out for inappropriate conversations and content. And its community rules prohibit chat that's sexual in nature. Keep in mind that sexually explicit chat can still happen and move over to other parts of the platform.

If your child wants to use Roblox, it's critical that you review online safety, such as how to identify potential predators, how to report and block users, and how to spot "grooming" behavior, which predators use to get their victims to trust them.





## Are sexual predators a big problem on Roblox?

There are predators on Roblox, as there are on many popular social networks. Predators take advantage of Roblox's easily accessible chat to target their victims. (All you have to do is sign up for Roblox to start chatting, and the Chat & Party window is featured on nearly every page of the site.) Roblox uses human monitors as well as technology to weed out those with bad intentions, but they still crop up occasionally. To avoid being contacted by a predator, and to play as safely as possible, children should enable the most restrictive contact settings. You can prevent anyone from contacting you by turning off chat entirely or limiting interactions to only friends. You should coach your children to not chat with people they don't know and to not accept private messages (PMs) from anyone they don't know. Make sure they know never to give away personal information, to trust their instincts if someone makes them uncomfortable, and to never move a conversation to a different platform (a common red flag with predators)

## Managing device stress and anxiety

*In 2023 our children can access new music and movies in seconds. They can get products delivered to the door the very next day. They can chat or play games with people on the other side of the planet. There are many remarkable benefits brought to us by the digital age, however, it has also presented us with a whole new raft of pressures and anxieties that we and our children are still learning to cope with.*

*From continual notifications inflaming a fear of missing out to the risk of public embarrassment or slanging matches on social media, today's children and young people have stresses to manage that previous generations simply never encountered. We have attached a guide put together by National Online Safety that highlights some suggestions for reducing some of these stresses. It contains suggestions on reducing push notifications from apps, avoiding social media arguments and spotting when children have been upset by something online.*



# National Online Safety

## National Online Safety

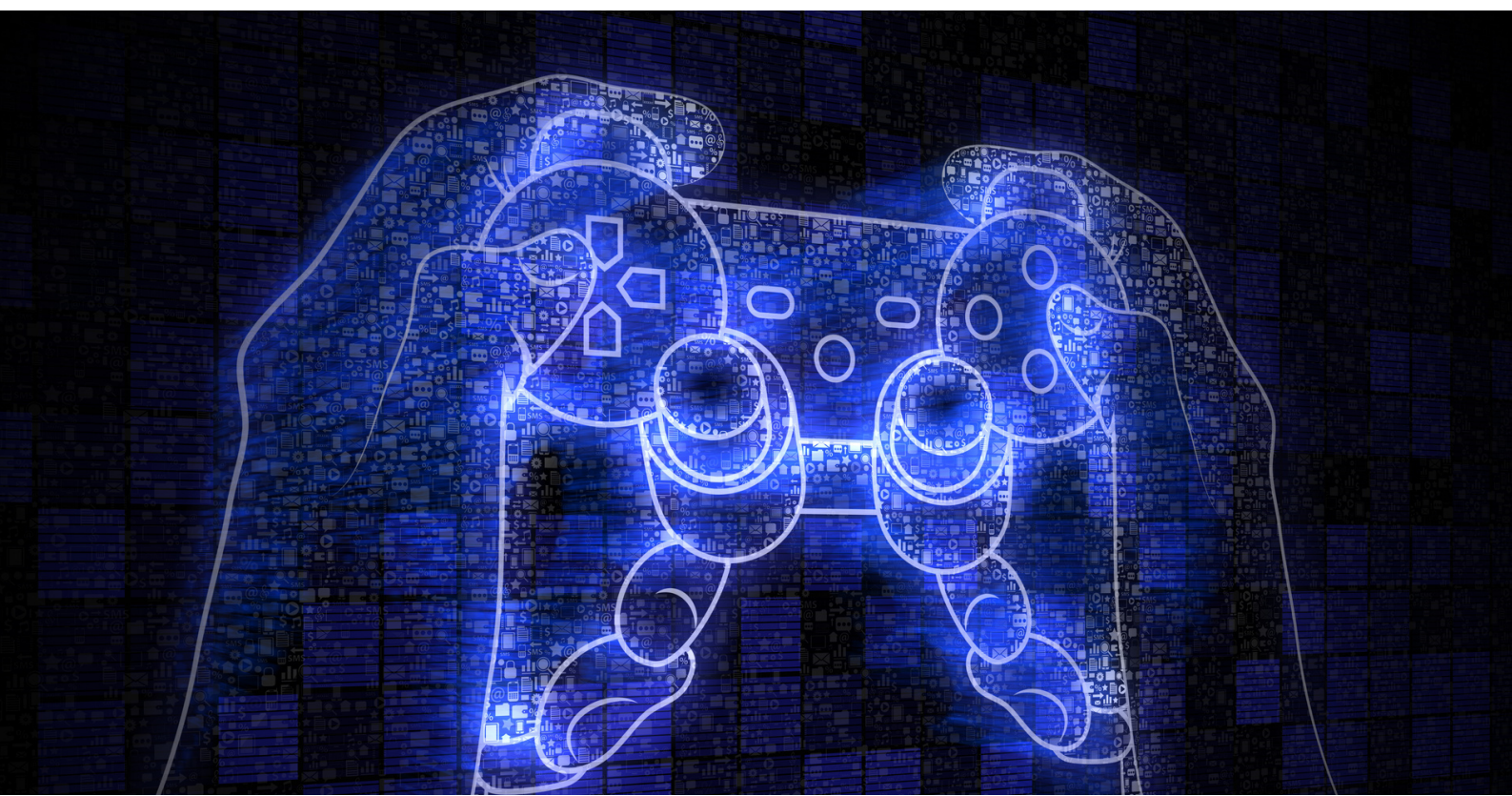
A reminder that all of our parents are able to access more detailed information on the National Online Safety platform, access details below.

To create a parent account, please follow <https://nationalonlinesafety.com/enrol/wellington-school> and complete your details.

You can access National Online Safety online via any device- including via a brand-new smartphone app.

To download the app, please go to:  
<https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/national-online-safety/id1530342372>

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.co.nationaleducationgroup.nos>





# Helping children and young people with MANAGING DEVICE STRESS AND ANXIETY

The internet and advances in the capability of digital devices have afforded us arguably the fastest period of technological and social evolution in living memory: creating opportunities for us to interact with people anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day. It's also, however, blurred safety boundaries and added new stresses for young people, who are often less aware of the hidden hazards. With almost half of 10-15-year-olds experiencing bullying online and algorithms pushing content in front of our children every day, it's important to know how to address some of these challenges.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### LIVING ONLINE

The internet is awash with sophisticated algorithms that learn from our online behaviour and try to predict our wants and needs. That's very helpful in some respects, but it can make the online world difficult for children and young people to negotiate. Content can be brought to them at any time – it may not always be appropriate, and children may not have the ability or the support to deal with it.

### PUSHY NOTIFICATIONS

Content is also directed at us through notifications from our apps: letting us know we have a new message or social post to read, for example. While that's useful in some circumstances, it conditions us to keep going back online (and is designed to do so) and can be a near-constant demand on your child's attention. As such alerts become more common, are we experiencing an 'attack of the pings'?

### BLURRED BOUNDARIES

There are now so many ways we can communicate online in real time (like instant messaging apps) or with a delay (such as on social media) that it's possible to be constantly in conversation. Young people often prefer quickfire exchanges of text – but using fewer words can cause distressing miscommunications through the lack of non-verbal cues like facial expressions or tone of voice.

### DIGITAL DEPENDENCY

As devices allow access to immediate external help in challenging situations, it's a concern that children may not be developing the inner confidence to work things out for themselves. Likewise, group membership is hugely important to young people – both in digital and 'real' life – and being excluded from online conversations can cause damaging feelings of loneliness and isolation.

### DISGUISED DISTRESS

Children often haven't yet developed the emotional resources to deal with many of the setbacks of everyday life, so identifying when it's specifically something online that's worried them can be tricky. A certain level of stress is a normal response to a problem: it spurs us into action to keep ourselves safe. If the stress is excessive, though, it can feel overwhelming and potentially lead to anxiety or depression.

### ANTI-SOCIAL SOCIALS

Social media can bring people together in hugely positive ways. Sadly, it does also have a darker side, including 'flame war' arguments which can escalate quickly and have harmful consequences. With so many people looking on, 'group shaming' situations are also common – while there are continual opportunities for young people to compare themselves negatively with other social media users.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### LEARN THE BASICS

It's impossible to keep up with every online change or every new app. The best option is to make yourself aware of the fundamentals of how the internet operates, so you can help your child to grasp how – and why – content reaches them. Devices and the digital world can be confusing, so learning to understand them better will give you the confidence to talk to your child about them.

### TALK IT OUT

If a child mentions a comment that's been directed at them in a text chat or on social media, it may sound minor but can actually have a much bigger effect than we realise. In our evolved brains, any perceived threat can get internalised while our body reacts as if we were in physical danger – raising stress levels. It's always worth encouraging your child to get any concerns out in the open.

### PUSH DISTRACTIONS AWAY

Notifications to our phones and tablets can be helpful, but they sometimes make one wonder who's really in charge: the person or the device? Checking our phone as soon as it goes off is an easy habit to fall into – especially for young people. Try switching off non-essential alerts on your devices and encourage your child to do the same: you should both feel less triggered and more in control.

### LOOK FOR THE SIGNS

This is tricky – and may depend on the child's age – but any sudden change in behaviour is worth looking out for. If your child seems to be checking their phone or tablet more, doesn't want to be parted from them, or appears unusually secretive, anxious or withdrawn, it could be a sign that something is amiss in relation to their device – and, possibly, that they're in need of extra support.

### KEEP CHECKING IN

Healthy emotional regulation balances three systems: threat, drive and grounding. Down the various rabbit holes of the internet, however, that balance can easily slip away – so it's important to help your child manage their emotions when they're online. Check in with them regularly when they're on their device, and remember that 'distraction' and 'relaxation' aren't always the same thing.

### BE KIND: UNWIND

Be kind to yourselves as parents and carers. Remember that we're all in the same boat, trying to safely guide our children through this complex, fast-moving digital environment. Getting into the habit of having natural, relaxed conversations with your child about their online life (and yours) can level the playing field and make it far easier for them to open up to you about any concerns.

## Meet Our Expert

Dr Carole Francis-Smith is an experienced counselling psychologist who specialises in promoting safe and ethical online communications. She consults with and offers bespoke training to businesses and organisations, supporting positive and effective online communications – often by considering some of the more hidden aspects of the various mediums.



Source: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/the-big-audio-big-answer/>

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandjustice/articles/2021/childrenscommissionerreportononlineanddigitalwellbeing/parentingmatters2021>

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#WakeUpWednesday