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Dear Parents and Carers,

Recently a BBC News article has appeared highlighting some issues with the very popular game Roblox. Here is a link to the article. We are aware that many of our students at Harriers play Roblox and our priority is always to ensure that our students are playing online games in a safe environment. With this in mind I have attached some information in this letter as well as a factsheet from National Online Safety.

Key things for parents to be aware of:

1. Communication: Whilst the games are aimed at 8-18 year olds, there are no age restrictions. This means both adults and young people can play and communicate with each other on the platform. All games are multiplayer and include a written chat feature, which is visible to players within each individual game. Users can also make and receive friend requests during gameplay and this means that they can chat to each other outside of the game. You can read more about the Roblox chat features and the way that these are moderated on the Roblox community guidelines and within their safety features.

2. Content: The Roblox Studio is a section where players use their imagination and skills to create their own games and share these with others. The ability to create and play games can be very appealing to young people who like to create the content they see online. However, because content is user-generated it can mean that some games might not be appropriate for young children. For example, whilst the graphics are not very life-like, some of the games feature weapons and blood (and possibly the content highlighted in the BBC article). .

3. Costs: Children may accidentally run up costs by creating games. Users can also earn Robux, the in-game currency. You can also buy Robux in the game. Players can spend money on items, such as membership to the Builders club.
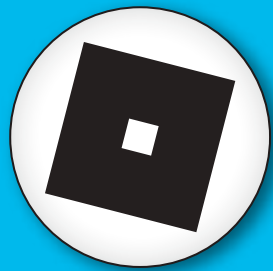
Remind your child that they should come to you if they ever see something inappropriate, mean comments or if anything worries them within the game. If you know how to report this type of content within Roblox, you will be in the best position to help them if they need it.

We will always strive to provide you with information and support on how to best balance the children's use of the internet and keep your children safe online. If there are any apps or online services that are of concern, or you have a concern regarding your child's safety online, please contact your child's class teacher immediately, or contact the designated safeguarding leads (members of SLT).

Yours Faithfully

Mr Bee

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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about
ROBLOX

PEGI 7+

With more than 150 million users worldwide, Roblox is one of the most popular video games of recent times. Roblox allows users to create their own gaming experiences using Roblox Studio: building levels and games then allowing other people to play them. Similarly, players can play each other's creations, either on their own or with other people online. While it's a tool that can help foster creative thinking, Roblox is also intermittently in the news amid concerns over young users' safety.

No Age Rating

Roblox is rated 7+ by PEGI, but the platform itself doesn't have a minimum age requirement. It *does* ask for a date of birth when registering, but this can be easily fabricated. The sheer quantity of games available on Roblox means that some *will* fall into teen/adult categories. Users can also interact with each other freely – and the game has, historically, attracted scammers, griefers and online predators.

In-App Purchases

Robux is the in-game currency used to buy things like special outfits or emotes, and to play certain sections of the game. A subscription service (costing £4.99 per month) called Roblox Premium offers more privileges and more in-game currency. Robux can also be purchased in batches, for up to £4.99. Children can easily pay for these, or purchase a membership, without realising it.
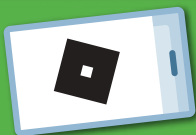
Chat Functionality

Users can join group chats with almost anyone through the Chat & Party function. While the chat has some filters, predators still try to find ways around these to prey on young children. There have been recent reports of adults pretending to be children, attempting to groom younger players and encouraging them to chat privately in an unmoderated environment away from the game.

ODers

An 'ODer' (online dater) joins Roblox to find someone to 'date' online. While there's nothing inherently wrong with finding love on the internet, it becomes an issue in a space that's populated by children and young teens, like Roblox. Online dating is against Roblox's community guidelines, but certain player-built games on the platform are specifically for 'ODers' and should be avoided by children.
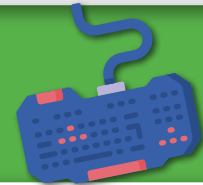
Online Predators

Roblox's developers aim to maintain a safe place for children; they employ human moderators for their players' protection. But there will, sadly, always be individuals who try to bypass these safeguards so they can chat to children and attempt to communicate outside the game. Anyone asking for your child's personal information or to talk privately should be blocked and reported.

Advice for Parents & Carers

Take Note of Ratings

Recent press reports drew attention to Roblox's issues with potentially offensive content. Some players were using Roblox Studio to create games featuring nudity, sexual activity and extreme political views. In response, Roblox is introducing a ratings system which will rank content by age appropriateness, with clear warnings if a game is not suitable for younger players.

Set Parental Controls

Roblox has controls that allow parents to moderate who their children can talk to and which games they can play. To enable these, add your email address to your child's account through the Security menu, and create a secure PIN to stop settings being tampered with. Then head into the Privacy menu where you can apply moderation to in-game chat, personal messages, invites and more.

Disable Messages

It's advisable to block all messaging if you have concerns over your child's safety. If they're playing with friends they know in real life, encourage them to chat in another way (like on the phone), so you know exactly who they're talking to and how. Accounts can be tweaked to allow messages from specific groups of people, such as friends or users that your child follows.

Block and Report

To report players in a game, find the Roblox symbol on screen (or the 'Settings' button on some devices). Identify the offending player and click the flag icon. Clarify why the player is being reported by choosing a reason from the list. If you think a particular game is inappropriate, you can also flag it for a moderator to check by following the same steps but selecting 'Game' instead of 'Player'.
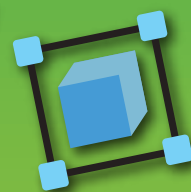
Encourage Creativity

It could prove a little too complex for younger children, but Roblox Studio is a great place to start learning the fundamentals of game design. Many budding developers have created Roblox games which have become popular among the community. There are plenty of tutorials on making games on sites like YouTube. You never know, your child's creation might be the next big thing!

Meet Our Expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for several years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the 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.

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