Online Safety Newsletter

June 2023

Rec Room

Rec Room is available across different platforms and is free to play. It can be played with or without a VR headset. Rec room consists of player created rooms, in which players can play games and interact with others.

Rec Room is rated as 9+ by the App store. For players under 13 years of age, they are assigned a junior account. When creating a junior account, you can also add your own email address, which will allow you to manage your child's password and other settings such as in app purchases. Users with a junior account will not be able to message each other.

You should be aware of the following if your child is playing Rec Room:

- In app purchases: make sure your bank account details are not linked to the device your child is playing on.
- Chat: if your child does not have a junior account then there is a chat facility within Rec Room so there is a risk that your child could communicate with strangers.
- Inappropriate content: your child may come across themes or content that is not appropriate for your child.

Rec Room does have reporting facilities so if your child is playing Rec Room, then please ensure they know how to use them and to talk to a trusted adult if they see anything that concerns them.

You can find out more about Rec Room here:

https://recroom.com/parents-guide

Social Media Influencers

What is an Influencer?

An influencer is somebody prominent on a social media platform such as YouTube and Instagram, who have a high number of followers. Influencers share their opinions/ideas and may be paid to advertise/promote products through their account. Whist there are some great influencers, there are some that choose to share their own opinions, which could be misogynistic or racist for example. These opinions can be expressed or interpreted as fact. It is important to talk to your child about the spread of misinformation online and how we should fact check and critically analyse what we see and hear online.

What we see on social media platforms is influenced by algorithms, which predict what type of content we are most likely to interact with. Whilst there are benefits of algorithms, it can mean that once we start looking at certain content, our social media feed can become more aligned with that opinion, so we don't see a balanced picture. You can find out more here: https://www.childnet.com/blog/algorithms/

Further information

The NSPCC have created an article detailing what you need to know about online influencers. You can read it here: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-safety-blog/2023-05-16-the-influence-of-influencers/

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into.
Current as of the date released 1.6.23.

Omegle

Omegle have updated their terms and conditions. You must be 18+ to use Omegle. Omegle is a social networking/chat website that **connects two strangers** together for either a text or a video chat. Chats are anonymous unless a user provides this information.

Omegle should not be accessed by children due to the potential imagery shared and language used which can be explicit.

What should I be aware of?

- No registration is required to access Omegle (therefore no age verification) and there are no reporting facilities.
- Users are given an option to save the chat's log and share the link. It is also possible for other users to take screenshots of text and video chats.

You can find out more information from Internet Matters, including imitation apps that you should also be aware of:

https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/news-blogs/what-is-omegle-what-parents-need-to-know/

Money Savvy Online

Have you been scammed online?

As scammers become more sophisticated, it's important that we learn about the different approaches that they might use and what to look out for so we can protect ourselves. Barclays have listed some of the most common scams on their website:

https://www.barclays.co.uk/fraud-and-scams/scams-protection/

MoneySense from NatWest

NatWest have an area on their website full of useful articles and guidance to support your child and enhance your understanding. Articles include avoiding fraud and online scams, information on digital game currency, the dangers of fraud and do you know what a money mule is?

The site also includes activities to complete with your child to enhance their understanding of money including a 'savings challenge' for ages 5 – 8 and 'money and your mental health' aimed at young adults. You can find this information and lots more here:

https://natwest.mymoneysense.com/parents/

JusTalk

Users can use this app to video chat, call and text. There are two versions – JusTalk and JusTalk Kids with both versions having the option to unlock further functions via a premium subscription. **JusTalk is rated as 12+ and JusTalk Kids is rated as 4+ on the App store. Even though the apps may be rated as age appropriate for your child, there are still risks in using either version, such as in app purchases.**

The Ineqe Safeguarding Group provide an overview of JusTalk, including the risks you need to be aware of: https://ineqe.com/2023/02/08/what-is-the-justalk-app/

Free Webinar

London Grid for Learning (LgFL) are working with the Early Years Alliance to deliver a 1-hour webinar on Thursday 8th June 10-11am to parents of children aged 0-5 years, about simple steps to take to keep children safe when using online devices. You can find out more at the link below:

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/family-connect-screens-in-the-early-years-tickets-633434709267

What is artificial intelligence (AI)?

AI is when a computer/machine can learn and perform tasks like a human. Its popularity is increasing due to the likes of ChatGPT and more recently, My AI from Snapchat. Internet Matters have created a guide about using AI with your child and lists some popular AI tools that you should be aware of: https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/parent-guide-to-artificial-intelligence-ai-tools/

In addition, Childnet have produced this blog about Snapchat's My AI: https://www.childnet.com/blog/snapchats-new-ai-chatbot-and-its-impact-on-young-people/