Online Safety Newsletter May 2023

Snapchat update: My AI

You should be over 13+ to use Snapchat.

Snapchat have announced that My AI will now be available to all users, it was previously only available to paid subscribers of Snapchat+. My AI will show as one of your chat contacts and users will be able to ask it questions and have a conversation with it.

Snapchat are planning to incorporate an overview in their parental tools (Family Centre) to allow you to see if your child is chatting with My AI, but there is no confirmed date as to when this additional tool will be available.

There were concerns with My AI when initially released, for example it was providing responses that weren't always age appropriate. Snapchat have stated that 99.5% of responses now conform to their community guidelines, but we would recommend talking to your child about their use of My AI.

At present the only way to delete My AI is to become a Snapchat+ subscriber.

You can find out more here: https://help.snapchat.com/hc/en-gb/articles/13266788358932-What-is-My-AI-on-Snapchat-and-how-do-I-use-it-

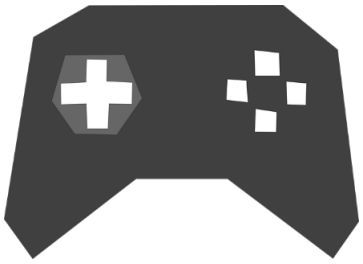
Fortnite

Fortnite is rated PEGI 12 for frequent mild violence which means it is not suitable for persons under 12 years of age.

It is important to remember that when rating games, PEGI do not take into consideration the communication features of a game. Fortnite does include a chat facility, which adds further risks.

What is Fortnite?

There are different versions of Fortnite, including a free-to-play Battle Royale game (although money can be spent within the game) where up to one hundred players compete against each other.



What do I need to be aware of?

- **Chatting to strangers and inappropriate language:** Fortnite contains voice and text chat. Due to the nature of the game, your child may be chatting to strangers and may hear inappropriate language. Ensure your child knows how to report players for any inappropriate behaviour.
- **In app purchases:** All users can purchase V-Bucks directly through the game. This currency can be used to purchase items in the Fortnite store so make sure you don't store your payment details within the game/device and restrict purchases.

Parental Controls

Fortnite includes several parental controls to help you make it a safer environment for your child including disabling voice chat, filtering language and setting privacy settings. **Also, remember to set up age-appropriate parental controls on the device your child is playing on.**

Further information

Virgin Media outline how to set up the different parental controls available: https://www.virginmedia.com/blog/parental-controls/gaming-fortnite

From the Financial Times – 'Capture: who's looking after the children?'

This is a 15-minute drama produced by the Financial Times looking at online harm, regulation and responsibility. The drama features Jodie Whittaker and Paul Ready. You can watch it here: https://www.ft.com/video/ea39f3a9-8993-477d-a763-317ba51c2e75

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date released 1.5.23.

Minecraft Legends

Minecraft Legends was released last month and is available across a variety of platforms. It is rated as 7+ by PEGI with a further content descriptor of 'violence.' As mentioned earlier though, when rating games, PEGI do not take into consideration the communication features of a game. Minecraft Legends does include a chat facility, which adds further risks of seeing inappropriate language/content. This can be switched off.

What should I be aware of?

- Multiplayer – children can interact with others (including strangers), you can switch this option off within settings or choose to play offline.
- Additional purchases – be aware of in app purchases and the purchase of additional items to support (although not needed) game play. You can set up appropriate parental settings to restrict/prevent purchases.
- Block and report players – if your child is playing with others, make sure they know how to block and report players within the game.

You can find out more in this article:
https://www.esrb.org/blog/what-parents-need-to-know-about-minecraft-legends/

Rocket League

Rocket League is rated as 3+ by PEGI. In Rocket League, players use cars to play in football matches and is available for free across a variety of platforms.

What should I be aware of?

If your child is under 13, then their account will have chat and purchases disabled (unless you override these settings). For children over 13, you will need to disable/restrict these settings as appropriate. There is the option to play online with others as well as make purchases to enhance your car. You can set up appropriate parental controls by setting up an account with Epic Games and applying settings on your child's device as well.

Further information:

You can find out more in this article:
https://www.vodafone.co.uk/newscentre/smart-living/digital-parenting/digital-parenting-pro/rocket-league/

Microsoft Family Safety app

Does your child have a Microsoft device e.g. an Xbox? If so, you can access the Microsoft Family Safety mobile app, which provides you with a variety of free features including:

- The ability to set screen time limits to devices, apps and games.
- Set content filters and block inappropriate apps/games.

Additional features such as location sharing are available as part of a paid subscription.

To access the app, you will need to enter your mobile number or email address at the link below and Microsoft will send you a download link:

https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/family-safety

Tackling Online Hate

One way in which we can tackle online hate is ensuring our children learn about what it is and how they can stop it. Internet Matters have created a quiz that you can complete with your child. As you progress through the questions, you will be given advice as well as questions to discuss and help you have a conversation with your child. The quiz is available here:

https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/theonlinetogetherproject/tackling-online-hate-quiz/

What is Online Grooming?

This is a really informative article from Thorn:
https://www.thorn.org/blog/online-grooming-what-it-is-how-it-happens-and-how-to-defend-children/