



Gooseberry Parent

Roblox

What is Roblox?

Are the days of children building Lego houses on the kitchen table over? Roblox is the new online way of building, with 48 million players building and creating complex virtual empires monthly. Players earn “Robux” (virtual currency) to buy the tools, materials and skills required to further enhance their empire.

With Lego like characters (avatars) and a tool box, players get their own piece of real estate to build their own virtual world. Players can join each other for game play, chat and more sinister activities like online bullying and grooming.

Roblox is a free App designed for ages 8 years and over. It is available on any device; iOS, android, Xbox one, PlayStation, Windows and Mac, but be aware there are in App purchases that cost real money to enhance the game play.

Is Roblox Safe?

Whilst the concept of the game itself is age appropriate, do be aware that the games within Roblox are designed and created by the users themselves and therefore might not be suitable for your children to play in. There is no control over the details submitted when registering to play so children could be playing online with anyone of any age.

As with any social gaming platform, the chat capability is where your children are most at risk of harm. The app does have a ‘chat moderation’ system in place. This uses software to recognise whitelist words suitable for under 13’s and blacklist of words for use by over 13’s. Blacklist words are replaced with hashtags ###, but the context of the sentence will probably still be identifiable to most users. When you sign up you are required to give your age and this determines what words you can see. Please remember that it is possible to sign up with false details. Users are also becoming fast aware of the list of words and can change the way they have written something to "pass" the moderation. This leaves your children open to become the victim of online bullying, grooming and more.

Enjoying Roblox safely and managing the risks

- **Communicate your expectations** – As a parent, it is your responsibility to make clear what is and is not acceptable online behaviour. You need to accept that allowing your child access to online apps like these, requires trust and clear boundaries, for their own wellbeing.
- **Model positive and safe online behaviour** – Safe behaviour online starts with us as adults. Following basic safety suggestions and demonstrating these will help your child to follow in your footsteps. You also have a better chance of staying safer online yourself.
- **Do your homework** – Take time to read Privacy Policies and Terms of Use to find out how app developers use personal information. You can also learn about acceptable use of the app and find advice on securing online accounts and set privacy settings on devices.
- **Read the reviews** for the app, this will give you an idea what other people are saying about it and what potential risks there may be.
- **Communicate your expectations** – As a parent or carer, it is your responsibility to make clear what is and is not acceptable online behaviour. You need to accept that allowing your child access to online apps and games requires trust and boundaries, for their own safety and well-being.



- **Privacy** – Users can control who they chat with. The key here is to impress upon your child how important it is to only have real life friends within the game but be aware that whilst playing a game unless your child sets the chat function to no one, EVERYONE can chat, there is no friends option here.
- **Look and you will find** – If you have a look around for long enough, you will find material that is not appropriate for anyone to see online.
- **Not that Private** – Even setting ‘who can message me’ to ‘friends’ poses risks. Be aware players can still see what others in the game are saying and can still chat with them.
- **Usernames** – Use creative usernames that do not identify your child's real one on screen. Do NOT describe your child where asked to do so. You can never be sure who is playing the game.
- **Check age visibility** - Look top right in game play to ensure your child's account is set to under 13 if it's not, they could have set up a new account! Take action and delete the account!
- **See something** – Report it, you can report both a user and or a particular game.
- **Set up a verification email** – to your email address, use two step verification for additional security.
- **For ultimate safety of game play - set up a parental PIN** and turn off chat completely.
- **Play the game** – Create and play with your child, explore the worlds they play in to make sure they are age appropriate.
- **Check** – If you have enabled chat and messaging, download it on another device, log in regularly and check who they are talking to. **This is not prying, it is parenting.**
- **Read the privacy policy** – This will tell you everything you need to know and help you make decisions about how you will allow your child to use Roblox as safely as possible.
- **Roblox is designed to be fun** and educational, and it is no surprise that so many children use it. By following the simple steps outlined above you have a better opportunity to ensure your child is staying safe online.
- **Choose friends wisely** – Be online friends with those who are trusted real life friends. Ignore, block or delete strange friend requests and check the settings of the app to control who can contact you.
- **Think before you share** – Think about the posts and information you are sharing about yourself and others online. It can be easy to get carried away and share something that you might not have done had you thought about it beforehand.
- **Become your child's friend** – this way you can check what they send, and make sure they are staying safe. **This is not prying, it is parenting.** Consider how you will monitor what is being shared online by your child and what is being shared with them.
- **Make the decision** – **You are a parent** and you will know your child enough to decide on allowing them to use Roblox or any other social networking or gaming app. Roblox is designed to be a fun and appealing app and it is not difficult to see why it is so popular. By following the steps outlined above you have a better opportunity to ensure that your child is protected online.



Remember the World Wide Web should be a fun and liberating place for all, but
take the right steps to make it a safe one!