



ONLINE SAFETY

# SAFE and SMART

Keeping children safe online

May 2026

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Oaklands School



"The best for all, the best from all"

## Welcome to the May 2026 edition of Safe and Smart.

This half-term we're looking at three important updates.

Firstly, we're thinking about privacy in the age of AI. Privacy has always mattered, but artificial intelligence is changing what can be done with photos, videos, voices and personal information. This includes the way images of children can be copied, altered, misused or turned into something entirely new.

Next we'll be taking a look at Roblox, which is introducing two new types of child accounts: Roblox Kids and Roblox Select. These changes are designed to give younger users more age-appropriate experiences and give parents more control.

Finally, as age-verification is now becoming more standardised across many online services to protect children from inappropriate and harmful content and experiences, we'll explain the new PlayStation age verification requirements and what parents need to know if their child has a PlayStation account.

**IMPORTANT: Some parts of this newsletter discuss online sexual exploitation and the misuse of images. The information is intended for adults. Please use your own judgement about what is appropriate to share with your child, depending on their age, maturity and emotional readiness.**



For many years, when we talked about online privacy, we were mainly thinking about things like passwords, location settings, social media profiles and who can see our posts. All of that is still important, but AI has added a new layer, it's changing things.

Today, information can be collected, copied, analysed, predicted and even recreated. A photo is no longer just a photo. A voice clip is no longer just a voice clip. A short video is no longer just a video. With AI tools in the wrong hands, all of these can be edited, manipulated or used to create fake content, including illegal content.

That doesn't mean we need to panic, and it doesn't mean we should never share photos online. But it does mean we need to think more carefully about what we share, where we share it and who can access it even more now than in the past.

## Why does this matter?

Children grow up surrounded by cameras. Families take photos at birthdays, sports days, holidays, clubs, school events and

so much more. We love to create these memories of our children. Some of these images we might choose to share in family WhatsApp groups, on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok. Through agreement with your school (dependent on the consent you have given) photos of our children might be shared on school websites and any social media apps they are using.

This is all innocent and positive. Families are proud. Schools celebrate achievements. Clubs promote their activities. But the challenge is that once an image is online, it can be very difficult to control where it goes next. It may be downloaded, a screenshot taken, copied, reshared or stored by someone else. All of this has been the case for decades, but AI now increases this risk because images can also be created or manipulated in ways that are far more realistic than ever before.

To give you just one example, the recently-released report from the Internet Watch Foundation (The Internet Watch Foundation's 2025 Annual Data and Insights Report) warns that AI-generated child sexual abuse material is a growing and evolving risk, with realistic content being easier to create at scale. The IWF recorded more than 15,000 AI-generated child sexual abuse images and videos during 2024 and 2025.

## Did you know?

The IWF reported that in 2025 it saw more than **260 times more** AI-generated child sexual abuse videos than in 2024. It also warned that some "nudifying" tools are no longer limited to altering still images, but can now create sexualised videos **using a publicly available image.**

## What is image harvesting?

Image harvesting is when photos or videos are collected from online spaces. This could be done manually by a person, or at scale using automated tools.

Images can be taken from:

- Public social media profiles.
- School or club websites.
- Online sports galleries.
- Public family posts.
- Video platforms.
- Messaging groups where content is reshared.
- Old accounts that have been forgotten about.

Again, this does not mean every image is unsafe. But we all need to understand that a public image can reveal more than we think.

A photo might show:

- A child's face.
- Their school uniform.
- Their name.
- Their friendship group.
- A regular location.
- Hobbies and interests.

This information can be used to build a picture of a child's life. In some cases, offenders may use this to start a conversation, pretend they know the child, impersonate someone else or manipulate an image.

## AI and fake images

One of the biggest changes is that AI tools can now create fake images that look increasingly realistic. The IWF reported that in 2025 it recorded 4,586 AI-generated images assessed as showing realistic child sexual abuse. It also noted that real children and known victims can be used within, or as the basis for, AI-generated imagery, causing further harm.

This is important because children may think, "It's fake, so it doesn't matter."

But it does matter. If a fake image is created of a real child, the harm can still be very real. The child may feel embarrassed, frightened, threatened or powerless. Other children may believe the image is real.

In addition, offenders may use fake images to blackmail or coerce a child. The IWF also reported that 21% of all reports to its Report Remove service in 2025 involved faked imagery.

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## What can we do?

The answer is not to stop every photo being taken or shared. Photos are part of family life. By becoming more privacy-aware and knowing the risks allows you to make the decisions that are right for you and your family.

### Check privacy settings

Look at your own social media settings. Are your posts public? Can friends of friends see your images? Can people download or share your posts? Importantly, remember that private doesn't really mean completely private. Anyone in the private group or page can take a screenshot or copy an image.

### Think before posting

Before sharing an image, ask yourself:

- Does this show my child's school, club or location?
- Would my child be happy for this to be online in five years?
- Could this embarrass them now or later?
- Am I sharing it publicly, or only with people I trust?
- Does the image include other children?



### Avoid unnecessary identifying details

A photo with a child's full name, school badge, sports club and location gives away a lot more than a photo without those details.

## What is Report/Remove?

Report/Remove is a free, confidential tool developed by the NSPCC (Childline) and the Internet Watch Foundation that enables young people under 18 in the UK to remove nude or sexual images/videos of themselves from the Internet. The international equivalent is Take It Down.



## Be careful with AI apps

Many AI image apps and websites ask users to upload photographs. These might be used to create avatars, cartoons, filters or “funny” edits. There are even websites where you can try on clothes using an uploaded image of yourself.

Before uploading an image, check:

- Who owns the uploaded image?
- Can the company use it to train AI?
- Can it be deleted?
- Is the app/website age-appropriate?
- Is the company trustworthy?

## Talk to children about consent

As children get older, involve them in decisions. Ask before posting. Explain why privacy matters. This helps children develop their own judgement and makes it easier for them to speak to you if something goes wrong.

Importantly, this includes consent for the school to use photographs. Most schools want to celebrate successes and achievements and will send consent forms home. Make sure you understand where and how photographs will be used.

## Know where to get help

If a young person is worried that a nude or sexual image of them is online, the IWF and NSPCC Childline have a service called **Report Remove**. It allows young people to report images or videos and receive support from Childline.

Link for Report/Remove (UK only) - [HERE](#)

Link for Take It Down (International) - [HERE](#)



## Kids and Select Accounts

We've covered Roblox quite a lot in previous newsletters, but that's with good reason, it's hugely popular and often reported as the most popular game.

When I say game, It isn't just one game, Roblox is a platform containing millions of games and interactive spaces, many of which are created by users. Users can play games, design characters, spend Robux (in-game currency), chat, create their own experiences and play with friends.

For many children, Roblox is creative, social and fun. But like many online spaces where children can interact with others, it also comes with concerns.

### What have the concerns been?

Roblox has been quite prominent in the media lately due to a number of different concerns, these have included:

- Children being contacted by people they don't know.
- Chat taking place inside games.

- Children being encouraged to move to other apps or private messaging which raises a grooming/exploitation concern.
- Inappropriate user-generated games or content.
- Spending pressure through Robux.
- Scams, fake giveaways or misleading links.
- Younger children playing in spaces that are not suitable for their age.

There has also been growing regulatory and media scrutiny. Reuters recently reported that Roblox agreed settlements with Alabama and West Virginia over child safety investigations, with those states citing concerns around children's exposure to predators, grooming and harmful content. Roblox has denied wrongdoing in related cases, but has also announced changes to age verification, chat restrictions and parental controls.

In Australia, the eSafety Commissioner has also issued transparency notices to major gaming platforms, including Roblox, asking them to explain how they protect children from grooming, sexual exploitation and radicalisation. The Commissioner noted that online games



## Did you know?

As of early 2026 reports suggest that Roblox has over 150 million daily active users and over 380 million monthly active users with a roughly 50% male/female gender split. Historically popular with children it is now estimated that 44% of users are over 17, with the 17-24 demographic increasing rapidly.



can be a first point of contact before offenders try to move children to private messaging services. This is a well-known tactic to exploit children.

None of this means every child will have a negative experience on Roblox. Many children simply play age-appropriate games with real-life friends. But it does remind us that Roblox (or any game that has engagement features) should not be treated as “just a game”. Roblox in particular isn't just a game, it's a huge social platform.

In April 2026 Roblox announced two new age-based account types for younger users:

**Roblox Kids** for ages 5 to 8.

**Roblox Select** for ages 9 to 15.

These are expected to roll out in early June 2026.

## Roblox Kids

Users aged 5 to 8 will be assigned to a Roblox Kids account, either through its age-check technology or by a verified parent.

For Roblox Kids accounts:

- Access will be limited to games with a Minimal or Mild content maturity label.
- Games must have passed Roblox's selection process.
- Communication (chat) will be disabled by default.
- The app will have a distinct visual style to show the account type.

This is a positive step, particularly for younger children, because communication is one of the key areas of concern on many gaming platforms.

## Roblox Select

This is for users aged 9 to 15. These accounts will also be matched to a selected catalogue of games.

For Roblox Select accounts:

- Access will be limited to games rated up to and including Moderate.
- Games must have passed the selection process.
- Default communication settings will remain unchanged for ages 9 to 15.
- The account will have a distinct visual treatment.

Roblox also says children will automatically progress from Roblox Kids to Roblox Select when they reach 9, and from Roblox Select to a standard Roblox account when they reach 16.



## How will games be selected?

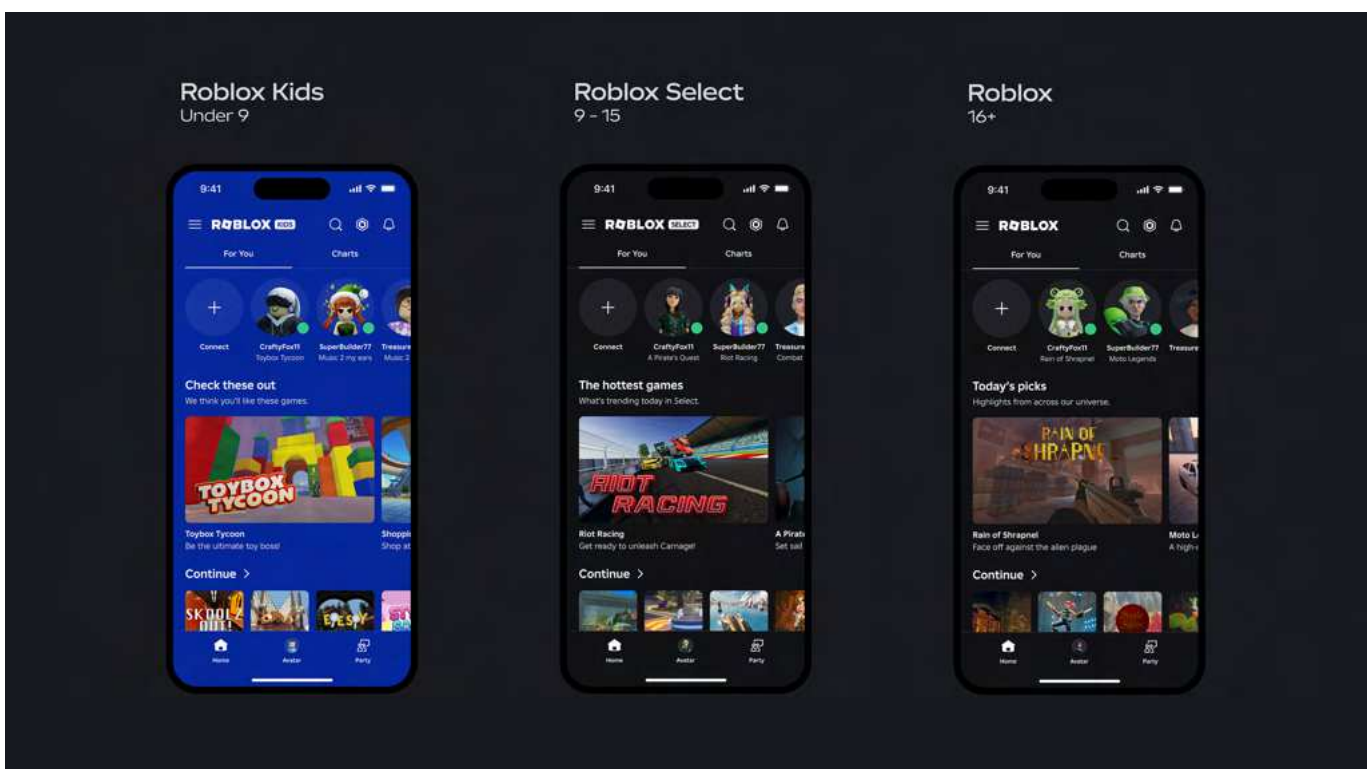
Roblox says that games available to under-16s will go through an additional selection process which includes:

- Developer verification.
- Extra content evaluation.
- Ongoing moderation and user report review.
- Real-time evaluation of how older users interact with games.
- Content maturity labels.
- Default exclusion of some types of games, including social hangouts, free-form drawing games and games involving sensitive issues.

## What about parental controls?

Roblox is also extending parental controls. Parents and caregivers will be able to:

- Manage content ratings.
- Manage communication settings.
- Set screen-time limits.
- Set spending limits.
- See which games their child is spending time in.
- See who their child's friends are.
- Block specific individual games through age 15.
- Manage direct chat settings through age 15.
- Approve specific games that are not otherwise available under the child's default account type.





## TOP TIPS

### Check your child's age is correct

Safety features usually depend on the age entered on the account. If a child has entered an older date of birth, they may not receive the protections designed for their real age.

### Use parental controls

Do not assume the default settings are enough. Take time to go through the settings with your child.

### Check communication settings

For younger children, think carefully about whether they need chat at all. If they are using chat, talk about who they are chatting to and what they should do if someone makes them feel uncomfortable.

### Look at the games, not just the platform

A child might say, "I'm just on Roblox," but that does not tell you very much. Ask which games they play. Sit with them. Watch for a few minutes. Some games are very child-friendly, others may not be appropriate.

### Talk about moving platforms

A common concern across gaming is when someone says, "Add me on Discord," "Message me on Snapchat," or "Let's talk somewhere else." This is a big red flag, especially if the person is not someone they know in real life.

### Keep money and Robux under control

Set spending limits and talk about scams. Children may be tempted by "free Robux" offers, fake giveaways or links that steal login details.

### For further information about the new age-based accounts see here:

<https://about.roblox.com/newsroom/2026/04/introducing-roblox-kids-and-select-accounts>



LIGHTNING FAST  
BREATHTAKING IMMERSION  
NEXT-GEN PERFORMANCE  
PLAY TOGETHER



# PlayStation

## Age-Verification

As we saw in the previous section, age verification is coming to lots of online services and platforms which includes gaming platforms.

Age verification is coming in different stages around the world, here in the UK it has already started to be introduced, where players will need to complete the age-verification steps to continue to use certain communication and sharing features.

This is all part of a wider move towards age assurance and age-appropriate experiences online with the aim being to help platforms understand whether someone is an adult or a child, and then apply the correct protections.

### What's changing?

PlayStation says age verification will be required later in 2026 for UK adult accounts to access certain features. From June 2026, if an account has not completed age verification, users can still play games, but some features will not be available until age verification is completed.



This includes:

- Communication features on PlayStation consoles, PS App and web.
- Voice chat.
- Text chat and messaging.
- Joining parties or group sessions.
- Connected or third-party communication experiences.
- Discord voice chat.
- Broadcasting and sharing features.
- Broadcasting gameplay to YouTube or Twitch.
- Some in-game chat, messaging and user-generated content features.

## How will age be verified?

PlayStation says users can verify their age using different methods provided by Yoti, its age-verification service provider. These include:

- Mobile phone age verification.
- Facial scan.
- ID document, such as passport, driving licence or national ID.

For facial scans, PlayStation says Yoti estimates age using facial geometry. Once the scan has taken place Yoti deletes the facial geometry data, and PlayStation says it receives only the result of the verification, not the facial geometry data.

## What about children under 18?

Players under 18 need to use an account managed by a parent or guardian. If a child is using an adult account, that account may need to be updated to the appropriate account type, with a parent or guardian managing the process.

## Why does this matter?

Many children use gaming platforms not just to play, but to socialise. Voice chat, parties, messaging and in-game communication can all be part of the experience.

These features can be positive when children are playing with real-life friends. But they can also create risks, including:





- Contact from people they do not know.
- Pressure to move to other apps.
- Bullying or aggressive behaviour in voice chat.
- Sharing personal information.
- Exposure to inappropriate language or content.
- Children using adult accounts and avoiding age-based protections.
- Has anyone ever asked you to move to another app?
- Has anyone made you feel uncomfortable?
- Try to keep the conversation calm and curious rather than turning it into an interrogation.

## What should parents do now?

### Check whose account your child is using.

Some children use an adult's PlayStation account. Others may have created their own account with an incorrect age. Check this now, before the June changes cause confusion.

### Use a child account where appropriate.

It's always preferable that a person under 18 uses an account managed by a parent or caregiver. This gives more control over privacy, communication, spending and age-appropriate access.

### Talk about communication features.

Ask your child:

- Who do you talk to when gaming?
- Are they real-life friends or people you met online?
- Do you use voice chat?

### Watch out for scam messages.

Whenever a big platform introduces a change, scammers may try to take advantage. Be careful with emails, texts or messages claiming to be from PlayStation. Use the official PlayStation website or console account settings rather than clicking links in unexpected messages.

### Discuss privacy

Age verification can feel intrusive, especially where ID or facial scanning is involved. Parents should read the information carefully and make a decision they are comfortable with. It is also a useful opportunity to talk to older children about the balance between safety, privacy and access to online services.








To see further information and some frequently asked questions about Playstation age verification you can visit the official page here:

<https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/support/account/age-verification-faq/>

# Common Apps

This is not an exhaustive list, but tends to be the more popular apps used by children and young people.

Age requirements are set within the terms and conditions of the app provider, don't be confused by ratings in the app stores which can be different.

App	Age	Comments
	13	<b>Discord</b> - is a voice, video and text chat app that's used by tens of millions of people aged 13+ to tap and hang out with communities or their friends. Parental settings can be found <a href="#">HERE</a> .
	13	<b>Instagram</b> - is a photo and video sharing app where people can upload photos, videos and messages to share with others. Parental settings can be found <a href="#">HERE</a> .
	13	<b>Snapchat</b> - is a very popular app that lets users swop pictures and videos (Snaps) with others which are meant to disappear after they are viewed. There is also a messaging feature. Parental settings can be found <a href="#">HERE</a> .
	13	<b>TikTok</b> - is a social media app that allows users to create, watch and share short videos shot on mobile devices or webcams. Parental settings can be found <a href="#">HERE</a> .
	13	<b>Twitch</b> - is where people come together to chat and interact live. Think YouTube, but it is live rather than pre-recorded. Parental settings can be found <a href="#">HERE</a> .
	13	<b>WhatsApp</b> - is a messaging app which uses text, images, video and voice record features to connect with others. Parental settings can be found <a href="#">HERE</a>
	18	<b>Reddit</b> - is a network of communities (called subreddits) where people can share information, their interests and hobbies. Reddit is an 18+ app, there are no parental controls.