

## THE PARENT'S GUIDE TO

## ROBLOX

By Maureen Kochan & Larry Magid, Ed.D.

IF YOUR KIDS LOVE TO PLAY ONLINE GAMES, ONE OF THE NAMES YOU MAY BE HEARING ABOUT A LOT LATELY IS ROBLOX.

Launched in 2005, Roblox's popularity among gamers 8-years-old and up has exploded, and it is now the No. 1 gaming site for kids and teens, according to ComScore. But Roblox isn't actually a game. It's a platform that allows anyone to create an online game using Roblox's game design tools known as Roblox Studio. In a way Roblox is similar to YouTube—it gives people the tools to create digital content, and a place to share their creations with the public.

Creators have published over 29 million games on Roblox, which is available on Xbox, PC and on iOS, Android and Kindle Fire devices as well as virtual reality headsets. The most popular games attract hundreds of thousands of players each day with the top game currently, Jailbreak, surpassing 100,000 concurrent players at its peak.

## SOCIAL PLATFORM FOR PLAY

Most Roblox games are multiplayer experiences. This social aspect is one of the reasons Roblox calls itself a "social platform for play." In fact, Roblox could be your child's first experience with digital socializing. Players can comment and converse with other players inside a game and also chat with their friends on Roblox. Parents can turn off Roblox's social features. (See the sidebar "Roblox's Social Features." Roblox also has a parent's guide on its website.)

While Roblox's social features can be nerve-wracking for parents, they also provide a hands-on opportunity for parents to help kids develop good digital habits that will last a lifetime. That's important, considering that—at some point—your child is likely to use other social networking platforms that don't offer parental controls.



## GETTING STARTED WITH ROBLOX

Kids register for Roblox with their birth date. It's important for kids to enter their correct birth date because Roblox has default security and privacy settings that vary, based on a player's age.

You can check the age bracket of your child's account by looking in the upper-right corner of the navigation bar, where it will read "13+" or "<13," depending on the date of birth given when the account was opened. If your child has previously set up an account incorrectly with an age of 13+, it's simple to change the child's age to <13 in the account settings section.

All Roblox games feature basic security and privacy measures. All user-uploaded images are reviewed by human moderators for inappropriate content before being posted, and there are filters that weed out bad words and other problematic language. Players age 13 and older can see and say more words and phrases than younger players, but inappropriate chat and sharing personal information (including phone numbers and addresses) are restricted regardless of age. Links to YouTube channels and social media usernames can be shared by players 13 and older.

While the imagery on Roblox has a blocky, digitized look, parents should be aware that some of the user-generated games on Roblox may include themes and/or imagery that may be too intense for young or sensitive players.

Roblox does allow parents to restrict access to a limited subset of curated games on the platform. Some young kids enjoy scary games and stories while others squirm at books, movies or games with dark themes. You know your child best, so discuss this aspect of Roblox with your child and make sure you are monitoring the games being played by your child. "Account Restrictions" can be found in **Settings** under the **Security** tab.

## STAYING SAFE ON ROBLOX

Because Roblox may be your child's first experience with digital socializing, it's a great opportunity for parents to ramp up discussion around Internet safety. If you don't want your child to use Roblox's social features, there is a simple way to turn them off. (See "Roblox's Social Features," next page.)

**Stay nearby.** Whether your child plays Roblox on a computer, tablet or gaming console, we recommend kids (especially younger ones) play with you or another trusted adult nearby. You'll want to see what kind of games they're playing, how they're playing (sportsmanship matters online too) and with whom they're interacting, especially at first.

**Play Roblox with your child.** See their favorite games and how they interact. Make an account for yourself and add your child as a friend on the Roblox platform so you can play games together. This will give you a better sense of what types of experiences your child will encounter on the platform and also how they interact with other friends and players inside specific games. And, besides, it might be fun for you too.

**Community rules.** Review Roblox's Community Rules with your child, especially the "guiding principles" which are written to be easy to understand. Also consider drawing up a family agreement that outlines your expectations for their online behavior. Make it a discussion (never a lecture) and remember to explain to your child that along with rights and privileges come responsibilities. Be clear about consequences for any violation of the agreement.

**Blocking and reporting.** Roblox's human and digital moderators can't police every player and game, so it relies on reports from its users when people break the rules. Players can use the **Report Abuse** links located throughout the site and in the Report tab of every game menu. Talk to your child about what to report (including bullying, inappropriate behavior, scams and other game violations) and how to make a report. Or, ask your child to come to you if they experience a problem so you can help make that report.

**Parental controls.** All accounts have the option to enable a "Parent PIN", which when active, requires a 4-digit code to

## BLOCKING & REPORTING

*(Note that these steps may vary based on the device.)*

### Blocking:

If a player is annoying or pestering your child, you can block that person so that your child doesn't see anything they post and vice versa in that particular game session. It also prevents that person from contacting your child.

1. Find the user inside of the leaderboard/player list on the upper-right of the game screen (if the leaderboard/player list isn't there, open it by clicking on your username in the upper-right corner).
2. Click on the player you wish to block. Select **Block User**.

### Reporting in game:

1. Click on the **Menu** button, located at the upper left of the screen. (The Menu icon looks like three lines stacked on top of each other.)
2. Click the flag icon located next to a player's name, or click the **Report** tab at the top of the menu. Complete the form.

### Reporting on the website:

Every player-created asset has a **Report Abuse** link that will send a report to Roblox's moderation system. In most cases this will be found in the bottom of the description box in red lettering, or under the "... " menu in the upper right. Complete the form.

make changes to an account. These settings can be adjusted from within the **Security** tab of the **Settings** page, accessed by clicking on the gear icon in the upper-right corner of the site. Parents can use this feature for very young or new players, but, for most families, the goal should be to help your child make responsible decisions without relying on the extensive use of parental controls. For a broader look at parental controls, see "What parents should think about when using or considering parental controls" ([ConnectSafely.org/parental-controls](https://connectsafely.org/parental-controls)).

**Hacking.** While Roblox has made its platform more secure, hacking still happens. Games can be injected with malicious code or inappropriate content. Talk to your child about this possibility and if they see anything suspicious tell them to talk to you and report the content to Roblox.

**Passwords and other personal information.** Starting at an early age, talk with your kids about the importance of keeping passwords and other personal information private. Friends can become ex-friends and use a stolen account in mean or inappropriate ways, including stealing your child's Robux (the online currency that players can use to buy digital items on the Roblox platform). Players of all ages have their posts and chats filtered to prevent personal information from being shared. Roblox puts even tighter filtering mechanisms on accounts of players 12 and under, but no online filter is foolproof. Roblox also offers an extra layer of protection with two-step authentication, which we recommend. See ConnectSafely's "Tips for Strong, Secure Passwords & Other Authentication Tools" ([ConnectSafely.org/passwords](https://connectsafely.org/passwords)) for additional advice.

**Predatory behavior.** Talk to your child about online grooming, including what it is and what to watch out for, such as inappropriate or overly personal questions or

unsolicited gifts (such as Robux). People with bad intentions may encourage children to “meet” with them on other, less moderated social media platforms or via email. Discuss this with your child and ask them to come to you about any inappropriate requests from other players. While parents worry most about inappropriate contact with adults, children can also be bothered, solicited and harassed by peers.

**Bullying.** Unfortunately bullying can and does happen on Roblox. Roblox filters bullying text language on the platform wherever possible. Again, talk to your child about what to watch out for, and teach them how to block and report offenders. For more advice, see ConnectSafely’s “A Parent’s Guide to Cyberbullying” ([ConnectSafely.org/cyberbullying](https://connectsafely.org/cyberbullying)).

## CLOSING THOUGHTS FOR PARENTS

It may seem like just yesterday when your child was learning how to play Candy Land or Old Maid. How simple those games seem now! But you don’t have to be an expert to help your child stay safe on and enjoy Roblox or any other online game. Even if you think your child is more tech savvy than you, you’re still the parent and have a lot of experience and wisdom that applies to most aspects of your child’s life, including use of technology.

In fact, the “rules” for using any game, app or service are pretty similar. Everyone should be respectful of themselves and others, be mindful of what they post, and understand how to use any privacy settings, security tools or blocking and reporting mechanisms.

We encourage you to try out Roblox with your kids. It will give you a feel for the platform and its privacy and security features, and offer a great opportunity to help your child develop critical thinking skills so that no matter what service they use (online or off), they think about what they’re doing, take actions to protect their privacy, safety, security and reputation, and keep an eye out for scams and things that may not be what they seem. And since your child may be (or will soon be) more of a Roblox expert than you, it will give them a chance to be the teacher, and you the student, which can be a great role reversal.

## ROBLOX'S SOCIAL FEATURES

You can restrict your child from playing, chatting and messaging with others on Roblox. Whatever settings you choose, we recommend discussing your decisions with your child. If you limit Roblox’s social features, consider revisiting these restrictions as your child grows and matures.

1. Log into the account.
2. Click on the gear icon in the upper right-hand corner of the website.
3. Go to **Settings**.
4. Select **Privacy**.
5. Review the options under **Contact Settings** and **Other Settings**. Select **No one** or **Everyone**. (Players age 13 and older have additional options.) This can also be done under the **Security** tab with “Account Restrictions” enabled.

Your kids may also be more likely to talk to you about their experiences—both good and bad—if they feel you have some knowledge, and even appreciation for, their favorite online games and services. As your child grows and matures it’s important to keep the lines of communication as open as possible, and to have ongoing conversations about what’s appropriate for them in terms of privacy settings, time spent online, and the types of activities they’re engaging in. It generally works better to talk with your kids about their favorite tools—with genuine interest, not fear—because they’re more likely to come to you when they need help, and you’re much more likely to be kept in the loop about the technology that they use.

# TOP 5 QUESTIONS

## 1. What is Roblox?

Roblox is a “social platform for play” that allows people to create games for the public using Roblox’s digital tools, called Roblox Studio. There are literally millions of games on Roblox, most of which are designed for multiplayer play. Though parents can turn off its social features, Roblox may be your child’s first experience with digital socializing, which gives you a hands-on opportunity to help your child develop good digital habits that will last a lifetime. Your child will probably first experience Roblox as a player, not a creator, but many kids will “graduate” into designing their own games.

## 2. Why do kids love Roblox?

Roblox has millions of games that have been created by talented people from all over the world. Most kids play in multiplayer mode, which means they can play and interact with real-life friends on virtual “play dates,” or play with people they only interact with on the platform. If they get bored with one game, there are always dozens and dozens more to try, and new ones being created and updated every day.

## 3. How can I help my child stay safe on Roblox?

The “rules” for using any game or service are pretty similar. Everyone should be respectful of themselves and others, be mindful of what they post, and understand how to use any privacy settings, security tools or blocking and reporting mechanisms. Roblox also provides parents with tools to restrict certain activities on the Roblox platform.

## 4. Should my child play Roblox with people he or she doesn’t know?

There isn’t a single answer for every child or family. Roblox does give you a lot of control over who can interact with your child and how. You can choose who can message them, who can chat with them in the app, who can chat with them in the game and so on. Click on Privacy under Settings to adjust these controls.

## 5. How much screen time is best for my child?

This is a harder question to answer than it may seem. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recently revised its screen time recommendations and, instead of arbitrary limits, now suggests “For children ages 6 and older, place consistent limits on the time spent using media, and the types of media, and make sure media does not take the place of adequate sleep, physical activity and other behaviors essential to health.” In other words, use of Roblox or any other service should be balanced with the child’s other activities and never interfere with school, family time or other forms of play, especially physical activities.