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Popular Apps and Games for Children

A Handy Guide for Parents

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Key insights for parents

This handout is for parents and carers, it summarises key findings from Ofcom's Online Nation 2025 report and related Ofcom children's research.

It will help you quickly compare the built-in tools children and parents can use to support healthier use — such as private accounts, messaging controls, reporting, content filters and screen-time reminders.

Mostly positive — but mixed feelings

- 91% of children aged 8–17 say they're happy with the things they do online.
- 56% say being online has a mostly good effect on how they feel about themselves (3% mostly bad).
- 34% say it can be both good and bad.

Age-appropriate content isn't guaranteed

- 81% of 8–17s say they're happy the things they see online are appropriate for their age.
- Only 31% say this is always true.

Late-night use on major platforms

- Across YouTube, Snapchat, TikTok and WhatsApp, 8–14s spend 15–24% of their time between 9pm–5am.
- 4–10% of time is between 11pm–5am, depending on the platform.

Harmful content & reporting

- Ofcom reports that seven in ten 11–17s have seen or heard harmful content in the last 4 weeks.
- Most common types: bullying-related (58%) and hate-related (49%).
- 64% took some action afterwards, but only 11% reported it and 10% told an adult.

Learning and spending

- 78% of 13–17s say the internet helps with schoolwork (72% of parents agree).
- Four in five 3–17s (80%) do creative activities online (including tutorials and game walkthroughs).
- In games, 42% of 13–17s said it was unclear what they were buying, and 41% said they often overspend.

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Popular Social Media Apps

A quick comparison of built-in safety and wellbeing tools (features may vary by age and account type).

Legend: ✓ Available ◐ Limited / age-restricted ✕ Not available (use device-level controls instead)

Feature	YouTube	TikTok	Instagram	Snapchat	WhatsApp	FB Messenger	Discord
Minimum age / age assurance	✓ 13+ ◐ <13 Kids	✓ 13+	✓ 13+ (Teen Accounts)	✓ 13+	✓ 13+ (UK)	✓ 13+	✓ 13+
Account privacy defaults & "who can contact me"	◐	✓	✓	✓	◐	✓	✓
Messaging / DMs	✕	✓ (16+ DMs)	✓ (teen limits)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Restricted contacts (unknowns)	◐	✓	✓	✓	◐	✓	✓
Blocking & reporting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Content controls (sensitive content, search)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✕	◐	✓
Screen time / break reminders	✓	✓	✓	✕	✕	◐	✕

Live streaming controls	✓	✓	✓	**N/A**	✗	◐	◐
Location sharing / discoverability	✗	◐	◐	✓ **(Snap Map)**	✓ **(Live location)**	◐	✗
Parent tools / supervision	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Purchases, gifting, ads / monetisation controls	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐

Age notes:

- TikTok DMs **are 16+ only.**
- Instagram **has Teen Accounts and extra protections for under-18s.**
- Snapchat Snap Map **can be set to Ghost Mode.**
- WhatsApp **is phone-number based (use privacy settings to limit groups/contacts).**
- YouTube **has 3 levels of content filtering: Explore, Explore More and Most of YouTube.**

Popular Games & Platforms: Safety Features

This page summarises key safety and parental-control settings for popular game services, plus common console-level controls.
Symbols: ✓ available | ✕ not available | ◐ varies by age/device.

Feature	Roblox	Minecraft	MONOPOLY GO!	Poki / Poki Kids	Pokémon Showdown	Game consoles (PS / Xbox / Switch)
Minimum age / age assurance	◐ Under 13 can play. From Jan 2026: age check required for Communication features (Experience chat, Party chat, Voice). 13+ can use ID as an alternative method.	◐ Age ratings vary; child accounts can require parent setup.	◐ Younger players allowed; some features limited by age.	✓ Poki.com is 16+; under-16s use kids.poki.com.	◐ No stated minimum age; open web service with rules for conduct.	✓ Child accounts and age-based access settings.
Account privacy defaults & who can contact me	✓ Parents can limit who can contact the child (friends only / no one) via parental controls.	✓ Managed via Microsoft/Xbox privacy settings.	◐ Limited (mainly friends/links); fewer privacy controls than social platforms.	✕ No accounts (generally).	◐ Nickname-based accounts; limited privacy controls.	✓ Platform privacy & communication settings.
Text chat / messaging	◐ Age check required to enable chat. 5–9: parent consent needed to enable Experience chat. Under 13: parent consent needed to enable Direct chat.	✓ Can allow/block text & invites via account settings.	✕ No open player chat (support chat only).	✕	✓ Public chatrooms + private messages.	✓ Restrict messages across games/services.
Voice chat	◐ Age check required. Voice controls are	◐ Usually platform-based; restrict voice via	✕	✕	✕ (text-based).	✓ Restrict voice chat / party chat.

	available for users age-checked as 13+ in supported regions; phone verification no longer unlocks voice.	account/console settings.				
Restricted contacts (unknown players)	◐ Age-based chat limits who can chat (by age groups). Parents can tighten communication further in parental controls.	✓ Friends-only / block (account settings).	◐ Friends list only; remove friends to limit contact.	×	◐ Open chat; can ignore/block users individually.	✓ Friends-only and approval controls.
Blocking & reporting	✓ Block and report users/experiences.	✓ Hide chat from a player; report abuse.	◐ Report issues via in-app support.	◐ Contact site/support to report concerns.	✓ /ignore and reporting tools; moderated chat rooms.	✓ Reporting tools vary by game + platform.
Content controls (sensitive content, recommendations, search limits)	✓ Chat filters; restricted experiences require age verification; maturity labels.	◐ Control multiplayer/servers; chat and invites can be restricted.	× No user-generated feeds; limited content settings.	◐ Poki Kids is curated; main site is general.	◐ Rules/moderation for chat; no personalised filters.	✓ Age ratings and content restrictions at platform level.
Screen time / break reminders	✓ Usage insights and optional daily time limits via parental controls.	◐ Use device/console or Microsoft Family Safety time limits.	×	×	×	✓ Time limits and bedtime settings.
Location sharing / discoverability	×	×	×	×	×	×
Parent tools / supervision	✓ Parents can manage communication settings and can update a child's age via parental controls if the age check needs correcting.	◐ Microsoft Family Safety / Xbox Family Settings.	× (mostly device-level).	×	×	✓ Parent apps + family management.
Purchases, gifting, ads / monetisation controls	✓ Spend limits and purchase restrictions via parental controls.	◐ Store/console purchase controls + approvals.	◐ In-app purchases: use Apple/Google purchase controls (and device Screen Time).	◐ Ad-supported; limited purchasing.	◐ Ad-supported; no in-app purchases.	✓ Spending limits, approvals, and restrictions.

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Help & Support Links

Official safety, privacy and family tools for the platforms featured in this guide (UK).

Tip: Settings change often, so it's worth checking these pages regularly.

Apps & Games

Popular apps

- **TikTok:** Family Pairing | Guardian's guide
- **Instagram:** Meta Family Center | Instagram Help Center
- **Snapchat:** Family Centre
- **WhatsApp:** Safety & Security | Privacy check-up
- **Discord:** Family Center | Safety Center
- **YouTube:** Supervised experiences | YouTube Kids

Popular games & platforms

- **Roblox:** Parental controls | Age checks for chat (Jan 2026)
- **Minecraft:** Parental controls
- **MONOPOLY GO!:** Help Centre
- **Poki Kids:** Parents
- **Pokémon Showdown:** Contact / report

Devices & Consoles

Phones, tablets & accounts

- **Apple (iPhone/iPad):** Screen Time parental controls
- **Android / Chromebook:** Google Family Link

Game consoles

- **PlayStation (PS4/PS5):** Account & family settings | PlayStation Family app
- **Xbox:** Xbox Family Settings app
- **Nintendo Switch:** Parental controls

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Common Sense Media Reviews

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Below are summaries from **Common Sense Media's** reviews and community feedback.

YouTube **Common Sense Says: 13+** Vast video library can entertain and educate, but age-inappropriate videos, comments, and ads are easy to stumble across. Supervision and Restricted mode help. **Link:** Read review	**TikTok** **Common Sense Says: 15+** Creative short videos and trends, but expect swearing/sexual references and heavy scrolling. Use Family Pairing, teen defaults, and time limits. **Link:** Read review	**Instagram** **Common Sense Says: 15+** All-in-one app for sharing, shopping, and scrolling. Ads and public profiles can increase pressure and exposure to mature content—keep accounts private. **Link:** Read review
Snapchat **Common Sense Says: 16+** Messaging with disappearing photos/videos and curated content. Location sharing (Snap Map) needs care—use Ghost Mode and Family Center. **Link:** Read review	**WhatsApp** **Common Sense Says: 14+** Messaging and calls with individuals and groups. Useful for staying in touch, but limited parental controls—watch group chats and unknown contacts. **Link:** Read review	**Facebook Messenger** **See review** If your child uses Messenger, check message requests, privacy settings, and who can contact them. Agree clear rules for adding contacts and sharing photos. **Link:** Read review
Discord **Common Sense Says: 13+** Voice/text chat with servers. User-generated content can include swearing and mature topics—use DM filters, server settings, and Family Center. **Link:** Read review	**Roblox** **Parents Say: 10+ • Kids Say: 9+** Popular creative game platform, but many users warn about inappropriate content and stranger contact. Supervise chat/friends and review privacy settings. **Link:** Read review	**Minecraft** **Common Sense Says: 8+** Creative building and exploration. Online multiplayer can involve chat with others—use private servers/real-life friends and adjust account settings. **Link:** Read review
Poki (browser games) **Common Sense Says: 14+** Free web games hub with a wide mix of content and ads. Younger children are better with curated, age-appropriate game libraries. **Link:** Read review	**MONOPOLY GO!** **No Common Sense review found** If you can't find a review, use the app store age rating, check in-app purchases, and supervise any online/social features. **Link:** Search Common Sense Media	**Pokémon Showdown** **No Common Sense review found** If you can't find a review, use site/app age guidance, check chat/online play options, and supervise interactions with strangers. **Link:** Search Common Sense Media

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Help & Reporting (UK)

Where to get help if something goes wrong online

If a child sees something upsetting, is being pressured or threatened, or you're worried about contact from an adult, these UK services can help. For most situations: pause, save evidence (screenshots), and report.

CEOP (NCA)

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (part of the National Crime Agency).

Use CEOP if an adult is contacting a child sexually online, or you're worried about online sexual abuse or grooming.

Website: ceop.police.uk

NSPCC

A UK charity working to prevent child abuse and help keep children safe.

Provides advice for parents and carers, guidance on online safety, and reporting routes.

Website: nspcc.org.uk

Childline

Free, confidential support for children and young people under 19 (run by the NSPCC).

Children can get help with anything that's worrying them — including online bullying, sextortion, grooming or pressure.

Website: childline.org.uk

Report Harmful Content

A UK Safer Internet Centre service that can advise, signpost, and help escalate reports of harmful online content.

They can support with requests to remove harmful content (for example, images or videos) seen online.

Website: reportharmfulcontent.com