

Staying safe on Minecraft



Photo: Kevin Jarrett

Minecraft is one of the world's most popular games, especially with children (find out more about how it works and what the appeal is in our [What is Minecraft](#) article).

The chances are, if you have primary age children, Minecraft will be part of their world, or their friends' worlds. So what should you know about helping your kids play safely?

Are there age restrictions?

Like lots of popular sites, apps and games, Minecraft's terms and conditions specify that it is for over 13s. This is because of US privacy legislation, which requires parents of under-13s to sign permission before any data about their children can be collected. In the UK, if children under the age of 13 play Minecraft, it is a violation of the site's terms and conditions but it is not illegal.

Is it appropriate for younger children?

Despite the age restriction, which as we have seen is to do with the legal position in America, Minecraft is very popular with primary school children. There's nothing about the game itself that's inappropriate for kids – in fact, it's often been described as a virtual Lego. Users explore landscapes and worlds and build their infrastructure from materials they find on the site.

As with any online activity, there are some safety concerns to keep in mind. If you have a young child who plays Minecraft, you might want to:

- Set the account up through your own email address and know their passwords – at primary age, this is not an unreasonable thing to ask.
- Discuss which settings you are going to apply prior to their joining the site – will you allow multiplayer, for instance?
- Speak to your child about unwanted contact and what to do if someone is being nasty or inappropriate to them in the game. Ask that they come to you if anything goes wrong, so you can make it stop.

Are there privacy settings?

Privacy settings are limited in Minecraft, but there are things you can do to control what your child sees and whom they interact with. These are especially important if your child is of a primary age – you may want to

be more flexible with older children, depending on their maturity and ability to talk to you if they feel uncomfortable.

- **Single player / multiple player**

Users can either play on their own in single player, which is the safest mode because they can't use the chat function; or with others in multiplayer.

The multiplayer option enables users to play together in a single world. It's safest to create a private server where only known friends and contacts can join. Some servers have been set up to enable children and families to play together, with strict rules on language and behaviour. A simple online search will give you server options.

- **Chat feature**

On multiplayer, the chat function allows users to participate in discussions. You can open a chat window by pressing the 'T' button and then pressing 'Enter' to display the chat to other users. In the chat function users can also post website links.

Chat features on sites allow children to make friends with people who, in this case, have similar gaming interests. Online, there is no way of verifying who these people might be, so if your child is talking to people online that they have never met in the real world, it is important that they don't give away any personal information about themselves, or move their conversations into other online areas, especially private ones where conversations could become more personal.

Are Minecraft YouTube videos safe?

Lots of Minecraft users watch fan-created YouTube videos to improve their skills and learn new techniques. Minecraft videos are by far the most popular gaming content on YouTube, with 3.9 billion views in March 2015 alone.

Minecraft videos are popular with children and plenty of them are age-appropriate. But some of the videos include commentary with profanity or sexual references, and some discuss and encourage bullying. So if your child is planning to watch Minecraft YouTube videos, you may want to have a look at them first.

You can also try searching for 'profanity free Minecraft servers'. But even then it might be worth checking the videos before young children watch them. Minecraft does not have any particularly graphic content but some of the videos contain monsters, trolls, spiders and zombies, which some children may find scary.

Some popular YouTubers run Minecraft channels that are intended to be family friendly. Minecraft Dad makes videos of himself and his kids playing on their family server, while SuperKevinCraft is run by a teen whose videos show him building and exploring with friends. Stampy's videos are also popular with children – and he's creating a new Minecraft-focused YouTube channel featuring educational videos. You can point younger children towards some of these age-appropriate channels.

You can also turn on [YouTube's Safety Mode](#) (link is external) to block age-inappropriate content.

Can I report directly to Minecraft?

Currently Minecraft does not have a 'report' function so your child should be careful when joining a server. If your child is gaming with a mature age group, they might hear offensive language or rude comments.

With some plugins (add-on software that extends or customises the game), you can report users who break the rules of the server to a moderator who can ban anyone being offensive or disruptive.