

Roulette style video /chat apps

Chat roulette style apps work by pairing people together anonymously to chat (and video chat) to each other. **Due to the anonymous nature of these apps, we would always recommend that that they are not suitable for under 18s.**

There is often a lot of inappropriate content and behaviour on these apps and your child is at risk of grooming as a stranger may try to connect with your child initially on an anonymous app and then encourage them to continue chatting on another app.

It is also important that your child is aware that what they say and do whilst video chatting can be recorded and shared later without their knowledge.

You should talk to your child about who they chat with and what they are sharing when they do. As with all apps and websites that your child accesses, make sure they know how to use any reporting tools and they know how to block other users if necessary.

The NSPCC discuss chat apps in general as well as how to talk to your child about what they are sharing with others online here:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keepingchildren-safe/online-safety/socialmedia/chat-apps/>



Image taken from NSPCC

CapCut

Have you heard of CapCut? It is owned by the same owners as TikTok and is a video editing app. CapCut state that their services are intended for those over the age of 13 and those under the age of 18 must have consent from their parent/legal guardian. It is rated as 12+ on the App store. The App store have rated it as this because of *Infrequent/Mild Mature/Suggestive Themes, Infrequent/Mild Sexual Content and Nudity.*

What can I do on CapCut?

CapCut is used as a video and image editing tool allowing users to edit their videos/images as well as add music, sound effects, text and stickers.

What should I be aware of?

- The templates are user generated, therefore they may not always be appropriate for your child to view, for example adult themes. CapCut includes access to a library of music that can be used within videos that may include explicit lyrics.
- Premium content - CapCut does include in-app purchases/monthly subscriptions allowing users access to premium content.

Further information

Protect Young Eyes have published a full review of CapCut here:

<https://protectyouneyes.com/apps/capcut-app-review/>

Image taken from
Bark



Harmful Online Challenges

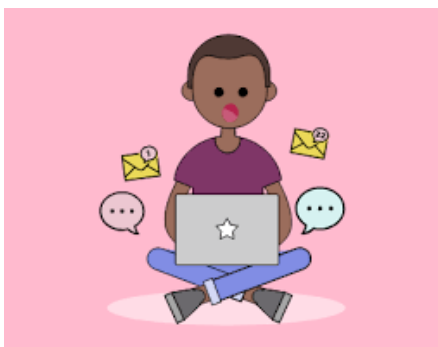
Lisa Kenevan and Hollie Dance both lost their sons to dangerous online challenges. They share their advice and tips with Internet Matters to help protect children from harmful online challenges. Internet Matters have also included links to further resources regarding online challenges at the below link:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/parent-stories/tips-protectchildren-harmful-online-challenges/>

Being Unkind Online



It can be very easy online for children to behave in a way that they would not if they were face to face with each other.



Talk to your child about how they speak to others online and encourage them to talk to people online with respect and kindness, like they would if they were face-to-face. How they act online should be how they behave on the school playground when they are following school rules. Here are some examples of what being unkind looks like online:

- Sending nasty or hurtful messages
- Leaving unkind comments
- Sharing photographs of somebody else without their permission
- Excluding somebody on purpose
- Impersonating somebody with a fake account
- Telling/sharing lies

The above might happen whilst your child is gaming online or whilst using social media or messaging apps for example.

What should I do if my child is being bullied online?

Ensure that your child understands that if they receive unkind messages or see something that worries them, they should not reply or engage in conversation with the perpetrator. Instead, they should tell a trusted adult. You can use the tools within an app to report any offensive or hurtful content as well as block people so they cannot contact them again in the future.

Starting a conversation with your child BBC Own It have curated a selection of videos and quizzes with ideas and advice to help make the web a kinder place. You could use these to help you start a conversation with your child.

<https://www.bbc.com/ownit/curations/being-kind-online>

Further information

<https://bulliesout.com/need-support/be-kind-online/>
<https://bekindonline.com/category/cyber-safety-tips/>



Image taken from: InternetMatters

Summertime Screen Time



Image taken from Dreamstime.com

The Ineqe Safeguarding Group have published information on their website to help you manage your child's screentime during the summer break. Their website includes top tips for managing screen time, activities and guides to popular apps:

<https://ineqe.com/2024/06/20/summer-time-screen-time-2024/>

Helping your child transition to secondary school

Is your child moving to secondary school in the autumn term? Internet Matters have published lots of useful advice and resources to help you during this transition, including discussing if your child is ready for a smartphone and explaining the challenges they may face in secondary school:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/moving-to-secondary-schoolonline-safety-guide/>

Accessibility features

There are many accessibility features available on iPhone and Android phones to support those with vision, speech and cognitive needs for example. You can find out more here:

iPhone:

<https://support.apple.com/engb/guide/iphone/iph3e2e4367/ios>

Android:

<https://support.google.com/accessibility/android/answer/6006564?hl=en-GB>

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

AMONG US

A multiplayer 'social deduction' game set in outer space, Among Us enjoyed a surge in popularity in 2020, and has since maintained a dedicated fan-base (globally, around 60 million regular players each month) thanks to its unique nature, simple premise and ease of access across numerous platforms. The game's on-screen action revolves around danger, disguise and deception – and there are certain parallels to be drawn with some of the real-life risks that parents and carers of young Among Us players need to be aware of.



WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

SENSITIVE PREMISE

In Among Us, up to three players are secretly assigned to be alien imposters, tasked with murdering their colleagues while the survivors try to unmask them. While the concept's not far removed from traditional games like Wink Murder or TV shows such as *The Traitors*, some parents may feel uncomfortable about their child playing a video game in which deception and killing are prioritised.

VIRTUAL VIOLENCE

The on-screen death of characters may be fundamental to the gameplay of Among Us, but the majority of the animations depicting this are deliberately cartoonish and only appear very briefly. However, it is worth bearing in mind that the game has a PEGI age rating of 7 – meaning that certain elements (however heavily stylised they may be) could still upset some younger players.

CHAT BETWEEN PLAYERS

With up to 15 people participating in each game online, a large part of Among Us' appeal is speculating with fellow players who the imposters might be and making accusations. This dialogue through the in-game text chat can occasionally become heated – and could, of course, involve your child being put into contact with people (including adults) who they don't know in real life.

GOING OFF PLATFORM

While Among Us provides basic ways to communicate, many gamers prefer to use external services such as Discord: a popular app which offers voice and video chat functions. These undeniably make cooperation easier, but also create a potential route for children to hear inappropriate language – or for strangers to message them privately in an environment which isn't regulated by the game itself.

IN-GAME PURCHASES

Among Us is free to download on mobile devices, and costs less than £5 to obtain on console and PC. A related longer-term pitfall, though, is that the game also includes options to pay for upgrades such as removing ads on the mobile version or adding cosmetic touches to characters (such as different costumes). It's certainly possible that a child could spend a significant sum without realising it.

Advice for Parents & Carers

CONSIDER SOFTER ALTERNATIVES

Although Among Us is hugely popular with young gamers, it's possible that some children might find the murder themes unsettling. If so, plenty of similar social deduction games are available (in both digital and traditional board game formats) which downplay the potentially grislier elements: some centre around undercover spies, for instance, and there's even a Marvel superhero-themed variant.

CHAT ABOUT CHATting

You might feel it's prudent to talk to your child about the risks associated with voice chat while gaming, explaining in particular that strangers online aren't always who they claim to be. Keeping the conversation relaxed will reinforce your child's confidence that they can always come to you with any online concerns – not just about Among Us, but any potential future issues as well.

DISCUSS DISCORD

In general, Discord is an excellent app for keeping online communities together because of its use of dedicated individual servers, which allow comprehensive control over who can join – and who can't. Once you're familiar with the platform, you could set up a secure server for your child and their friends to communicate during games of Among Us, with no access for people they don't know.

AMONG US, AMONG FRIENDS

When your child and their friends get together, they can enjoy a private game of Among Us by choosing a 'local' lobby – that is, only people connected to the same WiFi (your home network, for example) can enter. This prevents any random online users – who may be total strangers – from joining and removes the need for voice chat, as the players are all physically in the same location.

STOP SURPRISE SPENDING

If you're concerned about the possibility of your child racking up an unexpected bill on Among Us' microtransactions, you could consider using a prepaid card with a set limit. Likewise, you could specify in the game's options that adult authorisation is required for every purchase – or you could make sure that no payment methods are enabled on the device that your child plays the game on.

Meet Our Expert

Lloyd Coombes is Editor in Chief of gaming and esports site GGRecon and has worked in the gaming media for around four years. A regular visitor to the App Store to try out new tools, he's also a parent who understands the value of online safety. Writing mainly about tech and fitness, his articles have been published on influential sites including IGN and TechRadar.

