

PGHS Online Safety Newsletter

Feb 2022

SAFER INTERNET DAY

On Tuesday 8th February is **Safer Internet Day**. Each year there is a different theme for this. This year, the theme is 'All fun and games?'

As a school, we will be using this theme for all the assemblies to make every student aware of demonstrating respect and building positive relationships whilst online.

Students are increasingly online these days and are being exposed to a variety of new online tools. It is our responsibility to teach them how to stay safe and what is acceptable use on the software and Apps around today and how to show respect in a virtual environment.

DISCORD

This is a popular app for gamers that has come to the attention of the safeguarding team recently. Discord is the only cross-platform voice and text chat app designed specifically for gamers.

With the app users can stay connected to all Discord voice and text channels even when AFK (Away From Keyboard). Discord provides anonymity and privacy for communications, this does mean that it is vulnerable to the users who may use it for hostile or predatory behaviour and abuse whilst in chats.

It has an age restriction of 13+ but is being used by many children younger than this.

We have been informed that this app is becoming more popular with children can be used to send inappropriate sexual content and is linked to cybercrime.

Top Tips for Parents/ Carers

Having conversations without judgement.

Whether by playing games, watching videos, or doing things your child enjoys, spending time together online is a great way to start conversations about the online world and how they're finding being a part of it.

It is important to ask questions and take an interest in what your child enjoys online.

An essential part of having this open dialogue is to not judge, even if their behaviour or life online isn't what you wanted or expected. This ensures that your child feels they can come to you if ever they make a mistake or experience a problem online.

Knowing where you can learn more about their favourite apps and games.

Websites like Common Sense Media or The Family Gaming Database can be invaluable sources of information. When your child starts talking about a new game or app, why not do some research into the reporting and blocking options available? Then you can help your child if they come to you with an issue.

Reassuring your child that whatever happens online, you are there to support them.

Let your child know that the best way to address any problem they have online, is to tell a trusted adult immediately. For example, this might include someone sending them a friend request; an online message; telling them to visit a specific website or app, or asking them for their personal information. Reassure them that if anything happens online that they are unsure about, or makes them feel worried or upset, they can come to you for help.

If you have any concerns about online safety please email s.hall@penworthamgirls.lancs.sch.uk.

Use the QR code to join our online safety forum for parents and carers





With over 14 million daily users, Discord is one of the most popular communication tools for gamers. It allows you to create or join what are known as 'servers', where different users can talk in groups via text message or voice call. There is also the option to send direct messages and make video calls.

AGE RESTRICTION
13+



What parents need to know about **DISCORD**

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Your child can access almost any chat server on Discord. This means they can easily be exposed to content and conversations that are inappropriate, upsetting or potentially harmful.



SEXUAL IMAGERY

Despite there being guidelines in place to prevent it, users are able to share adult content. This can include unwanted images, pornographic videos and provocative discussions. It's important to play alert and know the risks that your child could be exposed to.



RISK OF CYBERBULLYING

Interactions on the platform are largely unregulated. This means other users can easily say and share things to your child that might be offensive and upsetting. The competitive nature of gaming can lead users to make abusive and harmful remarks about your child.



HIDDEN CHARGES

Though the basic platform is free, your child will be encouraged to sign up to premium subscriptions, which give extra perks, such as animated avatars and free games. The two options are known as 'Nitro Classic' (which costs \$4.99 a month) and 'Nitro' (which costs \$9.99 a month). Prices are only converted to pounds sterling during the payment process.



RISK OF CYBERCRIME

Cybercriminal groups have been linked to the platform due to reports of hackers sharing stolen data. It's also possible that your child may be encouraged to share the data of their friends, either through peer pressure, or 'for fun', without realising the consequences.



STRANGER DANGER

To create an account, you only need to display a username and profile image. This makes it easy for someone to hide his or her real identity. Predators from anywhere in the world can join a chat server, message your child and quickly leave to avoid detection. Forbes reports groomers have been targeting children susceptible to online contact on the platform.



National Online Safety
#WakeUpWednesday

Top Tips to Protect Your Child



1 BEWARE OF WHAT'S SHARED

Whatever your child says or shares on the platform can be seen, heard and shared with a much larger audience. Be careful to make sure your child understands this and does not say or share anything that could be deemed offensive, harmful or put themselves or others at risk.

You can find Discord's own guide for parents here: <https://blog.discordapp.com/parents-guide-to-discord-c77d91793e9c>



2 IMPROVE SECURITY SETTINGS

To help protect your child, make sure they set strong passwords. You should consider using the 'two-factor authentication' function for extra protection. It's also important to remind your child to never to share their personal information, or the details of another user.



3 CHECK THEIR FRIEND LIST

You can restrict who is able to make 'friend requests' to your child in the 'Friends' tab. It's a good idea to deselect the default option that allows anyone to connect. Of course, you should also talk to your child about why it's a risk to allow strangers to connect with them through such platforms.



4 REPORT & BLOCK SUSPICIOUS USERS

Make sure your child knows how to report and block abusive or suspicious users. If you do find your child suffering repeated abuse, contact the platform directly using the email: abuse@discordapp.com. It's a good idea to teach your child how to screenshot any negative interactions too.



5 BEWARE OF NSFW CONTENT

Public forums on the platform are a potential venue for inappropriate content that you should be wary of. There is a Discord mascot known as 'Wumpus', which is supposed to represent anyone under 18. Anyone who posts content unsuitable for under-18s, should mark it NSFW (Not Suitable For Wumpus).



6 SHOW RESPECT TO OTHERS

It's important you actively teach your child to treat other users with respect and behave online the same way as they would offline.

Take the time to read through Discord's Community Guidelines with your child. Find them at www.discordapp.com/guidelines



7 TURN ON SAFE MESSAGING

You should encourage your child to activate the 'Safe Direct Messaging' option. This will scan and delete any direct messages sent to your child containing explicit content.



Meet our expert

Claire Woffenden has been a technology journalist since 1998 with a specialism in consumer technology (apps, websites, home computing and digital devices). As a mum of two young children - aged 8 and 6 - Claire is passionate about helping to keep children safe online.

NS UKCCs do not support discord app on ios for us, <https://www.gamescom.co.uk/2020/05/13/discord-has-a-child-safety-problem/>, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/technology/article-6330608/Half-youngsters-report-being-online-games.html>, <https://www.polygon.com/14565703/discord-says-it-will-stop-sharing-if-it-can-stop-creating-friendships>, <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-52719707> (discord the 1 billion gamers parallel coming to terms with data shows child groomers and for investigations) (discord)

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