



Digital Bulletin – Discord

In addition to the large, key social media sites, a number of different apps appear, some of which are a brief, but fashionable craze, while others succeed in achieving longevity within this busy online space. A platform that has risen to prominence and is growing in popularity is 'Discord'.

What is it?

Discord was launched in 2015 and has become increasingly popular among the gaming community. The site is used to connect people with similar interests and allow them to communicate using either text or voice (through a microphone on the device being used). The platform works by providing a series of 'servers'. These are spaces where people can go to meet up with others. The majority of these are by invitation only, allowing friends to talk amongst themselves; however, there are also public servers, that focus on a particular game or topic. In terms of age rating, Discord shares the common age rating of 13+. However, Apple have requested that this is raised to 17, whereas Google Play Store has it listed as a 'Teen' rating.

What are the risks

- Discord contains adult content and must be labelled as only accessible to those over 18 years old. They have added an option for over 18 users to label their contact 'not safe for work'.
- Your child can access almost any chat server on discord. This means they can easily be exposed to conversations and content that are inappropriate, upsetting or potentially harmful.
- Despite there being guidelines in place to prevent it, users are able to circulate adult content, including sexualised images, pornographic videos and provocative discussions.
- Interactions on the platform are largely unregulated. This means other users can easily say and show things to your child that might be offensive and upsetting.
- Though the basic platform is free, there are options for in app charges, including monthly subscriptions.
- Cybercriminal groups have been linked to the platform due to reports of hackers sharing stolen data.
- 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

Privacy

Discord's latest report reveals that 37% of users were subject to harassment on the platform, 12% were victims of cybercrime followed by 9% of not safe for work (NSFW) content. As a result, they have implemented some safety measures, including:

- Use of artificial intelligence (AI) to detect abuse, scams, and phishing
- Dedicated moderators who are a key part of making the platform safe, "respond meaningfully to an increased number of reports while maintaining proactive efforts to keep the highest-harm actors off the platform"
- Blocking and reporting features
- Safe Direct Messaging offers a traffic-light colour-coded system to determine whether messages should be checked for inappropriate content:
 - **Keep me safe** (Scan direct message from everyone)
 - **My Friends are nice** (Don't scan friends messages)
 - **I live on the edge** (Don't scan anything)

Our advice to users would be:

- Choose an appropriate privacy setting to ensure that you are as protected as possible
- Limit your usage to private servers and ensure you know who has access to that chat
- Ensure that the people in your server are who you think they are. Check in person
- Report or block inappropriate usage from others

If you have any questions on this, or any other online safety matter, please email me directly.