



PARENT'S GUIDE TO



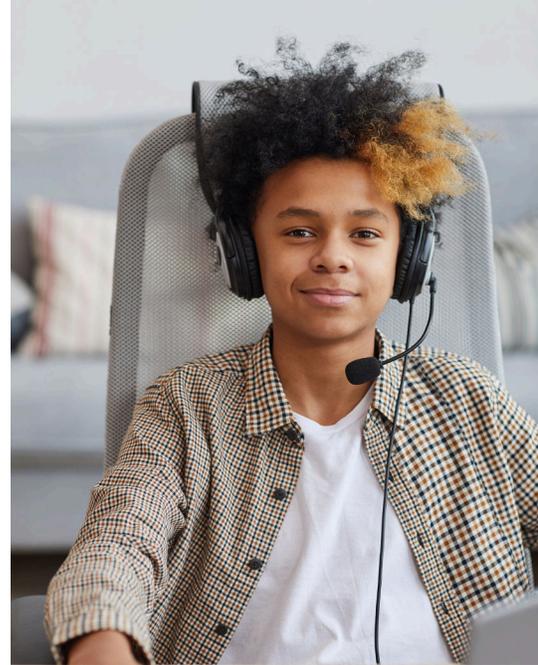
Discord



- **What is Discord?**
- **How it Works**
- **Important Safety Settings You Should Know About**
- **How to Filter Inappropriate Content**
- **Blocking & Reporting**
- **Thoughts for Parents**

What's Inside

- 3 How Discord Works
- 4 Joining Discord
- 4 Safety Considerations
- 5 Explicit Media
- 5 Friends on Discord
- 5 Direct Messaging
- 6 Blocking
- 6 How Does Discord Make Money?
- 7 Closing Thoughts for Parents



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If you've got a teen in your house, there's a good chance you have Discord. We don't mean bickering—we're talking Discord with a capital D, the chat app that's especially popular with teens.

Discord debuted in 2015 and quickly gained a following among gamers looking to communicate while playing videogames. The service has since shed its gamers-only image to become one of a handful of go-to chat apps.

The service supports voice, video and text chat and now has 150+ million monthly users. It's still popular with gamers, but you're also just as likely to find groups (or "servers," in Discord speak) about politics, celebrities or finance, or created around a school project.

How it works

Discord is organized into chat groups called **servers**, which can be public or private. Private, invite-only servers are by far the most common type and typically host no more than 10-15 members. Popular public servers, on anything from a celebrity to a hot topic like anime, can attract thousands of members.

All conversations are opt-in, so users have to join a server to access content and exchange messages with other people on the server. There's no algorithm delivering content to a newsfeed like other social apps. Anyone can start a server.

Servers are organized into subtopics called **channels**. Channels are divided into **text and voice channels**. In text channels, users post messages, upload files and share images. In voice channels, users communicate through voice or video chat and screen share (called "Go Live" on Discord).

Users can send **private messages** via voice, video or text to an individual or group of up to 9 other people. Messages aren't monitored by Discord unless there's an issue. Discord doesn't offer end-to-end encryption (technology that digitally scrambles messages so only the sender and receiver know what was said).

Discord also features **Student Hubs**, a space for students to engage with others at their school by verifying their Discord account with their official student email. Within the hub, they can connect with other verified students, discover servers for study groups or classes, and share their own servers for fellow students to join. Hubs are student-created and not affiliated with or managed by a school.

Discord has general [Community Guidelines](#) against hate speech, harassment and other harms like bullying and misinformation. Servers also have rules that users must accept to join.

Volunteer **moderators**, or “**mods**,” enforce the rules and delete content or ban users that break the rules. Verified moderators have completed Discord’s [Moderator Academy](#), which offers courses on managing and improving Discord communities.

Joining Discord

Users must be 13 or older to join. Discord users choose any username and receive a four-digit number. The username plus # and the four-digit number make up a user’s **Discord tag**, such as "lincoln#2345".

As with most online services, teens need to sign up for Discord using their correct birth year. Why? Discord has default settings designed to keep minors safe, such as automatically scanning direct messages for explicit images and videos.

Safety considerations

In general, we recommend the most restrictive settings for users under 18 but acknowledge that every teen is unique. In most cases, older teens should be given more freedom and say when it comes to settings than younger users. Whatever settings are selected, revisit them at least once a year as your teen grows and matures or if there's an issue.

You’ll want to take a look at some important settings with your teen:

My account

Create a hard-to-guess password and don’t share it. We also recommend enabling two-factor authentication for additional protection. Go to **User Settings > My Account > Enable Two Factor Auth**. [Learn more](#) about enabling 2FA on Discord.

Filtering out explicit media

Go to **User Settings > Privacy & Safety > Safe Direct Messaging**. We recommend the most restrictive setting. “Keep me safe” is the default for minor accounts, which means Discord will scan all direct messages for sexually explicit and violent images and videos. If explicit media is found, Discord will delete the message.

Minor accounts also can’t access channels labeled “NSFW,” or Not Safe for Work. Users trying to access channels labeled NSFW, which may contain nudity or other adult content, must confirm they are at least 18 before entering.

Managing Friends

Go to **User Settings > Privacy & Safety > Who Can Add You as a Friend**.

Options include Everyone, Friends of Friends, and Server Members. We recommend teens only accept friend requests from people they know in real life. Choose the most restrictive option, Friends of Friends. All friend requests must be approved by the user no matter the friend setting.

Direct messages

Go to **User Settings > Privacy & Safety > Server Privacy Default**. Again, we recommend the most restrictive settings for minors. “**Allow Direct Messages from Server Members**” is on by default, so toggle it to the off position.

Meme Culture



Anywhere you find teens online, you’ll find meme culture, and Discord is no exception. Countless Discord servers are packed with memes (pronounced “meem”), which are videos, images or graphical text that “go viral,” are usually funny, shared as-is or altered in a way that extends or adds to the “conversation.”

Most memes are silly, but some are thought-provoking, offering commentary or satire on various topics and news events. But some memes can be racist, sexist or homophobic, and serve to perpetuate these and other societal harms. (Discord will remove these types of memes when reported.)

Look at your teen’s favorite memes together to jump-start conversation about this important part of youth culture. **What’s a meme they like, didn’t like, one they’ve created?** Don’t be surprised to see memes that tackle tough subjects with deadpan humor, similar to stand-up comedians joking about war or disease. Take time to listen and understand—without judgment—what they appreciate about a meme and why.

Keep in mind that changes to global settings only affect new servers your teen joins. To make changes to settings in existing servers, go to **Server Settings** on the server's dropdown menu, which is next to the server name.

You can adjust settings on a server-by-server basis, so you may want to select the most restrictive settings in the general settings menu and then adjust an individual server's settings to be less restrictive (e.g., a server set up for a study group at school).

Blocking

Blocked users can't send you direct messages, and you won't see any new content they post.

On desktop:

- Right-click the user's @Username to bring up a menu.
- Select Block in the menu.

On mobile:

- Tap the user's @Username to bring up the user's profile.
- Tap the three dots in the upper right corner to bring up a menu.
- Select Block in the menu.

To report a user who's posting harmful content, [submit a report](#) to Discord's support team.

How does Discord make money?

Discord makes money from subscriptions to its Nitro service, which allows subscribers to stream higher quality video, upload large file sizes (helpful when sharing big images, gifs or short snippets of video), create a custom profile and other special perks.



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Users can also purchase server “boosts,” which provide special **emotes** (characters with movement) and improved video and voice quality within a server.

Discord doesn't sell ads and says it doesn't sell user data to third parties.

Closing thoughts for parents

While Discord's name can raise the eyebrow of even the most laid-back parent, safety on Discord, like all connected apps, mostly depends on how it's used.

Smart practices—like treating others how you want to be treated, utilizing privacy settings in an age-appropriate way and maintaining a healthy balance of on- and offline activities—are especially protective and will help ensure a positive experience on Discord or just about any other app. You can learn more about Discord's safety work at [Discord.com/Safety](https://discord.com/safety).

Parents are still who most teens look to for advice and a value system that will carry them successfully into adulthood. Open, non-judgmental discussions and genuine interest, not fear, in the apps, games and services they use, are a great way to put into practice your family's values and help your teen grow into the adult they are meant to be.



Discord makes money from subscriptions and doesn't sell ads.



For more info about teens & privacy, visit ConnectSafely.org/privacy.

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About ConnectSafely

ConnectSafely is a Silicon Valley, California-based nonprofit organization dedicated to educating users of connected technology about safety, privacy and security. We publish research-based safety tips, parents' guidebooks, advice, news and commentary on all aspects of tech use and policy.