SAFE and SMART

Keeping Children Safe Online
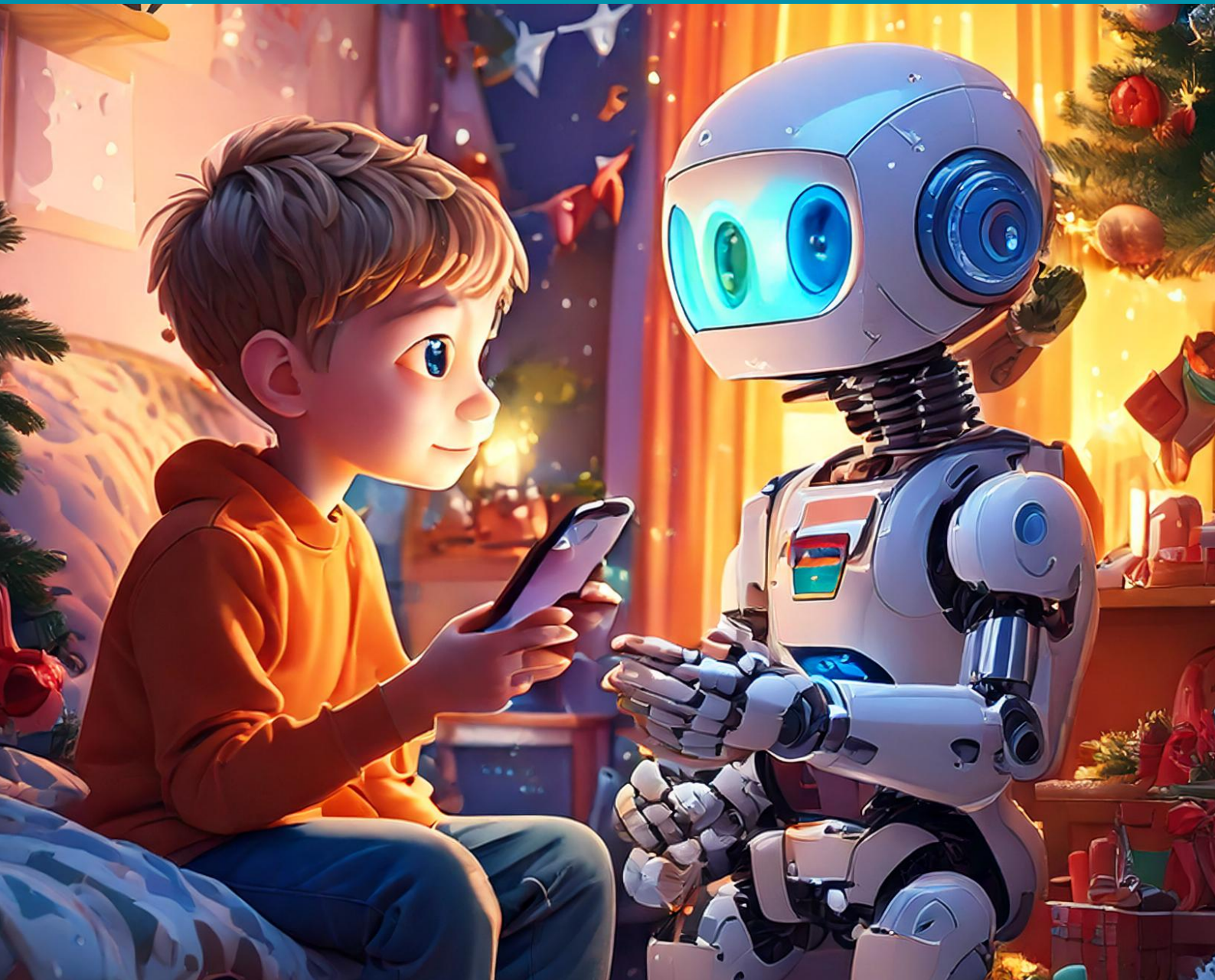
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What are
AI Chatbots?

Simply speaking, AI chatbots are computer programs designed to have conversations and give a human-like response. They can answer questions, tell stories, help with homework, suggest recipes or just chat and much more. They learn by processing lots of information and figuring out how to respond in a way that feels natural and helpful.

Children might come across chatbots in apps (e.g. Snapchat), games, or even in educational tools. For example:

- Educational platforms like Duolingo use chatbots to help with language practice.

- Games sometimes have chatbots to guide players or add to the fun.

- AI-powered assistants like Siri, Alexa, or Google Assistant can answer questions or play music.

- Advanced AI tools (like ChatGPT) can help with research, creative writing, or exploring interests.

- Other advancements would include things like healthcare, mental health support and much more.

Why do Children use Chatbots?

There's lots of different reasons, the main one being that children are naturally curious. For example, if your child uses Snapchat and they're curious about SnapMyAI, they might experiment just to see what it does. Lots of children and young people who are using AI tools like ChatGPT are using them in the same way they might use Google search: to ask questions and explore.

Positives of AI Chatbots

- **As a learning aid:** Chatbots can explain concepts, help with problem-solving, or inspire creativity.

- **For convenience:** They're always available to help answer questions.

- **To have fun:** Chatbots can engage kids with trivia, jokes, or interactive storytelling, make poems and much more.

Negatives of AI Chatbots

- **Inaccurate information (hallucinations):** Chatbots sometimes provide answers that seem confident but are completely wrong. This is called "hallucination," and it can confuse children who may not know how to tell what's true.

- **Lack of guardrails:** Some chatbots aren't designed with safety measures in place, meaning they could share inappropriate content or respond in ways unsuitable for children. There have been lots of concerns lately about the advice chatbots are giving and the way in which they are responding. See HERE for an example.

- **Inappropriate advice:** In certain situations, chatbots might give advice that isn't helpful or is even harmful, like suggesting unsafe actions.

- **Over-reliance:** Kids might turn to chatbots instead of thinking critically or asking parents and teachers.

- **Privacy risks:** Some chatbots might collect data, raising concerns about how that information is used.

Things to Be Aware Of

1. **Know what your child is using.** Take a look at the chatbots your child interacts with and see how they work.

2. **Set boundaries.** Talk about when and why it's okay to use chatbots and explain that they're tools, not people.

3. **Encourage fact-checking.** Teach your child to verify information with other trusted sources.

4. **Discuss privacy.** Explain the importance of not sharing personal information with chatbots.

5. **Watch for red flags.** If your child mentions something unusual or upsetting from a chatbot interaction, check it out together.

DID YOU KNOW?

AI chatbots have been around since the 1960's as experimental programs to simulate conversations (natural language processing). Although chatbots were very limited back then it demonstrated how computers could mimic human dialogue and interact with humans, laying the foundations for advancements in artificial intelligence for academic and research purposes.

Now, AI chatbots are embedded everywhere, from customer service bots, education, entertainment, healthcare and much more.

YouTube
Teen Supervision

In September 2024, YouTube introduced new features to help parents stay involved in their teenagers' online activities while respecting their growing independence.

These new tools allow parents and teens to link their accounts through the [Family Center Hub](#). This feature gives parents and teens a shared view of channel activity, such as uploads, subscriptions, and comments. Parents also receive email notifications for key events like new video uploads or when a livestream begins. This approach encourages open communication and trust, keeping parents informed without taking away teens' sense of autonomy.

In addition to these supervision tools, YouTube has updated its recommendation system to reduce teenagers' exposure to videos that promote unrealistic body ideals or focus too heavily on fitness goals. See [HERE](#) for more information.

How to:
Set Up Teen Supervision

Step 1: Create or Link a Google Account for Your Teen

1. If your child already has a Google account:

   - Ensure their account is updated with their correct age (under 18) to enable teen-specific settings.

2. If your child does not have a Google account:

   - Create a new account for them at accounts.google.com/signup.

   - Choose a **Family Link account** for supervision features.

Step 2: Set Up Family Link (if not already in place)

1. Download the **Google Family Link app** on your device (available on Android and iOS).

2. Open the app and sign in with your Google account.

3. Follow the prompts to **add your child's account** under your family group.

4. Ensure your child's account is linked to your Family Link account for supervision capabilities.

Step 3: Enable YouTube Supervision

1. Log into **YouTube** using your child's account on their device.

2. On your device, open the **Family Link app** or go to families.google.com and select your child's profile.

3. Locate and click on **YouTube Settings**.

4. Choose the level of supervision you'd like:

- **Explore:** Allows access to most of YouTube with content filters for teens.

- **Explore More:** Broadens access but with more supervision.

- **YouTube Restricted Mode:** Limits inappropriate content but allows most functionality.

Step 4: Link Accounts for Activity Insights

1. Ensure your child's YouTube account is signed in on their device.

2. On your YouTube account, navigate to **Settings** > **Family Sharing** > **Supervise Accounts**.

3. Send an invitation to your child's Google account.

4. Ask your child to accept the invitation on their device to complete the linking process.
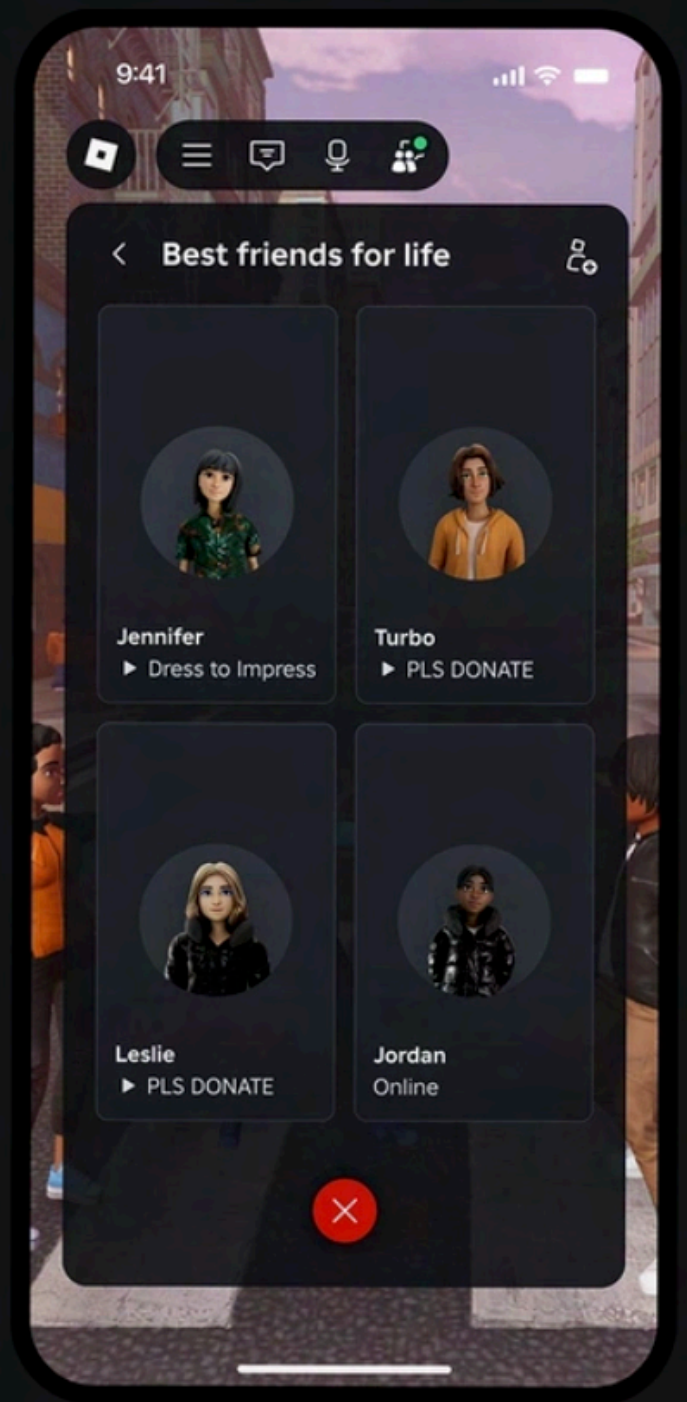
Step 5: Adjust Notifications and Reports

1. In the **Family Link app**, customize what updates you'd like to receive. For example:

   - Notifications for new uploads, subscriptions, or live streams.

   - Reports on viewed content or watch time.

2. Enable email notifications to stay informed about significant account activity.

Optional: Adjust YouTube Recommendations

- If your child is exposed to sensitive topics, YouTube's algorithms already restrict repeat recommendations. However, you can:

  - Go to **YouTube Settings** > **History & Privacy** and toggle off **Watch History** to limit personalized recommendations.

  - Manually review and adjust subscriptions and liked videos to ensure they align with positive and age-appropriate content.

ROBLOX PARTY

Roblox Party is a new feature introduced in December 2024 to make it easier for friends to play together in a more coordinated and seamless way.

The Party feature acts as a virtual "lobby" where players can form small groups of up to six people to chat, interact, and join games or experiences together without needing to interact in another app like Discord.

Features

- **Group Formation:** Players can invite up to five friends to join a Party, forming a group of six.

- **Integrated Chat:** Party members can chat directly within Roblox, making communication easy and accessible while remaining on the platform.

- **Shared Gameplay:** Once a Party is formed, all members can join a game or experience together, ensuring no one gets left behind.

- **Cross-Platform:** Roblox Party works across all devices where Roblox is available, including mobile, PC, and gaming consoles.

- **Privacy and Safety:** Chat within Parties is monitored to comply with Roblox's community guidelines, and parental controls allow for additional restrictions.

Why is Roblox Party Good for Children?

- **Encourages Social Play:** Roblox Party makes it simple for friends to connect and play together in more safe controlled environment, encouraging teamwork and social interaction.

- **Simplified Coordination:** Instead of juggling different apps or chat tools, children can organise their gameplay entirely within Roblox.

- **Fosters Creativity:** Group gameplay often leads to collaborative problem-solving, which can help build important cognitive and social skills.

- **Minimises Use of Other Apps:** Since children no longer need to use apps like Discord for group coordination, their online activities stay more contained within Roblox, where parents can more easily monitor their behaviour.

Risks to Be Aware Of

While Roblox Party is designed with safety in mind, there are some risks parents should be mindful of:

1. **Age Restrictions:** Roblox Party is only available for users aged 13 and older. However, younger children might attempt to use it if not properly supervised so don't forget to check those age settings.

2. **Inappropriate Content:** While Roblox monitors chat for inappropriate language or behaviour, some unsuitable interactions could still slip through.

3. **Stranger Invitations:** There's a possibility of children being invited to join Parties by people they don't know.

4. **Privacy Concerns:** Children might share personal information in Party chats, even if unintentionally.

5. **Overuse:** As with any gaming feature, children might spend excessive time using Parties, especially if they can now interact within the game, potentially leading to screen-time issues.

How Does Roblox Keep Parties Safe?

Roblox has implemented several measures to ensure that Party remains a safe feature, however nothing is ever completely safe so parents still need to be vigilant:

- **Chat Moderation:** Party chats are monitored for inappropriate content or behaviour.

- **Parental Controls:** Parents can manage Party access through Roblox's parental control settings, limiting who can send invitations or even disabling the feature altogether.

- **Friend-Only Access:** Parties can be restricted to invite only friends from the child's Roblox friend list, reducing the risk of stranger interactions.
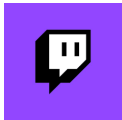

How Can Parents Support Safe Use?

- **Enable Parental Controls:** Use Roblox's settings to control who can invite your child to a Party and adjust other safety features.

- **Discuss Online Etiquette:** Teach your child about appropriate behaviour, privacy, and the importance of not sharing personal information.

- **Check Activity Logs:** Regularly review your child's activity to ensure they are interacting safely.

- **Monitor Usage:** Keep an eye on the time your child spends using Roblox Party to maintain a healthy balance between online and offline activities.

Common Apps

This is not an exhaustive list, but tends to be the more popular apps used by children and young people.

Age requirements are set within the terms and conditions of the app provider, don't be confused by ratings in the app stores which can be different.

App	Age	Comments
	13	**Discord** - is a voice, video and text chat app that's used by tens of millions of people aged 13+ to tap and hang out with communities or their friends. Parental settings can be found **HERE**.
	13	**Instagram** - is a photo and video sharing app where people can upload photos, videos and messages to share with others. Parental settings can be found **HERE**.
	13	**Snapchat** - is a very popular app that lets users swop pictures and videos (Snaps) with others which are meant to disappear after they are viewed. There is also a messaging feature. Parental settings can be found **HERE**.
	13	**TikTok** - is a social media app that allows users to create, watch and share short videos shot on mobile devices or webcams. Parental settings can be found **HERE**.
	13	**Twitch -** is where people come together to chat and interact live. Think YouTube, but it is live rather then pre-recorded. Parental settings can be found **HERE**.
	13	**WhatsApp -** is a messaging app which uses text, images, video and voice record features to connect with others. Parental settings can be found **HERE**
	18	**Reddit** - is a network of communities (called subreddits) where people can share information, their interests and hobbies. Reddit is an 18+ app, there are no parental controls.