SPOTLIGHT ON SAFEGUARDING

Working together to keep our young people safe

Primary | January 2025

What is sextortion?

Sextortion is a form of online exploitation where a perpetrator coerces or blackmails a victim into providing explicit videos or images.

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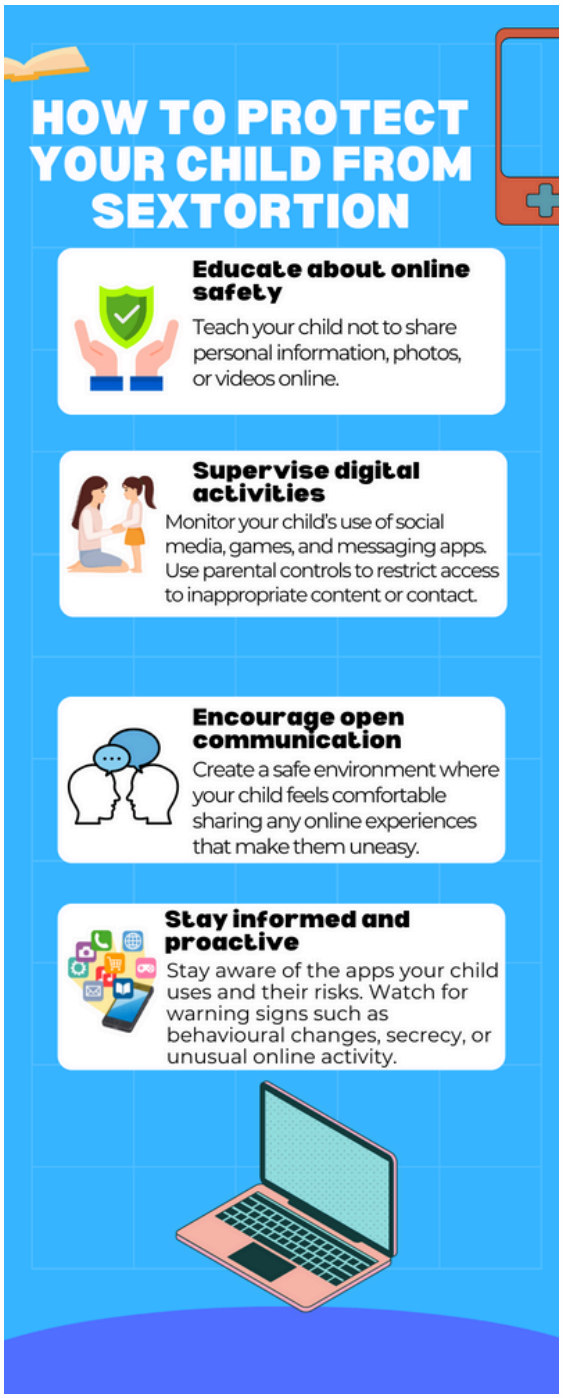

What parents need to know about sextortion

Sextortion is a serious online threat that can target anyone, but children are particularly vulnerable. There has been a recent rise in primary school aged children been targeted because they may not fully understand the risks and are easier to manipulate.

How Sextortion Works

Initial contact: predators often contact children through social media, gaming platforms, or messaging apps. They may pose as someone the child's age, a mutual friend, or even someone the child knows.

Building trust: predators use friendly conversations, compliments, and subtle manipulation to gain a child's trust. They may pretend to share common interests or act like a peer.

Obtaining explicit material: through their grooming tactics, predators may persuade children to share private photos or videos. They may even send fake images of themselves to make the child feel more comfortable.

Blackmail: once the predator has compromising material, they use it to blackmail the child. They might threaten to share the material with friends, family, or online unless the child sends more explicit content or even money.

Artificial intelligence: the use of AI has significantly increased the risks of sextortion for children by making it easier for perpetrators to create realistic fake identities, manipulate content and exploit vulnerabilities. AI can generate deepfake images or videos that appear to show the victim, even if they've never shared explicit material of this kind.

Warning signs of sextortion: parents should be alert to changes in their child's behaviour that may indicate they are being targeted for sextortion. Key warning signs include increased anxiety, depression, or withdrawal from family and friends; reluctance to use devices or secrecy surrounding online activity; and sudden requests for money or attempts to conceal financial transactions. Recognising these behaviours early can help parents intervene and provide the necessary support to protect their child.

What to do if your child is a victim of sextortion

If your child faces sextortion, stay calm and supportive. Let them know it's not their fault and that you're there to help. Avoid meeting the predator's demands. Instead, document the messages and evidence, and report the incident to the police, who are trained to assist in such cases.

Speak to a designated Safeguarding Lead at school so they can provide support. You can also contact Childline to have any public images removed: Childline Report and Remove.

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Roblox- new parental controls and safety features

Roblox is particularly popular among younger audiences, offering a safe and creative space for gaming and learning. The platform has grown significantly, with millions of active users daily, and has become a cultural phenomenon in gaming.

Roblox, while offering creative and educational opportunities, can pose risks to children if not properly monitored. Here are some key concerns and how they can impact young users:

- Inappropriate content
- online predators
- in-game purchases and scams
- cyberbullying
- addiction and overuse.

In 2024, Roblox introduced new parental controls and safety features for users under 13 years old and announced that they wanted to 'keep users of all ages safe' on their platform.

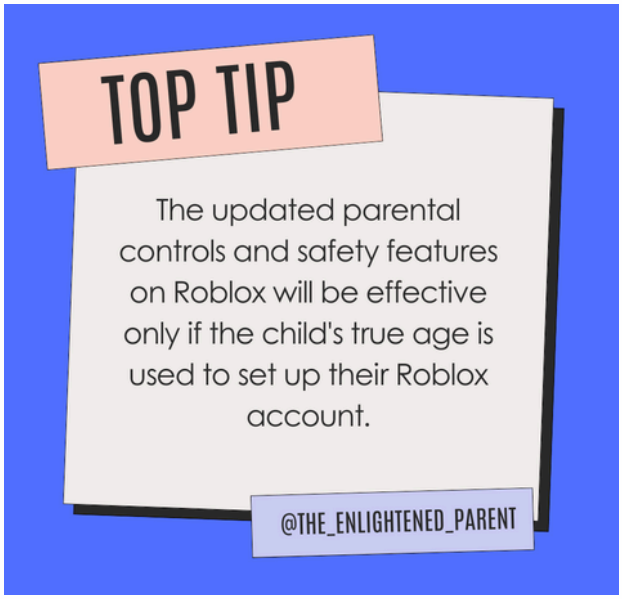
Updated parental controls and safety features:

1) Direct messaging restrictions: to enhance safety, children under 13 can no longer send direct messages outside of games. For in-game messaging, parental consent is required. These measures are designed to help protect your child from potentially inappropriate interactions and ensure a safer online environment.

2) Parental accounts: parents and caregivers can now set up accounts linked to their child's Roblox account. This feature allows you to remotely manage important settings, such as screen time limits, spending controls, and monitoring your child's friend list. It's an easy way to stay actively involved in your child's online activities and ensure they have a safe and enjoyable experience.

3) Content labels: Roblox experiences are now categorised with clear content labels—"Minimal," "Mild," "Moderate," and "Restricted"—to help parents understand their suitability for children. By default, kids under 9 can only access "Minimal" or "Mild" content, while those under 13 are blocked from "Restricted" content unless you give explicit permission. This feature helps you ensure your child is engaging with age-appropriate content.

4) Screen time management: parents now have the ability to set daily screen time limits for their child's Roblox usage. Once the set time is reached, access is automatically restricted until the next day. This feature helps encourage a healthy balance between online activities and other important aspects of your child's day.

5) Experience restrictions: to enhance safety, users under 13 are now restricted from accessing certain types of experiences on Roblox, including social hangouts and those involving free-form writing or drawing. These restrictions are designed to protect your child from potential exposure to inappropriate content and ensure a safer gaming environment.

While Roblox's new safety features offer added protection, it's still important for parents to actively monitor their child's activity. Setting boundaries, reviewing interactions, and maintaining open communication about online safety will help ensure a secure experience. Staying involved and using the available tools will keep your child safe while they enjoy Roblox.