

Parents' Ultimate Guide to Discord (2024)

Is Discord safe? How does it work? Here's everything you need to know about this popular chat app.

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What is Discord?

Discord is a free app for mobile and PC that lets people chat via text, voice, or video in real time. Combining the internet-calling features of [Skype](#) with [Reddit](#)-like discussion boards, it's broadened from gamers-only to a social networking site for communities of all types. Users include those with non-gaming interests like [anime](#), TV series, music, and more. It can also be an easy-to-use group-chatting tool for friends.

How old should you be to use Discord?

Discord requires that users be at least 13 years old, although they don't verify users' age upon signup. Common Sense Media also recommends that Discord users be at least 13 due to its open chat.

Because it's all user-generated, there's the potential for plenty of inappropriate content, like swearing and graphic language and images (though it's entirely possible to belong to a group that forbids these). Discord also has "NSFW" channels and servers that require users to be 18 or older to join (but it's easy to click through the verification). (Note: If you're looking for more parental insights on your kids' favorite things online, sign up for our [family movie night newsletter](#).)

What are servers on Discord?

Servers are the main communities on Discord, often focused on a single game or topic. Anyone on the app can create a server upon signup. Servers can be private and require an invitation to join, or public, which anyone can take part in.

Servers are broken up into text channels and voice channels. Some have bots (computer programs that mimic human interaction) that do automatic moderation, welcoming, and community management. Discord doesn't have an in-app way to search for servers unless you've already joined them, so users have to be invited directly or else find out about them from other sources.

Is Discord safe?

With the right privacy settings and monitoring, it's easy to use Discord safely. However, [there's always a risk](#) when it comes to sites and apps with open chat. The safest way to use Discord is to only accept friend requests and participate in private servers with people you already know.

Although it's rare, predators have targeted kids by using Discord's public servers to send direct messages (DMs). Even though most server moderators (and other users) are often quick to patrol this kind of behavior, kids and adults should know [how to recognize and deal with creeps and online predators](#).

How is Discord related to Fortnite and Pokémon Go?

Fortnite and Pokémon Go are two games with particularly big followings on Discord, especially for older kids and teens. Lots of public servers focus those games, but users also create private servers to chat with friends while they play together. For example, a team on Fortnite could create a private server on Discord to chat and strategize together in order to avoid the public chat on Fortnite itself.

Discord also allows an in-game "overlay" for Fortnite and other PC games so gamers can use Discord to chat directly within those games (instead of having the app open in the background or using the in-game chat).

Are there privacy settings for Discord?

Discord has privacy and safety settings that allow users to control who has the ability to send them direct messages or add them as a friend. Its "Safe Direct Messaging" feature can automatically scan and delete direct messages that contain explicit content (although this isn't foolproof, and it doesn't apply outside of DMs).

Discord also lets its users decide whether the app can collect and use their data for customization or analytics purposes. To view and change your privacy settings, select the "User Settings" gear icon by your username, then choose the "Privacy & Safety" menu item.

Are there parental controls for Discord?

Family Center is a Discord feature that allows parents and caregivers to monitor their kids' activity on the app. Parents will now be able to know what servers their kids have joined or participated in, everyone they've messaged, new users they connect with, and more.

The process for accessing and setting up the Family Center supervision may feel daunting for adults (Discord's site has step-by-step guidance) and is likely to garner some resistance from teens. Also, the feature isn't really a parental control setting as much as it is a usage tracker. Yes, parents can see the usernames and server names their kids are interacting with, but they don't have access to the content in the chats or what they're talking about on video or audio calls. Sure, they can look at the user profile to try to see who's behind the username (which is not likely to be the user's real name), but they may not know who that user is or if it's someone their teen actually knows. Also missing is any in-app limitation on the amount of time teens can spend on the app, so this will have to be done within the iOS or Android settings.

The information the Family Center offers is a great way to monitor any changes in behavior or interactions that might seem suspicious. It also gives parents enough insight to ask informed questions and talk to their kids if they feel concerned. It may not be a set-it-and-forget-it protection measure, but it can help facilitate conversations between parents and kids about their digital habits.

How does Discord chat work?

Each server on Discord has both text and voice channels. Text channels allow people to type messages to each other, while voice channels let people use the microphone and speakers on their device to talk with each other. Users can directly invite friends to a specific chat channel, or you can join a channel after being invited to a server.

Some channels have limits on how many people can join, which are set by the server owners. Server owners can also set their own rules for what is or isn't allowed (for example, swearing or hate speech) and block from chat any users who break the rules.

Can you share images or video on Discord?

You can share images, video, and GIFs on Discord, either in text channels or direct messages (voice channels are audio only). Discord also allows for video chat and screen sharing in direct messages.

Is Discord just for gaming content?

You don't have to play video games or even discuss them to use the app. Just about any topic is represented on Discord, although gaming, music, anime, and memes tend to be the most popular categories. The app can also be used for friends and groups to chat with each other directly. Discord has started to lean into more educational content. There are several educational servers and as well as Student Hubs, a feature that has users enter their student email address and then connects them with their classmates in a private server where they can create study groups and interest clubs.

[Read Common Sense Media's full review of Discord - Chat for Gamers](#) and learn more about how it works.



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