

Discord – A parent's guide to Discord

Is Discord safe? How does it work? And what does it have to do with Fortnite? Here's everything you need to know about this popular chat app for gamers.

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, including 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 do not verify users' age upon sign-up. CCHSG also recommends Discord users be at least 13 due to its open chat. Because it's all user-generated, there's 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).

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 sign-up. There are private servers that require an invitation to join as well as public servers that anyone can take part in. Servers are broken up into text channels and voice channels, and 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, like friends or social media.

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, there have been a handful of cases where predators have targeted children by using Discord's public servers to send direct messages (DMs). Even though most server moderators (and other users) are often quick to police this kind of behaviour, children and parents 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 tweens and teens. There are plenty of public servers dedicated to those games but also tons of private servers that friends use to chat while they play together. For example, a squad 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 a wide array of 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 containing 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, which is a nice change of pace from other social apps that provide no insight or control over your data. 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?

At this time, Discord doesn't offer parental controls, so there's no way for parents to restrict content or password-protect the privacy settings within the app.

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 to 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 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, as with WhatsApp, Skype, or any other messaging service.

Information on this page has been adapted from:

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