

Keep your child safe on Houseparty



What is it and what's the problem?

An app you use to talk to friends over video, usually in groups. It's become much more popular since the coronavirus lockdown, with people (maybe you, too) using it to stay in touch with their friends and get some much-needed social contact.

But, it's not completely without risks:

- › It's easy for people who aren't your 'friends' to join chats
- › There's always the risk of sexting and screenshotting images. The app has a feature where you can record snippets of chats too, to share with others
- › There have been stories suggesting the app isn't very secure and users have had their details stolen – though Houseparty claims it hasn't been hacked

The **minimum age** to use it is **13**.

6 steps to help keep your child safe

1. Tell them to set a unique password

This is a good thing to do with all apps, but given the questions about security on Houseparty, definitely get them to do it for this one. To change a password on a mobile device:

- › Tap the smiley face button in the top-left corner of the app
- › Tap the cog in the top left to open settings
- › Scroll down and tap 'log out', then tap 'log out' again to confirm
- › Tap 'I already have an account'
- › Enter your email address, then tap 'Forgot Password?'
- › Enter your email address again and tap 'Reset password'
- › Then follow the steps in the email you get to reset your password



2. Be careful about who they add as friends

They should only accept friend requests from people they know and trust in real life.

3. Get them to use private mode

This means that only people they're friends with can join 'rooms' they're in. To do this:

- › Go to settings, as in step 1
- › Tap 'Private mode'
- › Tap 'Enable Private Mode'

If they're not in private mode, friends of their friends can join their 'rooms'. If this is the case, get them to 'lock' their rooms by tapping the padlock at the bottom-centre of the screen.

4. Tell them to think carefully about what they share



Remind your child that they can't stop someone else from screenshotting them on Houseparty and using the screenshot how they please. So, they should always think carefully about what they do in chats.

Remember, sharing or viewing sexually explicit images of under 18s is illegal, no matter what. It's unlikely the police will follow it up, but it's worth bearing in mind all the same.

If they are in a chat with someone they don't know outside the app or the internet, they shouldn't share any personal information about themselves, like where they live or where they go to school.

5. Make sure they know how to use blocking and reporting functions

To block or report a user:

- Tap the smiley face icon in the top left
- Tap 'My Friends' to open your contacts list
- Find the contact you want to block or report
- Tap the 3 dots to the right of their name
- Tap 'Block/Report', then choose which option you want to do



6. Tell our school about any bullying

If your child is bullied on the app, let us know about it.

Sources

This factsheet was produced by [Safeguarding Training Centre from The Key](http://www.thekeysupport.com/safeguarding): www.thekeysupport.com/safeguarding

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