

WHAT IS THE METaverse

Your online safety guide

The Metaverse is a shared virtual space for users across the internet to access content, play games, purchase items, and build environments.

The Metaverse is not a single product owned by a single company.

In the Metaverse, a user can:

- Create their own avatar to identify themselves
- Interact with other users
- Interact with locations
- Build products and worlds
- Purchase products, structures, and worlds eg. NFTs

Avatars like me will be the same across all areas of the Metaverse.











The main idea for the Metaverse is to create social experiences in an open world across the entire internet with unlimited users. This will involve virtual avatars, identities, and belongings that can be taken everywhere across the Metaverse.



It's likely that the child in your care has already accessed a Metaverse experience through Roblox. In Roblox users can chat, interact and play a vast amount of games all without leaving the platform.

Risks

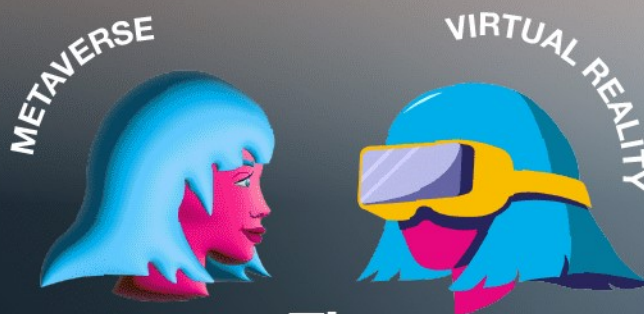
-  The Metaverse is still in development. This means there is still a lot to figure out, especially in terms of access and safeguarding.
-  Platforms on the internet (social media and gaming), including those using VR technology often lack effective age verification methods.
-  Since avatars are customisable, there could be a risk that they aren't an accurate representation of another user. This can create a false sense of security during interactions.
-  There is potential for children and young people to be exposed to graphic sexual content, racism, sexism, and displays of violence in the Metaverse.
-  The social aspects of the Metaverse experience could create an environment for grooming, where an adult builds a relationship with a young person to manipulate, exploit, and abuse them.
-  Reports of virtual bullying, sexual harassment, and threats of violence could occur in the Metaverse.
-  A young person could be at risk of excessive use, spending, and unhealthy habits if left to discover the Metaverse without time or spending limits.
-  Accessing the Metaverse using a VR headset can cause feelings of nausea, disorientation, eye strain, headaches and bumps and bruises from being unaware of physical surroundings.

What is the difference between VR and the Metaverse?








Although the Metaverse includes aspects of VR, the Metaverse is an entirely different concept.

VR is a digitally created experience that completely immerses the user in a simulated world. It is a popular tool used to access and explore the Metaverse, but they are not the same thing. Essentially - if the Metaverse is an ocean, then VR is like a submarine used to explore it.

The Metaverse can be accessed through VR as well as other technologies.



Tips

-  **Keep up to date:** The Metaverse is still developing, so keep track of new developments in safety and privacy.
-  **Introduce healthy limits and take breaks:** Introduce healthy screen-time limits and encourage breaks. Discuss and agree on these limits and habits, like starting on 20-minute intervals with a gradual increase.
-  **Empower your child to protect their personal information:** Reinforce the importance of keeping name, address, and any other identifiable information safe!
-  **Decide on whether your child can access the Metaverse:** You can do this independently or in conversation with the child in your care. Many of the platforms have differing age verification rules and parental controls, so make sure you have your own rules for using it.
-  **Encourage the use of the Metaverse in public spaces at home:** If accessing the Metaverse or just using VR technology, encourage the young people in your care to use it in a family room.
-  **Talk to the young people in your care about harmful content:** If they feel uncomfortable or have experienced something upsetting, remind them they can speak to you or another Trusted Adult.
-  **Discuss the 'novelty factor' of the Metaverse:** This technology is new, exciting, and popular on social media and news outlets. Reinforce the importance of making smart decisions when trying out any new technology.