What Parents & Carers Need to Know about SPOTIFY

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

EXPLICIT LYRICS

As per Spotify’s terms and conditions, people need to be at least 13 to use it. That said, the platform doesn’t censor lyrics unless instructed to do so in the settings section. That means that young teenagers could still be exposed to age-inappropriate songs which contain explicit references to sexual behaviour, violence, discriminatory language and swearing.

GROOMING TACTICS

Although Spotify doesn’t come with dedicated chat functionality, concerns were raised in January 2023 after reports of an 11-year-old girl being coerced into sharing explicit pictures of herself on the platform. The case highlighted predators’ tactics of sharing empty playlists with other users: their messages were being exchanged undetected through edited song titles and descriptions, bypassing security measures.

OVERSHARING

Spotify provides a perfect way to play music with the option to connect to another device, such as a Bluetooth speaker or an in-car stereo. While this is a useful feature, it’s also easy to forget your surroundings and inadvertently play content which isn’t appropriate for all listeners (especially those under the age of 16), potentially causing alarm or distress.

AGE-INAPPROPRIATE PODCASTS

Spotify’s podcast community has grown exponentially and it’s become a popular base for millions of users to listen to shows, stories, interviews and more — with content covering an array of topics. This includes some material which isn’t suitable for minors, including audio which is obviously adult-themed, but can be just as easily accessed as everything else.

ACCESS TO SPOTIFY LIVE

If your child has a Spotify account, they’ll also be able to access the platform’s audio-only chat service: Spotify Live. While this is a separate stand-alone app, Spotify Live allows people to listen to live discussions on the main Spotify platform and, more notably, lets users enter virtual rooms to chat with other users, opening up direct conversations with strangers and individuals who might not necessarily be there for the right reasons.

Advice for Parents & Carers

SWAP TO SPOTIFY KIDS

If you’re concerned about what your child might hear while streaming music, Spotify Kids is a separate, ad-free service specifically designed for children aged two and over. It allows younger users to enjoy child-friendly content (such as music and audiobooks) and is available to users with a Spotify premium family subscription — meaning that parents can view and manage the content their child listens to.

TALK ABOUT THE RISKS

As with any platform, it’s good practice to talk to your child about what they should be aware of when using Spotify. For instance, it’s important to make sure they know to share any concerns they have with you. It’s also a good idea to teach them to be cautious online — so you’re confident they’re using apps and services in the right way, for the right reasons, and they’re not being drawn into anything they shouldn’t be.

CENSOR EXPLICIT CONTENT

Regardless of what type of account your child uses to access Spotify, there’s an option to turn off explicit content in the settings — removing all songs marked with an “ Explicit” tag. If your child has their own individual account, it’s easier for them to turn it back on — whereas with a family plan, you’re in control and your child can’t alter the setting without knowing the password.

KEEP AN EYE OUT

If you’re concerned that your child is spending too much time on Spotify or you’ve noticed they’re being particularly secretive about how they’re using it, encourage them to talk about what they’re listening to. It’s always prudent to show an interest in their online habits from the outset — so you’re confident they’re using apps and services in the right way, for the right reasons, and they’re not being drawn into anything they shouldn’t be.

Meet Our Expert

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