

X (TWITTER):

ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS



Formerly known as Twitter, X is a social media platform with over 500 million users. Since being bought by tech entrepreneur Elon Musk in 2022, the platform has undergone many changes in how it operates that generated controversy for allegedly putting users at risk.

What are the risks?

Limited Blocking

In 2023, Musk announced on X that he was considering altering the way blocking works on the platform.

Under the new plan, blocking would only prevent posts showing up in the user's feed, but blocked users would still be able to view the blocker's profile and send them direct messages.

Verification for Sale

X's verification system was originally designed to help users tell apart imposters from famous people.

In 2023, X moved to a subscription model, which allows users to pay a monthly fee in return for verification. There have since been instances of accounts receiving verification under false names.

Inappropriate Content

One of the changes introduced during the rebrand from Twitter to X was a relaxation of the platform's moderation policies.

Since these policies have been relaxed, the platform has seen a surge of controversial content, ranging from extreme political views to pornographic material.

So how do I keep my child safe?

Enable privacy settings

Make sure your child's account has a strong password (ideally a long, memorable phrase that includes a variety of letters, numbers and symbols) and has the "Protect your posts" feature enabled to prevent strangers from viewing their tweets.

Lookout for imposters

Ensure your child understands that verification marks (the blue ticks next to a username) no longer guarantee that the account actually is who they say they are. Advise them to err on the side of caution if they aren't 100% sure that an account that appears to be a famous person is who they say they are.

Follow trusted accounts

Advise your child to be careful who they follow and use the "following" tab to only view posts from followed accounts to reduce the risk of being exposed to inappropriate content. Encourage them to report any accounts posting such material.

Don't take the bait

Some X users post deliberately inflammatory content in an effort to gain more followers. This can often be upsetting, but it's important not to get involved in arguments with these people, as that is the exact kind of attention they're looking for.

Take action

X has received a great deal of criticism recently due to concerns about its systems failing to protect users' wellbeing. If your child does start to suffer from harassment or is being exposed to upsetting content, it may be time to deactivate their account entirely and encourage them to move to another platform entirely.