



PARENT AND GUARDIAN GUIDE TO

# Meta Horizon Worlds



## WHAT'S INSIDE

- What you should know about social virtual reality
- Safety strategies and settings for teens
- Understanding risks and how to manage them
- How to talk to teens about staying safe



# WHAT'S INSIDE

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Meta Horizon Worlds is now available for teens ages 13 to 17. The app, created by Meta (formerly Facebook) for their virtual reality headsets, enables people to explore and socialize as avatars in 3D “worlds.” Parents and guardians of teenage users should know about some important safety features and parental supervision tools to help them navigate it safely.

The information in this guide pertains to Meta Horizon Worlds and does not necessarily apply to apps from other companies that you can download to a Meta Quest headset. We wrote this guide for parents and guardians, but it may also be helpful for teens and adults who want to learn about the safe use of Horizon Worlds.



## Is Horizon Worlds a game?

Horizon Worlds is a social experience where people can hang out and talk with others, explore, attend concerts and events, and, yes, play games in virtual spaces that can feel like you’re walking around a 3D cartoon. Some worlds in Horizon Worlds were created by Meta, but most were created by other developers, including members of the Horizon Worlds community. Users can explore Horizon Worlds or create their own worlds for others to visit.

For now, Horizon Worlds can only be accessed using Meta Quest Pro, Meta Quest 2 and Meta-made Oculus Rift S VR headsets. However, plans include ways for people to access Horizon Worlds via a browser on laptops, desktops, phones and tablets as well.

The Horizon Worlds app is free, but people can purchase custom virtual items from a select group of creators.



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## Is this the “metaverse”?

The metaverse is not here yet, but Horizon Worlds is part of what it will eventually become. The metaverse requires interoperability between platforms, virtual items, avatars and worlds. It will be made up of many interconnected virtual experiences. There are aspects of Horizon Worlds that give a glimpse of what the metaverse might be like with its avatars and immersive experiences, but at this time, there is no way to move between VR environments operated by different companies. That could change in the future. One day your avatar may play a game in Roblox and then move seamlessly to Horizon Worlds to meet a friend, much like we walk around a mall visiting different businesses.

## Start with the Meta Quest app

To use Quest or Rift VR headsets, create a Meta account in the Meta Quest app on a mobile device. If you have a Facebook or Instagram account, you can use that to streamline the sign-up process. Otherwise, you can use your email address. One important caveat: If your teen signs up using their Facebook or Instagram account, Meta will accept whatever age they used for that account.

[Meta Quest app continued on page 5 >](#)



## Key Safety Features

As with nearly all online experiences, the safe use of Horizon Worlds depends on how it’s used. It’s important to understand the safety features, but the most important safety tool is communication between parents and teens. Ask your teen what they love about VR and Horizon Worlds, take advantage of the device’s casting feature to see what your teen sees or better yet, put on the headset and try it yourself.

This guide explains these and other Horizon World safety features, as well as ways parents and teens can work together to help make this new virtual frontier a fun, productive and safer place for both teens and adults. Some of the key points include:

- Blocking
- Reporting
- Parental supervision tools
- Being honest about your age
- Personal boundary
- Privacy controls
- Muting the voices of people you’re not connected to
- “Safe zone” to pause the action when something makes you uncomfortable.

As we stress elsewhere in this guide, it's especially important that Meta accounts be based on an accurate age, so it might be best for your teen to start from scratch by using an email account to sign up.

For the Meta account, users choose how private or public to be to other Quest/Rift users (e.g., you can decide whether you need to approve followers, who can see your activity, who can know when you're online, and who can see what apps you use, etc.). The followers for your Meta account's Horizon profile are the same as your Horizon Worlds followers.

Parents who share a headset with their teens will need to switch accounts (if they have already enabled **multiple accounts**) or sign out of their account when they're done because the headset doesn't automatically sign out of the last account used. If you turn on **app sharing**, you can share apps between accounts on your device, eliminating the need to re-purchase those apps.

Meta's **Code of Conduct for Virtual Experiences** defines what conduct and content are prohibited in any app on Meta's VR platform. Horizon Worlds also has the **Meta Horizon Worlds Mature and Prohibited Worlds Policy**, which describes what content is not allowed on the platform and indicates when a world needs to be labeled mature (for an 18+ audience). Teens under 18 are not able to see or access mature worlds or events.

## Meta parental supervision tools

Parent supervision tools allow parents and guardians to see the teen's follower list, VR activity, screen time, and safety default settings and block access to apps, including Horizon Worlds. To initiate the tools, the parent or guardian sends an invite to the teen, or the teen can send an invite to the parent or guardian. We recommend families set up parent supervision tools, especially for new or younger users.



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*Meta parental supervision tools continued on page 6 >*

VR parental supervision tools also unlock Horizon’s supervision features. These allow the parent to control certain safety settings such as **personal boundary** (distance between avatars) and **voice mode** (whether other users’ audio is garbled). For more, see ConnectSafely’s guide to [Meta VR parent supervision tools](#) as well as our [Family Guide to Parental Controls](#).

Parental involvement is much more than just using tools, as discussed in this guide under “Talking to your teen about safety in Horizon Worlds.”

## Understanding and managing risks in VR and Horizon Worlds

Parents and others may be rightfully concerned about the possible risks of virtual reality. Just like any interactive social experience, possible risks include unwanted or inappropriate contact and communication, inappropriate content for children and teens, false information and propaganda, cyberbullying and harassment, and grooming and sexual solicitation that could lead to online sexual abuse or harmful offline contact. ConnectSafely has guides and tips that cover [these and other risks](#).

VR has the added factor of greater immersion, which can lead to a more visceral reaction to such things as harassment or simply having someone’s avatar get too close to yours. With all connected media, there are privacy issues, but VR brings up additional concerns about personal data that could be collected from eye tracking, iris or retina scans, fingerprints and handprints, face geometry, voiceprints and other biometric data. Although Meta doesn’t do immersive advertising, VR advertising can be [more immersive](#) and potentially more impactful. See Meta’s [VR privacy policy](#) for specific information about Quest and Horizon Worlds.

### Personal space — your virtual “home”

When you first enter Horizon Worlds, you land in a **welcome world** designed to give you contextual information about what Horizon is and how to use its features. You will also be introduced to your [personal space](#), a place to call your own — your “home” in Horizon Worlds — and invite up to seven others to join you to hang out and play mini-games like darts.

After that first visit, you start in your personal space. “Homeowners” are expected to select rules such as “be respectful” and to take action to actively moderate

[Risks continued on pages 7-8 >](#)

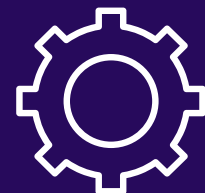
their space. Homeowners can mute or remove someone from their space. Personal space is a closed space. The homeowner decides who is invited, and no one can access the space unless the homeowner is there.

## User-generated worlds

Because some of the worlds within Horizon Worlds are user-generated, there is the risk of worlds that include content or experiences that may be inappropriate or uncomfortable for some users, including teenagers. Meta has rules and procedures to prevent violations of **its policies** and has implemented age-gating to protect minors (see pages 8 and 9), but there is no way to eliminate all risks.

Also, like many other social experiences in VR, Horizon Worlds enables some users to create “closed” member-only spaces. Such spaces are not actively moderated by Meta staff and can contain age-inappropriate conduct and a wider range of behavior that can pose harm to young people. Creators must specify 18+ age requirements for their worlds and “age-gate” those worlds, which is one of the reasons young people need to be honest about their age when creating an account. Anyone in the world can report underage users, such as those under 18 in a “mature” world, or anyone under 13 anywhere in Horizon Worlds.

Many of the protective actions in Horizon Worlds are similar to the precautions you would take in all social media, including blocking abusive users, reporting abuse, not disclosing private information, protecting your account, and so on. But because of the highly immersive nature of Horizon Worlds, we cover some additional precautions in this guide.



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## Physical safety

Although not specific to Horizon Worlds, using a VR headset that fully covers your eyes raises the risk of physical injury, especially if you're engaging in an activity where you are encouraged to move around or move your arms and hands. Parents and teens should review the [Oculus Safety Center](#) and pay attention to the health and safety warnings, including setting up a **guardian boundary** to "help you stay within your cleared play area."

Although it doesn't impact everyone this way, some VR users have complained about nausea and dizziness, and there is the issue of stress, anxiety, and even fear related to the immersive experience. For example, standing on the edge of a virtual building can elicit fear of falling, even though you may be nowhere near an actual skyscraper.

Headsets can sometimes be uncomfortable, especially if worn for long periods, and eye strain is possible. It's important to wear VR gear properly and to take breaks as needed.

These risks can all be managed and minimized by understanding and using safety and privacy settings, parental supervision, proper use of the equipment, good behavior and other practices, as discussed in this guide.

## Horizon Worlds safety features and settings

### Age-gating

Horizon Worlds uses **age-gating** to keep minors from content and spaces that may be allowed for adults but not teens under 18. This can include



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*Safety features continued on pages 9-13 >*



material that is sexually suggestive or violent or depicts the use of substances or activities that are inappropriate for minors, such as gambling, marijuana, alcohol and tobacco.

Creators are required to label worlds and events as “mature” (18+) or “all ages,” and there is a review process to ensure content is tagged correctly. Teens cannot view, access, create or collaborate on mature content.

Similar to Instagram, there are restrictions in Horizon Worlds to limit interaction between teens and adults who don’t follow each other and further limit unwanted interaction between teens and adults.

Age-gating is one of several features designed to keep teens safe in Horizon Worlds and to prevent children under 13 from using the service. Unfortunately, there are children and teens who lie about their age when setting up their Meta account, and if not corrected, it can give them access to experiences that are not age-appropriate. Parents and guardians must ensure their kids are honest about their age when signing up for Horizon Worlds and other platforms.

If you or your teen encounter someone in Horizon Worlds who you suspect is under 13, you can report that individual in the app by navigating to your wristwatch, locating them in the people tab, and selecting “Report” or go to this [Meta web page](#) to report the user.



## Age is more than a number

Horizon Worlds and other apps have tools, policies, and other safety precautions for teen users. *But there are protections that won't work if that platform doesn't know the user's age.* So it's critical that your teen gives their real birth year for any account they sign up for. That's especially true for Horizon Worlds, which restricts teens from worlds or events labeled 18+, which may include sexually suggestive content or content that involves gambling, marijuana, tobacco, alcohol or intense violence. A correctly stated age will also prevent adults from contacting teens they aren't connected with (i.e., following each other).

## Moderation

There are two types of moderators in Horizon Worlds. **Community guides** are Meta-employed ambassadors who are present in some public worlds to welcome players and show them around. Their role is to encourage positive behavior and point users to available safety tools. They can also warn, report and remove users from the Plaza, the hub people use to access worlds.

There are also **trusted safety specialists** who can invisibly moderate in real-time. These specialists are routed to potential incidents based on signals such as blocks and reports. Specialists can remove and report offenders.

It's important for parents to understand that not all worlds have moderators, and many rely on community members to report bad behavior, policy violations and underage users.

## Safe zone

**Safe zone** is a top tool for safety. It can be used to quickly pause the action when a person or your surroundings makes you uncomfortable without leaving the world. Make sure your teens know how to enable safe zone quickly. From here, you can block, mute or report.

To access safe zone, look at your wristwatch and select the shield icon.

## Personal boundary

**Personal boundary** keeps other avatars from coming too close to your avatar. The boundary is on by default for non-friends, but it can also be on for everyone or off for everyone. We recommend teens



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keep the personal boundary default setting on. Additionally, if someone is attempting to touch your avatar, their hand will fade away. This isn't a setting you can adjust; it's on for everyone.

To access personal boundary settings, go to **Settings > Safety**. Note: Parents can control this feature using Meta VR parental supervision tools.

## Voice mode

By default, users will hear all nearby users at the same volume, but with **voice mode**, users can easily switch to garbled voices, in which non-friends voices come across as unintelligible, friendly sounds. The default setting for teens is garbled voices. We recommend teens keep this setting on.

To access voice mode, go to **Settings > Sounds**. Note: Parents can control this feature using Meta VR parental supervision tools.

## “Poll to remove” from a world

If someone is being disruptive, any player can anonymously request other players to vote on whether to remove that person from that instance of the world. The person will be removed if a majority of people in that instance vote for removal. An instance is a copy of a world, and if a person is removed from that instance, they can still join another instance of that world. If they reenter the world, they will be in a different instance with different people.

To access **poll to remove**, look at your wristwatch and select the shield icon. Select the user's nameplate and poll to remove.



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## Block

You can anonymously **block** others so you don't see or hear that person, and they don't see or hear you. It does not remove them from the world at that time, but in the future, you won't be placed in the same instance.

To block, look at your wristwatch and select the shield icon. Select the nameplate above the person's avatar and **block**.

## Mute

You can **mute** other people if they are too loud or say things you don't want to hear. You can also mute your own microphone.

To mute other people, look at your wristwatch and select the shield icon. Select the user's nameplate and **mute**.

## Report

**Report** others you believe may have violated Horizon Worlds' community standards. The service automatically captures a rolling video of the last two minutes of your experience, which normally remains on your device but can be attached to any reports. You can also report people suspected of being underage who are in mature worlds or events.

Reporting is anonymous and will result in a review of the offending conduct by Meta personnel, who will decide whether the behavior violates their policies and, if so, take appropriate action.

To report, look at your wristwatch and select the shield icon. Select the user's nameplate and **report**.

## Privacy controls in Horizon Worlds

Privacy controls, accessible under your teen's profile image in Horizon Worlds, allow them to choose whether their followers can see if they are active in Horizon Worlds or where they are within Horizon Worlds. Both of these settings are off by default for teens.

## Watch your teen's VR video via Casting

You can watch your teen explore Horizon Worlds (or any app on a Quest headset) by **casting the VR video** from the headset to a phone, tablet, computer or smart TV. It's a good way to explore VR together and talk about safety strategies and what to do if they encounter anything that makes them uncomfortable.

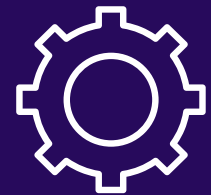
## Talking to your teen about safety in Horizon Worlds

Technology solutions, including Meta's VR parental supervision tools, have their place but are no substitute for conversations between parents and teens. At the end of the day, it's the software between the teen's ears that helps them stay safe online, in virtual reality, and in the physical world, now and later on.

Have regular conversations with your teens about how they use VR, Horizon Worlds and other connected technologies, but don't make them lectures or inquisitions. It's important to listen to them too. Conversations can be short and casual, but regular communication is important.

You can start by asking them what they like about Horizon Worlds, what they enjoy doing there, and how they protect their privacy and safety. You might be surprised how much they know and might learn some things to help you navigate the online world.

And ask them to show you around their "worlds" or perhaps a world that they think you might



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enjoy. You may or may not get hooked on VR, but you will learn how it works, why many people find it compelling and be in a better position to talk with your kids about their own experiences.

Do remind your kids that they are in control over their experiences in Horizon Worlds and go over some of the safety tools and tips covered in this guide, including blocking, reporting, safe zone and setting personal boundaries.

## Closing thoughts for parents

Even tech-savvy parents have a hard time keeping up with technology, especially when new paradigms, such as virtual and augmented reality, challenge us even further. But don't despair. Just like you don't have to be an automotive engineer to drive a car, you can learn to understand how your kids are using VR or how to use it yourself without knowing the nuts and bolts of how it works.

We at ConnectSafely can't predict the future, so we don't know what technologies will emerge or which ones will become popular. But we know that the technology will evolve, and there will be new concerns and safety strategies while the basic principles of staying safe will remain the same. Whether we're talking about new experiences, like Horizon Worlds, or "older" ones like Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok or Facebook, it's all about knowing how to protect your privacy, security and safety not only by following the app's guidelines and using the available tools but by applying the same critical thinking skills and good judgment that you have been teaching your kids since they were babies.

Smart practices, such as treating others how you want to be treated, utilizing privacy settings in an



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*Closing thoughts continued on page 15 >*

age-appropriate way, and maintaining a healthy balance of on- and offline activities, will help ensure a positive experience in Horizon Worlds or just about any other app in VR or any other platform.

When it comes to technology — especially virtual reality — there’s a good chance that your teen knows more than you do, but you still have an essential role to play. Parents are still who most teens look to for advice and a value system that will carry them successfully into adulthood. Open, non-judgmental discussions and genuine interest, not fear, in the apps, games and services they use are a great way to put into practice your family’s values and help your teen grow into the adult they are meant to be.

So, no matter what tech your kids use, it’s important to keep the lines of communication as open as possible and to have ongoing conversations about what’s appropriate for them in terms of privacy settings, time spent online, and the types of activities they’re engaging in. It generally works better to talk with your teen about their favorite tools because they’re more likely to come to you when they need help, and you’re much more likely to be kept in the loop about the technology they use.

## About ConnectSafely

ConnectSafely is a Silicon Valley, California-based nonprofit organization dedicated to educating users of connected technology about safety, privacy and security. We publish research-based safety tips, parents’ guidebooks, advice, news and commentary on all aspects of tech use and policy.

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