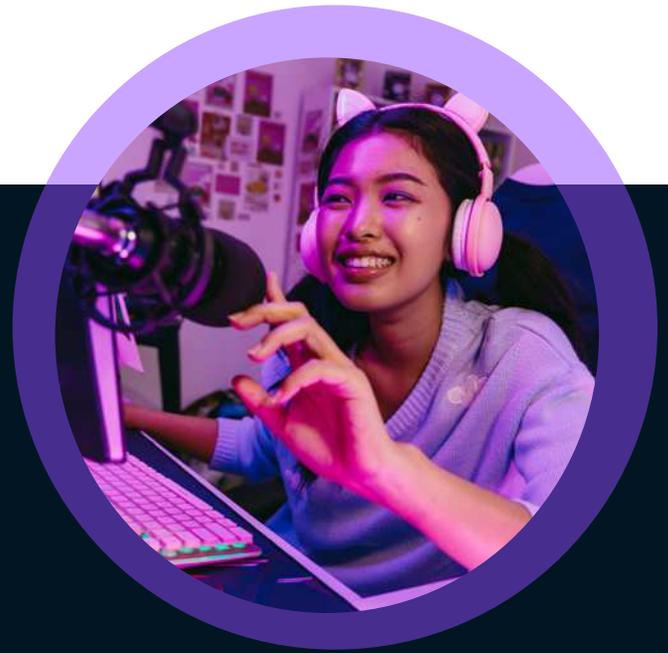


PARENT'S GUIDE TO Twitch



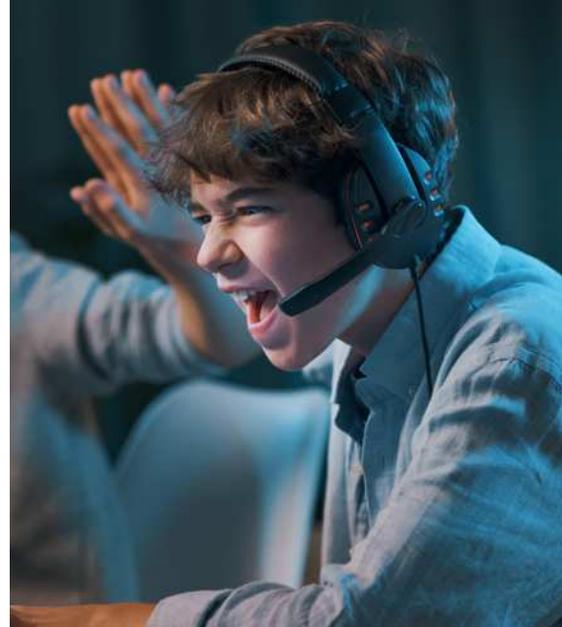
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For more info, visit
[ConnectSafely.org/
parents-guide-
to-twitch](https://connectsafely.org/parents-guide-to-twitch)

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Live streaming service Twitch continues to defy the short-form video trend that's popular among teens. Twitch's interactive streams, which feature everything from live video gaming, music performances and makeup tutorials to "just chatting," often last hours. And teens love the site — both for the wide variety of content and the sense of an authentic community that comes along with it.

This guide explains how Twitch works and provides advice for helping teens stay safe.

Why teens (and adults) like Twitch

Although it has evolved a great deal, Twitch started out as a place where people could watch other people play video games, interact and be part of the action. A lot of parents were baffled by that, but — in many ways — watching a video game is no different than watching football, baseball or other sports where great players compete for the enjoyment of others. It can be entertaining and — for those who aspire to hone their skills — a way to learn to improve their own game. And while some adults have expressed concerns about kids playing or watching video games, there is a body of research showing how video games can improve young people's **cognitive performance**, collaboration skills and **learning ability**.

Although gaming and e-sports remain a big part of Twitch, the platform is now home to a great variety of content, including music, dance, comedy, crafts and cooking shows.

Twitch streamers

Twitch creators (or “streamers”) broadcast live on “channels,” often while engaging their audience in an accompanying live chat by answering questions and commenting on messages — even asking what to do next.

Most users are happy to watch live or archived streams (also called “videos on demand”), and you don’t need an account to watch streams on Twitch. However, to live stream, you need to be 13 or older with a Twitch account. Unlike some other services, users can start streaming as soon as they sign-up.

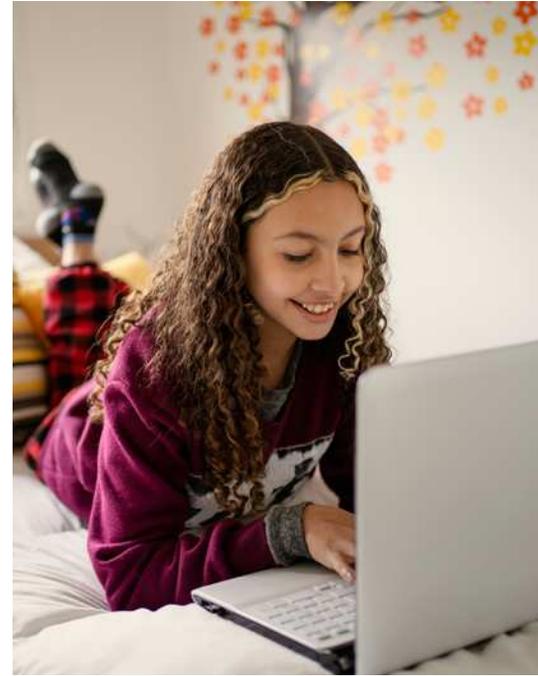
Most streams on Twitch attract a handful of viewers or maybe a few hundred, and those with relatively small streams can be very gratifying for both the streamer and the audience. But there are also some hugely successful Twitch streamers. A channel operated by a group of Dungeons and Dragons streamers regularly attracts tens of thousands of live viewers and is one of Twitch’s top performers.

Twitch streamers broadcast an average of over 2.5 million hours of content each day in 35 languages worldwide.

Twitch community

Community is an important part of Twitch — in fact, viewers often come for the streamer and stay for the community.

While watching a stream, viewers can post reactions, emotes (similar to emojis) and comments via live chat. The strongest communities encourage connection and communication among their



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Twitch community continued on page 5 >

viewers. Viewers/chatters who particularly love a streamer can sometimes become a “volunteer mod,” a strategic role within the community where you have access to Twitch safety and communication tools and work to enforce the streamer’s channel rules, welcome new viewers in and keep chat going during lulls. This can be a great way for teens to learn new skills and gain useful experience learning the ropes of moderation.

Signing up

If you want to stream or chat on Twitch, you need to create an account. When you first sign up, you are required to give your date of birth. Twitch only accepts users who are 13 or older.

Twitch has default settings and safeguards for all users, including turning off, by default, the ability for strangers to send you private messages. Also, new channels, by default, have additional safety settings like tools that require new chatters to undertake additional email or phone verification before they can participate on the channel.

Parents need to make sure their teens join Twitch using their correct birth year and make sure that any children under 13 remain off of Twitch and other services that they are too young to use. If a user inputs their age as under 13, they will be blocked from making an account, even if they try again with a different age.

Parents or legal guardians of children under 13 who have created a Twitch account can contact Twitch at privacy@twitch.tv to have the account closed and personal information deleted. When notifying Twitch, you’ll want to include any information, such as the username, that will aid in identifying the account. Others can report the child through Twitch’s reporting tool. You can find step-by-step information about reporting in Twitch’s [Safety Center](#).



When you first sign up, you are required to give your date of birth.

Money on Twitch

Streamers can make money on Twitch through advertising (Twitch usually shares advertising revenue with streamers 50/50), by offering paid subscriptions, which often include subscriber-only chat and streams, sponsorships or by soliciting donations, “bits” or cheers (which are chat messages that use custom emotes — similar to emoji — to show support for streamers).

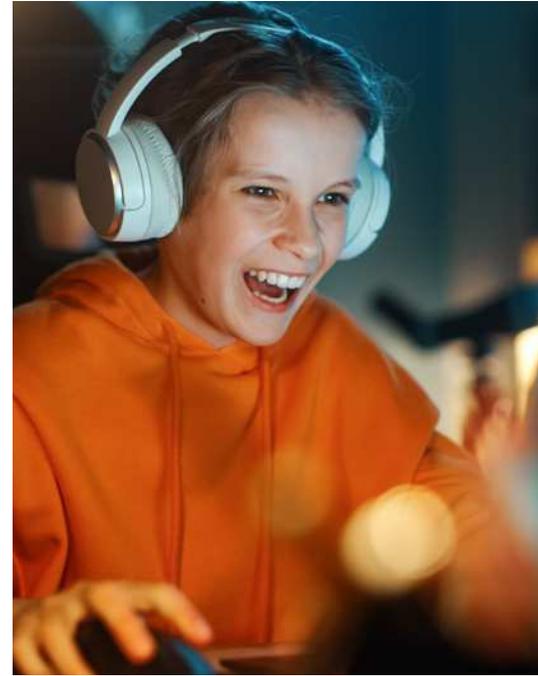
As a safety measure, to accept paid subscriptions, a streamer needs to be an Affiliate, which requires having at least 50 followers and having broadcasted 8 hours in the past 30 days. There are a few other requirements, but these are the main ones besides having an account that’s in good standing.

Streamers can also make money by posting links to 3rd-party services that collect payments, such as Stream Elements or PayPal.

Safety tools and features

Moderation

Twitch has **community guidelines** that all users must follow that, among other things, prohibit hate speech, cyberbullying, sexually explicit content and harassment. Streamers can also set additional rules for their channel, such as banning specific topics, words or phrases. Parents should help their teens set up **AutoMod settings** on any channels where they stream. Automod holds potentially risky comments from chat until they are reviewed by a moderator. Teens might want to start with the most aggressive AutoMod setting (Level 4) first as they learn more about how the service works. Many streamers assign volunteer or paid moderators to monitor chat during



Automod holds potentially risky comments from chat until they are reviewed by a moderator.

Safety tools and features continued on page 7 >

broadcasts. Twitch relies on user reports and automated detection to find people who violate the community guidelines and has ways to **make a report**.

Streamers can also **limit** the ways that “suspicious users” — accounts identified for possible violations that are being monitored — can interact on their channels by blocking messages from possible ban evaders. Twitch also offers streamers the **option** to require that all chatters on their stream have undergone phone or email verification before engaging.

Private messaging (“Whispers”)

Users can message each other privately (DM). Private messages (“whispers”) from people you’re not connected to (someone you don’t follow or subscribe to) are blocked by default. We recommend teens keep this setting. Go to **Settings > Security and Privacy** to view.

Recommended precautions

Inappropriate content

Streamers are expected to label their channels as mature if they include video game violence (real-world violence is banned) or other mature themes, but teens under 18 aren’t blocked from accessing the content, although they will see a warning message. Talk to your teen about your family’s rules around viewing mature content. And while sexually explicit content and nudity aren’t allowed on the service, some channels feature mature themes and rough talk, including swearing.



Streamers can also limit the ways that “suspicious users” can interact on their channels...

Recommended precautions continued on page 8 >

Avoiding predators and grooming

Millions of people enjoy Twitch every day without incident, but unfortunately, as on most social media platforms, there have been some teens that have been targeted by predators. And while just about any teen could be targeted by manipulative and predatory adults, teens who are isolated or have a chaotic home life are among those especially vulnerable.

Teens should learn to recognize the **signs of grooming**, which include inappropriate compliments or comments, attempts to gain the teen's trust, trying to get the teen to communicate on another service, gift-giving, flattery and demands to keep the communication secret. Once a predator gains the victim's trust — even dependence — they may ask for sexual pictures or favors, moving on to threats and extortion to get what they want.

Let your teens know that they can come to you with any concern without fear of getting into serious trouble, even if they slipped up and sent an inappropriate image. Our goal as parents should ultimately be about protecting our children from harm, not punishing them for falling victim to a trap set by a predatory individual (or individuals — some extortion plots are carried out by criminal networks). For more, see [ConnectSafely's guide on sextortion](#).

Privacy considerations

There have been cases where young streamers and people in chat have revealed their age, school name, home address — even whether they were home alone — while live streaming or in chat. These are big don'ts. Talk to your teens about protecting their — and others' — privacy and safety on Twitch or any service they use. In addition to avoiding sharing their own information, Twitch also prohibits users from sharing others' personal information.



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Life balance

As we've mentioned, Twitch streams can last hours. But most viewers don't necessarily watch an entire broadcast from start to finish but rather pop in and out as their day allows. Some viewers may double-screen (watch Twitch while playing a video game, looking at their phone or doing homework on a laptop).

Talk to your teens about life balance, reminding them about the importance of spending time with friends and family in person, exercising and focusing attention on homework or hobbies. And don't just tell them — show them how you balance your screen time with other pursuits.

While parents should certainly consider putting time limits on their teen's use of Twitch, be thoughtful before arbitrarily requiring them to immediately stop, especially if they're live streaming. It's better to have conversation and family rules in place ahead of time rather than having to interrupt them in the middle of an activity.

Safe streaming

If you and your teen think they're ready to try live streaming, talk about some important considerations. Start with familiarizing them with the Twitch **Community Guidelines**, which explain what is allowed on the platform. Let them tell you how they plan to protect their privacy, what's appropriate to talk about or show on their stream, how to handle negative comments or messages, whether to accept Bits or other gifts, time considerations, plus their motivations and goals for streaming. There could be good reasons for teens to monetize their channel, but we encourage parents to be a part of the conversation and to keep an eye on what their kid is doing on Twitch. Twitch has created interactive resources for creators in their **Creator Camp**, which covers not only the basics of streaming but also provides an **introduction** to safety on the platform.



If you and your teen think they're ready to try live streaming, talk about some important considerations.

Twitch etiquette

Since community is a big part of the Twitch experience, users should handle themselves as in any public space. Don't pick fights, reveal personal information or engage in inappropriate conversations. Good habits like these are protective.

Here are some other smart practices for teens:

- Block private messages (“whispers”) from people you’re not connected with. This is on by default, and teens should keep the setting enabled. Go to **Settings > Security and Privacy** to view.
- Prevent people from sending you **gift subscriptions** to channels you don’t follow. Go to **Settings > Security and Privacy**.
- Use a profile image that doesn’t reveal your age. (Profile images are seen by everyone.)
- Get familiar with the range of safety tools on Twitch and Twitch’s **Safety Center**. For example, enable filtering in chat. Open a chat window and select the gear icon. You can opt to hide sexually suggestive language, “hostility” (what Twitch calls “bullying language towards other people”), racist language and profanity. The settings you select will follow you from channel to channel.
- Remind your teens that they should also consider reporting, in addition to blocking, users that make them feel uncomfortable. Emphasize that reporting is entirely anonymous — the other user will not know who reported them.



**Get familiar with
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Safety Center.**

Twitch etiquette continued on page 11 >

To block a user, click on their username and then click on the 3 Vertical Dots menu icon. Select **Block {USERNAME}**.

- Protect the security of your account. Use a password that you use only on Twitch and is hard to guess. Enable two-factor authentication, which requires two ways to prove your identity if you sign on with an unknown device or browser. Go to **Settings > Security and Privacy**. See [ConnectSafely's guide to strong passwords](#).



Closing thoughts for parents

You may not be familiar with Twitch, but chances are your teen is, which is why it's important to understand Twitch — not just how your teen uses it but why they like it. Talk about how they stay safe on Twitch (you might be surprised by the steps they already take to protect their safety and privacy and keep their experience positive). Approach conversations about Twitch with genuine interest, not fear, and they will be more likely to come to you if they encounter a problem on Twitch or any other platform they use.

And it's not just about Twitch because there are other services your teens use or will use, including new ones that may pop up at any time. While each service has its own unique features and safety tools, the risks and approach to managing risks are generally similar among all services that allow people to interact.

So, no matter what technology your kids use, it's important to keep the lines of communication as



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Closing thoughts for parents continued on page 12 >

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.

Finally, although Twitch can bring joy and happiness to teens, it's important that they take breaks from viewing or streaming to interact with people in real life. And don't just preach about taking breaks — take some yourself.



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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