A PARENT-TO-PARENT GUIDE

Discord, explained.

Why teens love it, what changed in 2026, and how to help them use it safely.

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INSIDE THIS GUIDE

What Discord is, and why your kid is on it

Everything that changed in 2026, from age groups to encrypted calls

The real risks, and where the new protections stop

A 15-minute setup to do together, step by step

What to do if something goes wrong, plus scripts that don't start a fight

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What is Discord?

A free app for text, voice, and video chat.

Discord started as a place for gamers to talk while they play, and it has grown into a hangout spot for every kind of interest, from anime and art to homework help.

People gather in communities called servers. A server can be five friends from school planning a game night, or an open community with tens of thousands of strangers who love the same game. That range is the whole story of Discord safety: the app itself is neutral, and the risk depends on which kind of space your child is in and who they meet there.

Discord's terms say users must be at least 13, or older where local law sets a higher age.

Why do tweens and teens love it?

Friendship and community

Teens use Discord to stay in touch with friends, work on group projects, and find people who share their interests.

Gaming

Many games have their own Discord servers, and lots of kids chat on Discord while they play Roblox, Fortnite, or Minecraft together.

Creative sharing

Teens share art, music, writing, and fan projects, and get feedback from people who care about the same things.

Independence and privacy

There's no public feed of likes or follower counts. Conversations happen in smaller, user-run spaces, which feels more private to teens. It's also why parents can find it harder to see what's going on.

02 · WHAT'S NEW IN 2026

Discord's biggest year of change.

Discord changed more this year than in any year since it launched. Here's what parents need to know.

Every account now has an age group.

Since September 22, 2026, Discord automatically places accounts into one of three groups: Adult, Teen (13 to 17), or Unconfirmed. It estimates age from account signals like how old the account is and the kinds of servers and games it's connected to. Discord says it does not read messages or calls to do this, and that more than 90% of users won't be asked to verify anything. Discord admits the estimate can be wrong, so it's worth checking.

CHECK YOUR CHILD'S AGE GROUP

User Settings → Account Status

Teen protections are now on by default.

Teen and Unconfirmed accounts automatically get these protections:

- ✓ Messages from people who aren't friends land in a separate message requests inbox to review first. Only a confirmed adult can turn this off.
- ✓ An alert pops up before accepting a friend request from someone with no mutual friends or small servers in common.
- ✓ Sensitive images are blurred or blocked, depending on where they appear.
- ✓ Age-restricted servers, channels, and bot commands are closed.
- ✓ Full profile details and activity (like what game they're playing) are visible only to friends and people in smaller servers. Unconfirmed accounts are the exception: their profile stays visible to everyone in their servers.

Family Center does more.

Discord's parent tool now lets a linked parent set a monthly spending cap (even $0), schedule downtime when Discord can't be opened, and manage some of their teen's settings, like who can send friend requests and DMs. Parents also see their teen's top five contacts and servers from the past week, purchases, and call minutes. When teens report something, they can choose to notify their parent.

Voice and video calls are now fully encrypted.

Since early March 2026, every Discord voice and video call is end-to-end encrypted by default, which means not even Discord can listen in. Text messages are not encrypted. This is good for privacy, and it also means no one is moderating what's said on calls. Your relationship with your child is the safety net there.

More legal pressure.

Several U.S. states have sued Discord, alleging it misled parents about safety and didn't do enough to protect kids from predators. These include New Jersey (2025), Texas (May 2026), and Florida (October 15, 2026). In July, a Texas court order required Discord to give Texas kids the same protections it already offered in the UK. Discord disputes the claims, and none of the cases has been decided.

A reminder about ID uploads.

In 2025, about 70,000 government ID photos that users had submitted to appeal age decisions were exposed through a third-party customer service vendor. Discord says it has since retired that process.

> **THE TAKEAWAY FOR FAMILIES**
>
> **Your teen has no reason to upload an ID to Discord, and a message asking for one is a red flag.**

03 · THE FEATURE TOUR

Everything your kid is actually using.

Servers

Individual communities built around an interest, like a game, a band, or an art style. Some are invite-only groups of friends. Others are public and huge.

Channels

Text or voice chat rooms inside a server, organized by topic. One channel might be for general chat while another is for sharing memes or planning game sessions.

DMs and message requests

Private one-on-one or small group chats outside of a server. For teen accounts, messages from people who aren't friends now go to a separate message requests inbox first.

Voice, video, and Go Live

Users can call, video chat, share their screen, or stream a game in real time. These calls are now end-to-end encrypted.

Stage channels

Broadcast-style rooms where a few people speak to a listening audience. Teens can listen, but only confirmed adults can speak.

Bots, apps, and activities

Automated tools and mini games that run inside servers. Some help moderators filter harmful content, while others play music or run games.

Nitro and the Shop

Discord's paid subscription and in-app store for profile decorations, effects, and game items. This is where spending can add up.

04 · POTENTIAL RISKS

Where the new protections stop.

The 2026 changes strengthen Discord's front door. They limit messages from strangers, explicit images, and adult-only spaces. What they can't do is judge the people your child chooses to let in, and that's where most of the real risk sits.

Strangers who become "friends."

Grooming rarely starts with an obvious red flag. More often, someone meets a child in a shared-interest server, becomes a helpful and flattering regular, then moves the conversation to DMs, and later to another app. Once a teen accepts a friend request, the stranger filters no longer apply. The FBI has also warned about organized online groups, such as one known as "764," that target kids roughly 10 to 17 across social media, gaming platforms, and chat apps.

Explicit and harmful content.

Discord's filters scan images and videos only. They don't scan text, voice, or calls. Most servers are run by volunteer moderators, so standards vary a lot, and an ordinary public server can still carry crude talk or pressure to join edgier spaces.

Sextortion.

Someone may build trust, ask for a photo, then threaten to share it unless the child sends more images or money. This can happen fast, and kids often feel too ashamed to tell anyone.

Cyberbullying and harassment.

Discord communities can be supportive or toxic. Anonymity makes it easier for people to say things they wouldn't say in person.

Harmful communities.

Some servers promote extreme ideologies, hate, or self-harm, and teens can get pulled into echo chambers that reinforce harmful beliefs.

Scams and account takeovers.

Fake "free Nitro" gifts, "free game codes," and urgent "verify your account" messages are common ways to steal accounts or personal information. The new age checks gave scammers a fresh script. Discord says it only asks about age inside the app, and does not send emails or texts about age checks.

Spending.

In-app purchases, Nitro, and gifts from other users can add up. Gifts can also be a grooming tactic, used to build a sense of owing someone.

Set it up together.

Sit down side by side with your child's device and go through these in order. It takes about 15 minutes.

A teen who sees each setting and understands why it's there is far more likely to keep it.

1 **Check their age group**

A 13 to 17-year-old should show as Teen. Unconfirmed is normal for newer accounts and comes with nearly the same protections. If your child shows as Adult, the teen protections won't apply and Family Center can't be linked, so set the options below by hand and contact Discord's Help Center.

2 **Link Family Center**

You'll need your own Discord account. On your child's account, generate a QR code or link. Scan or open it from your account, and your child accepts the request.

3 **Leave message requests on**

For teen accounts, DMs from non-friends already go to a separate inbox. Show your child where that inbox is and what to do with requests from people they don't know.

4 **Turn off DMs from server members for younger teens**

This stops anyone who shares a server from messaging your child directly.

1 Narrow friend requests

Under Friend Requests, leave only "Friends of Friends" on for 13 and 14-year-olds. Older teens may reasonably want "Server Members" on too.

2 Set a spending cap and downtime if you want them

In Family Center, set a monthly spending cap (it can be $0, though it doesn't cover subscriptions like Nitro) and schedule hours when Discord can't be opened, like school nights after 10 p.m.

3 Turn on two-factor authentication

This protects their account from being stolen.

4 Practise blocking and reporting once

Long-press a message on mobile (or right-click on desktop) and choose Report. Knowing where it is before it's needed is half the battle.

WHERE TO FIND IT

Age group: User Settings → Account Status

Family Center: User Settings → Account → Family Center

DMs and friend requests: User Settings → Privacy & Safety

Menus move. Discord has been renaming its settings this year, so if something isn't where we said, look under Privacy & Safety, Messaging Permissions, or Content & Social.

06 · KEEPING THEM SAFE, PART 2

Talk about it.

Settings handle the front door. Conversations handle everything after it.

Explain that people online aren't always who they say they are, and that a stranger who seems kind and fun can still be dangerous.

Teach the red flags. Any one of these could be innocent. Together, they're the classic pattern of grooming.

THE RED FLAGS

- ✕ Asking for personal information or photos
- ✕ Offering gifts or free Nitro
- ✕ Asking them to keep a secret
- ✕ Wanting to move the chat to another app

Make one promise out loud, before it's needed.

> **If anything ever feels off, you can come to me and you won't be in trouble or lose your phone.**

That promise is what makes kids actually tell you.

Check in without spying.

Family Center shows you who your child is talking to, not what they say.

YOU'LL SEE (PAST 7 DAYS)

- [x] New friends
- [x] Who they messaged or called
- [x] Call minutes
- [x] Servers joined
- [x] Purchases
- [x] A weekly email summary

YOU WON'T SEE

- [ ] Message content

Use what you see as a conversation starter, not evidence. "I saw a new name in the weekly email. Who's that?" lands very differently than "Who is this and why didn't you tell me?" Ask them to show you the servers they're in from time to time, and let them know it's about safety, not mistrust.

Set boundaries.

Agree together on which kinds of servers are okay to join, when Discord is used, and where devices live at night. Keep gaming and chatting in shared spaces for younger kids. Revisit the rules as your child shows good judgement, and loosen them over time.

The goal is scaffolding, not surveillance.

Stay calm. Act quickly.

If your child is being pressured, threatened, or asked for images or money, here's what to do.

1. **Keep the evidence**
   Save screenshots, usernames, and message links rather than deleting them.
2. **Help them stop replying**
   Don't pay anything, whatever the threat.
3. **Block and report the account in Discord**
   Then report it to the authorities below.

IN CANADA

Report to Cybertip.ca. For help getting images removed, visit NeedHelpNow.ca.

IN THE U.S.

Report to the NCMEC CyberTipline. Use Take It Down to help remove images.

> **If a child is in immediate danger, call 911.**

What to actually say.

Start with curiosity.

> **“I know a lot of people your age use Discord. What do you like most about it?”**

> **“Can you show me how Discord works? I'd love to understand what makes it fun for you.”**

> **“What kinds of servers are you in?”**

> **“Discord changed some settings this year. Want to look at your account together and see what's different?”**

> **“If someone you've only met in a server wants to be friends, it's okay to wait. People worth knowing don't mind ‘let me think about it.’”**

> **“Have you ever seen something on Discord that made you uncomfortable? How did you handle it?”**

“How do you tell if someone on Discord is really who they say they are?”

“Real account checks happen in your settings, not in a DM. If a message says your account is in trouble or asks for your ID, don't click. Come show me.”

“If anyone asks you to keep a secret from me, move to another app, or send a photo, that's the moment to tell me. You won't be in trouble.”

“Do your friends ever talk about scams or weird links on Discord? What do you think the red flags are?”

“I'll check in on your Discord sometimes. Not because I don't trust you, but to make sure you're safe.”

“I trust you to make smart choices, but even smart people run into problems online. If anything ever feels off, please come to me so we can figure it out together.”

10 · SOURCES

Where this came from.

01 **Discord: Safer for Teens, Same Discord for Adults**
discord.com · September 22, 2026

02 **Discord Help Center: Family Center for Parents and Guardians**
support.discord.com

03 **BleepingComputer: Discord rolls out end-to-end encryption on voice, video calls**
bleepingcomputer.com

04 **Courthouse News: Florida AG sues Discord over child safety concerns**
courthousenews.com

05 **Texas Attorney General: Agreed temporary injunction against Discord**
texasattorneygeneral.gov

06 **REFOG: What the new age checks change and what they don't**
refog.com

A NOTE FROM US

Menus move. Discord renames and reshuffles its settings often, so if something isn't where we said, check Discord's Help Center for the latest path. We update this guide as things change.