

The 'Houseparty' app is an online live streaming app where you can have social face-to-face communications where other people can join your video chat. The app can make connecting face-to-face very easy and can alert you when your friends are there and ready to join the conversation.

It has become very popular recently and like other on-line social platforms there are aspects that can be very beneficial to know.

To join Houseparty you should be at least 13 years old to use the app. However there is no age verification on signup.

Here I am going to highlight 10 aspects to assist in helping keep you and (your) children safe whilst using and enjoying the app. Hope you find this helpful.

### **'Lock' Rooms**

In regards to communicating with users on the platform, it is advisable that a child uses the 'lock' feature to make conversations private. This means that other users, especially strangers, can't join their conversations.

### **Private Mode**

An additional tip is to use the app settings to turn on 'Private Mode' which automatically locks the room, instead of doing it manually.

### **In-App Purchases**

As with some other app's, there is the ability to buy cyber-products (non-physical or non-tangible items) within a game called 'Heads Up!' within Houseparty. There is the potential for someone to get carried away playing the game while paying out money.

### **Protecting their Privacy**

A person may unknowingly give away personal information during a live stream including their location. As well as not disclosing anything to anyone during a live stream, it is advisable to remove items in their live stream that could expose their personal location. Such items could be school uniform, street names, posters and to be aware of the app's location sharing option.

### **Check Communications**

Remind your child not to communicate with people they do not know and trust. If they experience something that makes them feel uncomfortable then they should tell a trusted adult immediately. Remind your child that if they get an invite to join a Houseparty room from someone they don't recognize, then they should ignore the request.

## **Remove Links To Other Apps**

Users can link their account to both Facebook and Snapchat, or can simply share a link to their profile. It may be advisable to remove these links and not to publically share access to their online profiles. This is because of the potential for strangers to access one's information and to then communicate with them.

## **Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying is when people use technology to harass, threaten, embarrass or target another person. Exclusion from friendship groups within the platform may make your child feel sad and left out / socially excluded.

## **Sharing Content**

There is the ability to record and share sections of a 'chat'. Every member of the group will see a notification if another member is recording but what is said within the live-chat recording may be regretted at a later time. Screen shots of live streams and private messages can also be taken. Once recorded, you may lose control over the video and how it is used.

## **Digital Footprint**

As the videos are live, it may lead to the misconception that what happens in the video will disappear once the live stream ends. Content shared on the app can be recorded or screenshotted and shared. The video-chats (unless screenshotted) can't be reviewed for later so you may not know or prove what has been said. Parents can see when their child has last communicated with someone and for how long for under the 'We Time' feature.

## **Reporting and Blocking**

If a child faces a problem while using the app, please report the issue immediately and click on the 'report now' button. There is also the option to report and block users directly on the user's profile. Of course if there is a criminal offence whilst being online such as threats or inappropriate sexual exposing / sexual messages please report them to the Police. You may be able to obtain a screen shot of the suspect's messages or image.