



Background

“ROBLOX is the best place to Imagine with Friends™. With the largest user-generated online gaming platform, and over 15 million games created by users, ROBLOX is the #1 gaming site for kids and teens. Every day, virtual explorers come to ROBLOX to create adventures, play games, role play, and learn with their friends in a family-friendly, immersive, 3D environment.”¹

Launched in 2006, Roblox was created by David Baszucki and Erik Cassel. Roblox is available for nearly all platforms including PC, Mac, iOS, Android, Amazon devices, Xbox One, Oculus Rift, and HTC Vibe. Roblox currently boasts over 48 million active users around the globe, with a 201% year-over-year growth in active users. According to the Roblox website, 23.8 million users are located within North America. On January 7, 2017, Roblox creator David Baszucki tweeted that Roblox had passed one million concurrent players.

What is Roblox?

Roblox is a user-generated massive multiplayer online social gaming platform. The name Roblox was created by blending the words “robots” and “blocks.” Roblox users create their own virtual worlds and design their own avatars and games within the platform. New users must register with a username, email address, and date of birth. After registration and email verification, the new user then selects and customizes a virtual character that is used as his or her identity in the Roblox world.

Each user can request their own pieces of virtual real estate on which they can build houses, cars, machines, roller coasters, or anything else you can imagine with building blocks and code; these places are called "games". Users search for, find, and play games made by other users in a persistent online environment, playing these games with other users from around the world.

The Roblox world has its own virtual currency: ROBUX. Users can earn or purchase ROBUX in a variety of ways, and it can be used to buy or sell items within the platform. Users can also sell ROBUX back to Roblox subject to certain participation requirements (including being 13 years of age or older). Activities in the Roblox world include exploring, crafting items, resource gathering, and combat. Users can customize their virtual characters with



various hats, head shapes, body shapes, clothing, and gear. Users can create their own articles of clothing, or collect and trade items.

Users interact with each other through in-game chat, personal messaging (within the Roblox environment), and user forums. Players can add other people they meet in the game to their friends list. A player can have a maximum of 200 friends and infinite followers. Players also have the option to join community groups. After joining, players can then advertise their group, participate in group relations, and set their default group.



Roblox is used heavily by minors. It is a member of the kidSAFE Seal program, and is Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) certified, meaning that it complies with the following rules:²

1. Safety measures for chat, community, and social features
2. Rules and educational info about online safety
3. Procedures for handling safety issues and complaints
4. Parental controls over child’s account
5. Age-appropriate content, advertising, and marketing
6. Parental notice and consent procedures
7. Parental access to child's personal information
8. Data integrity and security procedures
9. COPPA-compliant privacy policy
10. COPPA oversight and enforcement by the kidSAFE® Seal Program

Importance to Law Enforcement

Like other virtual worlds that allow for two-way communication and real-world money exchange, there exists the possibility of financial crimes such as money laundering and extortion.³ Despite the Roblox Corporation’s KidSafe designation, perhaps the greater threat within Roblox lies with the solicitation of minors due to its marketing and appeal to children. In January 2017, it was reported that a six-year-old girl was sent explicit messages “from men trying to lure her to their homes.”⁴ According to the girl’s mother, her daughter had many messages from strangers and because the girl thought that the messages were coming from characters in the game, she replied to them. The mother also reported that many parents have since contacted her stating that their children were also receiving inappropriate messages through the game.

A similar case was reported in February 2017, when a father reported that his young son was sent “sickening” messages through the Roblox game.⁵ In this case, the father reported that his son had been sent inappropriate questions and requests to perform sex acts in the virtual bedrooms of the game.

Roblox has recently initiated some additional features aimed at making the game more secure for children; however, no precaution is 100% fail-safe. It is not unreasonable to expect that some adults will continue to use the game to solicit and groom minors.

Investigative Information

The Roblox Corporation lists their address at 60 East Third Avenue, Suite 201, San Mateo, CA 94401. Email may be sent to info@roblox.com, and phone contact through 888-858-2569.

In order to use the full service of Roblox features including chat, users must create an account which includes a username, password, birthdate, and email address. In addition, when using a credit card, users or their parents are required to enter billing information, including name, billing address, credit card or other payment information, and billing email. Roblox retains certain billing information to support customer service inquiries, but we do not retain the full credit card numbers. According to Roblox, "email is our only way to verify the authenticity of the account owner"⁶ therefore, it may be possible for someone to create an account on the Roblox site using false information.

The Roblox Corporation states that they will disclose the personal information of their users as required by law and when they believe that the disclosure is necessary to protect their rights and/or comply with a judicial proceeding, court order, or legal process served on their web site. To the extent permitted by applicable law, Roblox may disclose personal information about users in response to law enforcement agencies or other public agencies (including schools or children services) request or if they feel that such disclosure may prevent the instigation of a crime, facilitate an investigation related to public safety or protect the safety of a child using their website, protect the security or integrity of their website, or enable them to take precautions against liability or to protect their rights.⁷

According to the Roblox Privacy Policy, Roblox collects cookies, beacons, tags and scripts and other similar technologies that are used to store users' preferences, analyze trends, administer the site, track users' entry onto and movements within the Roblox website, provide payment fraud protection, gather demographic information about the user base as a whole, and other internal Roblox operations. Roblox also uses mobile analytics tools to allow them to better understand the functionality of their mobile software on devices and to derive insights about how their mobile software is used. These tools may record information such as how often a user uses the application, the events that occur within the application, aggregated usage, performance data, and from where the application was downloaded.

Sources

¹ <https://www.roblox.com/>

² <https://www.kidsafeseal.com/aboutourseals.html>

³ <http://f3magazine.unicri.it/?p=360>

⁴ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4159602/Girl-six-sent-creepy-message-app-Roblox-stranger.html>

⁵ <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/dad-roblox-warning-after-young-9821213>

⁶ <https://www.roblox.com/info/privacy>

⁷ <https://www.roblox.com/info/privacy>



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