Discord's Unenforced Polices and Guidelines

Discord claims to be "a safe and friendly place for everyone" and includes safety settings and filtering options. They also provide a Safety Center and Parent Guide in an attempt to make their platform adhere to that motto.

However, the available safety settings, filtering options, and reliance on individual user moderation and reporting by Discord makes it anything but safe and friendly for the millions of children using Discord every day.

NCOSE research found several contradictions and unenforced policies when investigating Discord – and the lack of true transparency surrounding how Discord proactively monitors and catches violations means Discord has a long way to go before it really is a safe and friendly place for everyone.

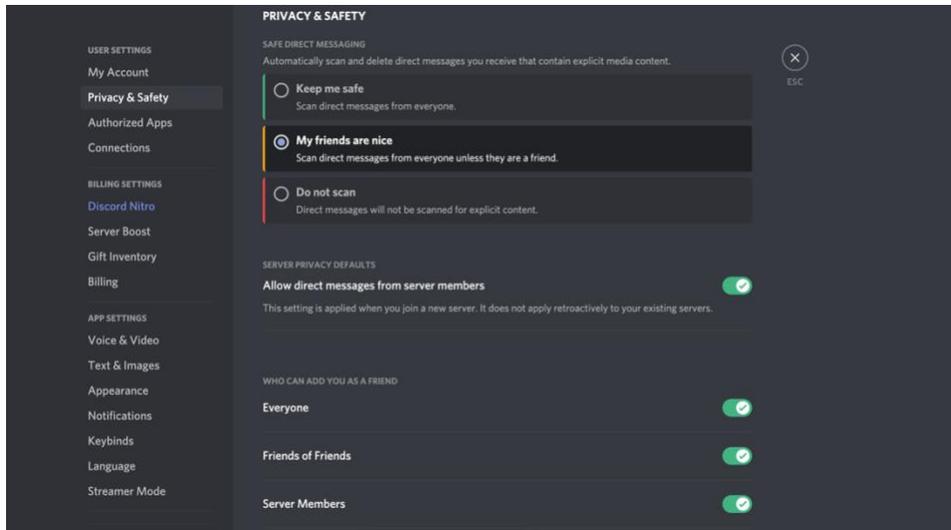1. **Discord does not default minor accounts to the highest safety settings available upon account creation.**

In their "adult content guidelines", Discord claims that the highest safety setting in regard to receiving direct messages, called "keep me safe" is on by default:

If you do not want to see adult content on Discord

If you do not want to be exposed to adult content on Discord, or if you are under 18 years old, we recommend **turning on the explicit media filter in your privacy settings**. In your *User Settings*, under *Privacy & Safety*, choose *"Keep me safe"*. This setting is on by default and will ensure that images and videos in all direct messages are scanned by Discord and explicit content is blocked.

If you are under 18 years old, our age gate will restrict you from accessing NSFW channels in servers.

But when NCOSE research made a fake 13-year old account, these settings needed to be toggled on. The default was instead the middle option, which only scans direct messages from users that are not already added as friends. The other safety settings, which include who can add you as a friend, were all defaulted to the most open settings available. This means that anyone can add you as a friend, including anyone in a mutual server – and some servers have thousands of members. This is often how adults contact and begin grooming relationships with children on Discord. Here is a screenshot of the default safety settings after creating the 13-year old account:

Discord also [requires users to opt-in to viewing NSFW content](#) when using the Discord mobile app for iOS – and this option is still available even for accounts under the age of 18 years old. If Discord were truly dedicated to protecting children online, they would remove this option completely for accounts under the age of 18 years old.

2. **Discord claims verified and partner servers cannot include NSFW content – but have verified Pornhub, a server dedicated to NSFW content, and a company that has come under fire for hosting and profiting from child sexual abuse material and other non-consensual material.**

Verified/partner servers cannot create NSFW channels. No adult content should be present on those servers.
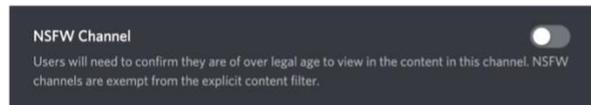
It's worth mentioning that while having a dedicated place for your NSFW content is ok by Discord standards, there is still some material that isn't appropriate anywhere on Discord. Content that sexualizes minors is never allowed anywhere on Discord. If you're unsure of what qualifies as ok or not, check out our Community Guidelines.

Adult content on Discord

There are millions of communities that use Discord as their home base. Because of this diversity, we want to recognize that content or topics that might be ok for some might be unsuitable for others. Adult content on Discord should only be accessible to those over 18 years old, and must be labelled properly to avoid anyone stumbling upon it inadvertently.
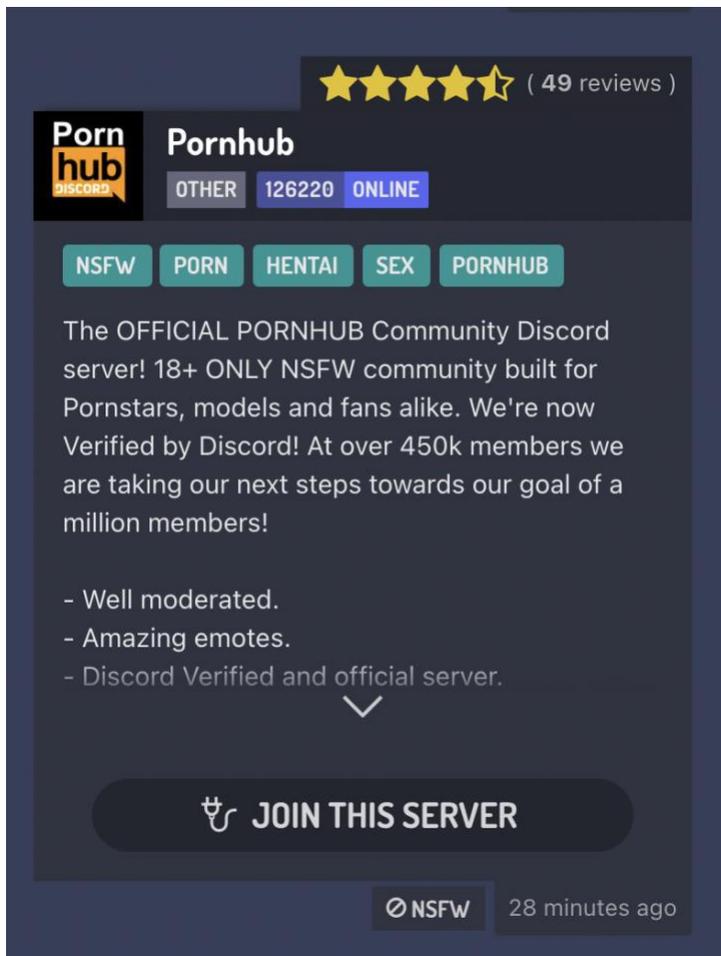
Labeling adult content properly on Discord

To help keep adult content in a clearly labeled, dedicated spot, we've added a channel setting that allows you to designate one or more text channels in your server as Not Safe for Work, or NSFW.

NSFW Channel

Users will need to confirm they are of over legal age to view in the content in this channel. NSFW channels are exempt from the explicit content filter.

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Anyone that opens the channel will be greeted with a notification letting them know that it might contain NSFW material and asking them to confirm that they are over 18.

3. **Minor accounts can still access NSFW servers, even if individual channels within those servers are blocked.**

Discord uses age-gating software to block minor-aged accounts from accessing and participating in channels that have been marked by server owners/moderators as "NSFW". However, many servers dedicated to illicit pornography trading, including non-consensual material and online prostitution, are easily accessed by minors. Despite Discord providing the ability to mark entire servers as NSFW, the fake 13-year old account joined several NSFW servers and was able to access content, including Pornhub – which should easily be marked as "specifically focused on explicit pornographic content".

No users between the ages of 13 and 17 will be able to join or view the content in NSFW servers.

18+ users attempting to join or access new NSFW servers on iOS will be required to opt-in to viewing NSFW content on desktop before being allowed into these spaces.

Additionally, a subset of NSFW servers that are **specifically focused on explicit pornographic content** will be blocked entirely on iOS. iOS users aged 18+ will only be able to join and access these dedicated pornography servers on the desktop and web versions of Discord.

4. **Discord relies on user moderation and reports to catch bad behavior – despite claiming a zero-tolerance policy regarding non-consensual sharing of sexual material and CSAM.**

Our Community Guidelines

We want Discord to be a safe, positive, and inclusive experience. For that to happen, we must all agree to a set of rules that guide our interactions on Discord.

When you sign up to Discord, you agree to follow our Community Guidelines and refrain from behavior that isn't allowed on the service. In exchange, it's our job to make sure your experience is as amazing as it can be.

We have a zero-tolerance approach to anyone threatening other people with harm, sharing sexually explicit content of others without their consent, sharing content that glorifies or promotes self-harm, and illegal activities such as sharing child sexual abuse material. If you come across a message that appears to break these rules, you can report it to your server moderator or directly to us by filling out this form. We may take a number of steps including issuing a warning, removing the content, or removing the accounts and/or servers responsible.

For more information, please see the other parts of this Safety Center as well as our Help Center.

Here are some rules for content on Discord:

6. **You must apply the NSFW label to channels if there is adult content in that channel.** Any content that cannot be placed in an age-gated channel, such as avatars, server banners, and invite splashes, may not contain adult content.

7. **You may not sexualize minors in any way.** This includes sharing content or links which depict minors in a pornographic, sexually suggestive, or violent manner, and includes illustrated or digitally altered pornography that depicts minors (such as lolicon, shotacon, or cub). We report illegal content to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

8. **You may not share sexually explicit content of other people without their consent**, or share or promote sharing of non-consensual intimate imagery (also known as revenge porn) in an attempt to shame or degrade someone.

They also take care to remind users they do NOT actively monitor every server, and even have it explicitly stated in their Terms of Use that Discord is under no obligation to monitor their communication channels.

Privacy is incredibly important to us.

We do not monitor every server or every conversation. We do not sell your data, nor do we share it with third parties for advertising purposes.

However, Discord also claims to be proactive in catching and removing harmful material – despite ample evidence proving otherwise.

Safety is just as important.

We don't sit back and simply wait for reports, but instead act to protect everyone on the platform. We know that there are cases where bad actors are acting to cause violence or harm in the real world, and we make it clear to them that there's no place for them on Discord.

Discord currently has policies on paper that in theory, prevent sexual content from reaching users unintentionally and blocks illegal sexual content with filter scanning software. However, it is abundantly clear that in practice, these policies are not enough to prevent the mass spread of illegal pornography, child abuse, and predatory grooming.