

What is the metaverse?

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What is the metaverse? Overview of risks and advice for parents

The metaverse is tipped to be the next big development in digital technology. But what exactly is it and what risks does it pose to children and young people?

The metaverse refers to the development of an online environment that allows you to take part in day-to-day activities that mirror your experience of the 'offline world'. For example, you could go shopping, watch a film at the cinema or have dinner with friends. Some experts have referred to it as a '3D internet'.

Companies are currently using technology like virtual and augmented reality to help them develop parts of the metaverse. These can be accessed using a headset. This gives users a first-hand view and helps to create more of a real-life experience.

The metaverse refers to the development of one virtual world that can be accessed through a single-entry point, similar to how we currently access the internet. For example, you'd be able to use the same headset to go supermarket shopping and check your social media accounts.

What does the metaverse currently look like?

Many tech companies are starting to experiment with different technologies to see what the metaverse could look like. Facebook recently changed its name to 'Meta' and launched a new virtual reality platform called 'Horizon Worlds' in the United States.

Virtual reality has been popular in the gaming industry for a few years. Both Roblox and Fortnite have developed online gaming environments that can be accessed using a headset. This allows players to use their body movements to play games instead of using a console. Roblox also recently partnered with Nike to launch a virtual store called 'Nikeland' where players can try on and purchase virtual trainers for their avatars.

Augmented reality is another technology used to enhance game-play and create more immersive experiences for players. This is where they add computed generated graphics to the real-world environment that players can see through the camera on their phone or device. For example, in Pokémon Go, players are encouraged to travel to different real-life locations to collect Pokémon on their devices.

Some platforms like Mario Kart Home Circuit use a mixture of both virtual and augmented reality. This is known as mixed reality. There are also other technologies being developed that aim to mimic touch. For example, wearable tech that allows you to feel touch in the offline world.

What are the risks of the metaverse?

Unwanted contact(Tab content hidden)

Access to inappropriate content(Tab content hidden)

Location sharing(Tab content hidden)

In-app purchases(Tab content hidden)

Top tips

Talk to your child about who they are talking to (Tab content hidden)

Explore the platform yourself(Tab content hidden)

Supervise them when using platforms that use virtual or augmented reality(Tab content hidden)

Enable parental controls and safety settings (Tab content hidden)

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