

METAVVERSE YOUTH SAFETY GUIDE



**PROJECT
ROKIT**

Supported by  Meta

INTRODUCTION

The metaverse – an immersive and interconnected web of virtual worlds – was once only a concept from science fiction, but it’s now rapidly approaching reality.

Unlike traditional social media and the internet, the metaverse will include a fully embodied and dynamic experience that allows users to participate in a virtual world that feels as real as the physical world. It’s not just a place to consume info, but a place to connect with others, build relationships, and create content in real-time.

Advancements in social media, gaming, and virtual reality are now bringing the metaverse to life. The rise of extended reality (XR) technologies, such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), have provided the necessary tools to create a more immersive and interactive metaverse.

This new world isn’t just something in the distant future, it’s happening now. And the growing popularity and accessibility of these technologies is making it even more compelling. The metaverse has the potential to revolutionise industries like entertainment, education, and commerce, leading to new opportunities and experiences for users.

As young people, we have the unique opportunity to shape the future of this new world, to explore its potential, and to use it to create positive change in our lives and in the world around us.



[INTRODUCTION](#)

[METAVERSE GUIDE](#)

[METAVERSE SAFETY](#)

[PHYSICAL TIPS](#)

[ONLINE TIPS](#)

[HORIZON WORLDS](#)

NATIONAL YOUTH CONSULTATION

In the lead-up to this guide, PROJECT ROCKIT facilitated a wide scale youth consultation project.

The project aimed to incorporate the voices of young people into the creation of the metaverse.

We worked with 42 young people aged 18-25, nominated by leading organisations in youth, mental health, and technology from across Australia.

These included the Centre for Multicultural Youth, headspace, Indigital, Minus18, Orygen, ReachOut, and UNICEF.

Through a series of roundtable discussions with these youth consultants, we came up with ten principles that we hope to see embodied by everyone who uses the metaverse, including young people, policy-makers, engineers, platforms, educators, and more.

To read the full report and learn more about the Youth Consultation Project, head to the [PROJECT ROCKIT website](#).



INTRODUCTION

METaverse GUIDE

METaverse SAFETY

PHYSICAL TIPS

ONLINE TIPS

HORIZON WORLDS

YOUTH-DESIGNED PRINCIPLES



PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS AND DIGNITY



SUPPORT THE BALANCE OF ONLINE AND OFFLINE



BUILD TRUST THROUGH TRANSPARENCY



KEEP PEOPLE ACCOUNTABLE



BUILD AGENCY THROUGH DATA LITERACY



CENTRE LIVED EXPERIENCE AS EXPERTISE



STRIVE FOR EQUITABLE ACCESS



CONTINUOUSLY CO-DESIGN



VALUE AND AMPLIFY DIVERSITY



COLLABORATE AND COMMUNICATE

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[METAVERSE GUIDE](#)

[METAVERSE SAFETY](#)

[PHYSICAL TIPS](#)

[ONLINE TIPS](#)

[HORIZON WORLDS](#)

YOUTH GUIDE TO THE METaverse

The metaverse offers young people a new realm to explore and create in, with endless possibilities for entertainment, education, fitness and work opportunities.

Growing up online, we're already comfortable with digital technologies and social media, which is a great starting point for navigating this new virtual world. That said, spending time in the metaverse is radically different to the majority of ways that people currently spend time online.

The next page shows three of the most significant differences that we will see in the metaverse compared to current technologies, adapted from Sir Nick Clegg's article, ["Making the metaverse: What it is, how it will be built, and why it matters."](#)



INTRODUCTION

METaverse GUIDE

METaverse SAFETY

PHYSICAL TIPS

ONLINE TIPS

HORIZON WORLDS

DIFFERENCES IN THE METAVERSE

BEING EMBODIED IN VIRTUAL SPACE

In contrast to our online experiences where we mostly interact by looking, listening and touching, extended reality experiences allow our entire body to be immersed in the digital environment. In the metaverse, you can transform into a customised digital version of yourself called an avatar, you can move and interact in the virtual world just like you would offline. It can feel like you're actually there because your avatar mirrors your movements!



IN-THE-MOMENT COMMUNICATION

Many metaverse interactions will happen in-the-moment and then disappear, like face-to-face conversations. This is called 'ephemeral' communication. In contrast to posting something that remains on the internet, we might find it easier to express ourselves without worrying about how our content will be received by a wider audience or in the long-term.



A FULLY IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE

VR can transport us to incredible places and experiences. By seamlessly substituting virtual elements for the physical world, our senses begin to perceive a sense that we are actually 'present' in online spaces. With VR devices like headsets and controllers, we can explore theme parks, cafes, or even historical periods, which can feel like we're really there.



[INTRODUCTION](#)

[METAVERSE GUIDE](#)

[METAVERSE SAFETY](#)

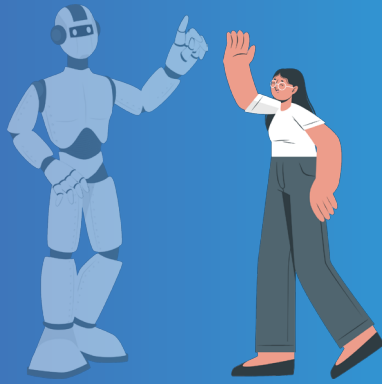
[PHYSICAL TIPS](#)

[ONLINE TIPS](#)

[HORIZON WORLDS](#)

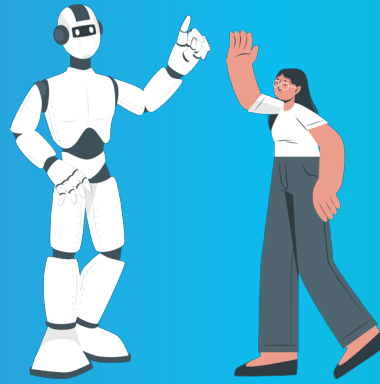
LEVELS TO THE METAVERSE

There's a range of levels to the immersive experiences that can take you beyond the physical world into the virtual.



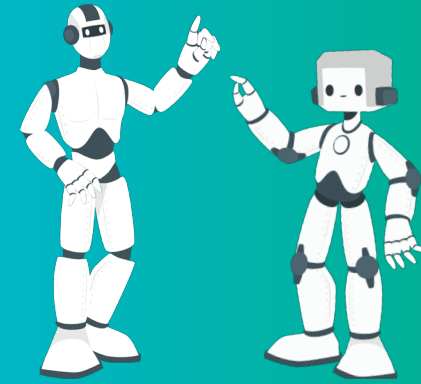
AUGMENTED REALITY

Where virtual elements are overlaid on the physical world around you.



MIXED REALITY

Where you enter more into the virtual space but can still interact with physical-world elements.



VIRTUAL REALITY

Where you're fully immersed in a digitally generated world using wearable devices.

PHYSICAL ←

→ VIRTUAL

Each step offers a more intense and exciting experience, blurring the line between the physical and the digital. The metaverse isn't limited to any single one of the above technologies, rather it's a concept that includes the entire continuum of mixed reality experiences. It represents a more immersive and interconnected digital universe where people can explore, interact, and collaborate in ways that extend beyond what current technology can offer.

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[METAVERSE GUIDE](#)

[METAVERSE SAFETY](#)

[PHYSICAL TIPS](#)

[ONLINE TIPS](#)

[HORIZON WORLDS](#)

OUR LIVED EXPERIENCES

HENRY (HE/HIM), YOUTH CONSULTANT

"Delving into the metaverse for the first time, was an experience that cannot be replicated. Due to having a cochlear implant on my right ear, a hearing aid on my left, the pressure of water does limit my ability to go deep underwater. As a swimmer, a dream of mine was always to swim deep underwater with fishes and sharks.

It was one of the first things I did in virtual reality, already knowing how water flows on me, I meditated on the bottom of the ocean floor. I am not going to lie, I cried. In happy tears, with elevated emotion of accomplishment and satisfaction..."



ZINAB (SHE/HER), YOUTH CONSULTANT

"As a culturally and linguistically diverse young woman, I've experienced challenges in online spaces, including a lack of cultural safety, representation, and accessibility.

With the metaverse, we have the opportunity to centre inclusivity, and build this platform for all. I have hope that the metaverse will allow marginalised people to connect, create communities where they may not be as visible, and provide supports that foster celebration of diversity."



[INTRODUCTION](#)

[METAVERSE GUIDE](#)

[METAVERSE SAFETY](#)

[PHYSICAL TIPS](#)

[ONLINE TIPS](#)

[HORIZON WORLDS](#)

SAFETY IN THE METaverse

As we've discussed, the metaverse is a collection of interconnected and interactive 3D experiences – like, worlds within worlds. As a result, each space within the metaverse may have its own set of rules and expectations. There will be broad codes of conduct established by platforms that apply everywhere, but there may also be specific rules or freedoms that are set by users within each specific world.

What might be considered acceptable behaviour in one space, like a virtual lounge room, may be inappropriate in another space, like a virtual classroom. This creates a more dynamic environment where users have an active role in determining what is and isn't acceptable and what consequences should be enforced for bad behaviour (like choosing to remove them from a space altogether). To be honest, it might be a bit weird if we had companies deciding for us what is and isn't acceptable in our own lounge rooms...

That's why our approach to 'online safety' in the metaverse needs to extend beyond simply learning which button to click to block your haters or report abusive content. We need a whole range of skills and tools to handle the complex social and digital dynamics across these spaces.



[INTRODUCTION](#)

[METaverse GUIDE](#)

[METaverse SAFETY](#)

[PHYSICAL TIPS](#)

[ONLINE TIPS](#)

[HORIZON WORLDS](#)

UNIQUE SAFETY RISKS

So, how do we draw our own boundaries while also respecting others'? How do we decide on the collective rules of conduct for our communities? How do we maintain a sense of healthy balance without missing out on all the virtual world has to offer? How can we access the personal freedoms and creative expression of the metaverse, while upholding real world accountability for what we do and say online?

The answers to these questions might not be clear, but we can level ourselves up with the skills and knowledge to actually create the virtual world that we deserve.

The metaverse presents us with opportunities to shape the future of technology and use it for positive change. We can use this new platform to amplify our voices and advocate for issues we care about, whether it's social justice, environmentalism, or mental health awareness. Virtual spaces also have the potential to provide new ways for young people to connect, build relationships, and create content, which can be especially important for those experiencing isolation or marginalisation in the physical world. Here are some of our tips to help you deal with the risks and truly harness the power of the metaverse.



[INTRODUCTION](#)

[METAVERSE GUIDE](#)

[METAVERSE SAFETY](#)

[PHYSICAL TIPS](#)

[ONLINE TIPS](#)

[HORIZON WORLDS](#)

PHYSICAL SAFETY TIPS

CLEAR YOUR SPACE FOR A SMOOTH VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE

Before diving into virtual space, make sure to clear out any objects or obstacles around you. Tripping or bumping into things can totally break the immersion, so create a safe zone! In augmented reality, it's easy to get distracted by the additional elements layered over the physical world – we'd recommend that you only use AR when you're stationary, not biking, walking, running or driving.

BRIGHTEN THINGS UP

Keep your space well-lit to stay aware of your surroundings and avoid any unexpected crashes or mishaps. It's a good move to avoid using XR technologies in dark or poorly lit areas.

CONSIDER OTHERS

When you're lost in the XR realm, communicate with the people physically around you and set some boundaries. Give them a heads-up when you're going in, so they know to steer clear. And hey, be aware of their movements to prevent causing inconvenience to them or getting in their way. We don't want any VR-induced collisions in the room!



[INTRODUCTION](#)

[METAVERSE GUIDE](#)

[METAVERSE SAFETY](#)

[PHYSICAL TIPS](#)

[ONLINE TIPS](#)

[HORIZON WORLDS](#)

PHYSICAL SAFETY TIPS



LISTEN TO YOUR BODY & TAKE REGULAR BREAKS

VR experiences can sometimes cause motion sickness, a bit like how you might feel in a moving vehicle. This is because the headset alters your perception by completely shutting out the physical world. As you get used to the sensory experience, your body will adapt but there's no need to push it on your first go. If you start feeling uncomfortable, dizzy or anxious, take a break and give yourself time to rest. It's also important to be mindful of eye strain and fatigue.



Remember to blink (sounds weird, but seriously!), look away from the screen, and take regular breaks to prevent discomfort. To maintain a healthy balance between the virtual and physical world, we recommend setting a timer to take regular breaks and stay hydrated.

MAKE SURE YOUR VR GEAR IS SECURELY SET UP

When using VR, make sure your equipment is securely mounted and properly adjusted. Double-check that tracking sensors or base stations won't fall or get knocked over during use. No one wants their headset slipping off mid-action – these disruptions can really mess with your senses. Get everything in place first for a seamless experience.

[INTRODUCTION](#)[METAVERSE GUIDE](#)[METAVERSE SAFETY](#)[PHYSICAL TIPS](#)[ONLINE TIPS](#)[HORIZON WORLDS](#)

ONLINE SAFETY TIPS

KEEP YOUR ACCOUNTS LOCKED AND LOADED

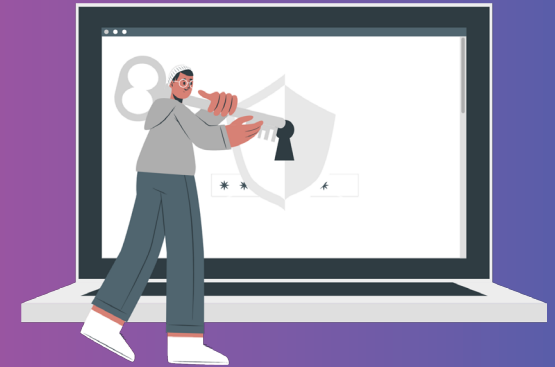
Adjust privacy settings: We recommend regularly reviewing and customising the default privacy settings on your XR platform to make sure you're only giving other users limited access to your info. With such an immersive experience, it's easy to overlook our data sharing, so it's important to proactively take time to understand what info is collected, who can access it, and how it's shared.

Fortify with strong passwords: Use strong and unique passwords for your accounts and associated email addresses. To add an extra layer of security, enable two-factor authentication if available.

ESTABLISH AND HONOUR BOUNDARIES (YOURS AND OTHERS)

Set personal limits: Before immersing yourself in XR, define your boundaries and have an exit plan. It's okay to leave if something or someone makes you uncomfortable or if you're uninterested.

Know the rules: Remember that in some virtual worlds, different communities have different rules. It's a good idea to seek out the guidelines for any community before joining. You can work out if it's a safe space and whether people will have your back.



[INTRODUCTION](#)

[METAVERSE GUIDE](#)

[METAVERSE SAFETY](#)

[PHYSICAL TIPS](#)

[ONLINE TIPS](#)

[HORIZON WORLDS](#)

ONLINE SAFETY TIPS

USE PLATFORM TOOLS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

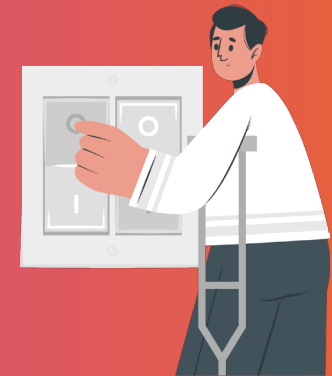
Maximise safety features: XR platforms often offer tools and features to enhance your safety – so let's definitely make the most of them. Whether it's privacy settings, content moderation tools, or reporting mechanisms, you can take advantage of the available resources to maintain the best possible virtual experience.

Don't tolerate abuse: If you encounter harassment or abusive behaviour, you don't have to put up with it just because it's happening in real-time. This includes if it's happening to you or if it's happening to someone else! You can still utilise tools to set boundaries, block, mute, or report.

EMBRACE REGULAR UPDATES

Stay updated for security: XR technologies are evolving rapidly, so it's a good idea to keep your software, applications, and devices up to date. This isn't just to get cool new features, it also ensures that you're accessing the latest security patches and updates.

Developers often release updates to address vulnerabilities and improve security. Regularly checking for and installing these updates will help protect your experiences from potential security risks.



[INTRODUCTION](#)

[METAVERSE GUIDE](#)

[METAVERSE SAFETY](#)

[PHYSICAL TIPS](#)

[ONLINE TIPS](#)

[HORIZON WORLDS](#)

ONLINE SAFETY TIPS

EXERCISE CRITICAL THINKING

Protect your identity: Virtual interactions can be deceptive, so think carefully about who you engage and share information with or accept follow requests from. Be mindful sharing information about you and your experiences. To protect your identity, you might consider using a pseudonym instead of your real name.

Stay alert while exploring: Be on guard for scammers and other shady characters capitalising on the freedoms of virtual spaces. Because VR and AR allow you to present yourself in different ways, they can hide their true intentions, making it tricky to spot them. Avoid clicking on sketchy links, downloading files or accepting invites to join other people unless they come from a trusted source.

Watch your virtual wallet: In the metaverse, digital money may have a real life currency value so it's important to be cautious when engaging in virtual shopping or trading. We'd recommend sussing out the reputation and trustworthiness of platforms and individuals involved to minimise the risk of scams or fraud.



[INTRODUCTION](#)

[METAVERSE GUIDE](#)

[METAVERSE SAFETY](#)

[PHYSICAL TIPS](#)

[ONLINE TIPS](#)

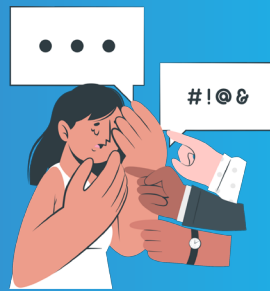
[HORIZON WORLDS](#)

HORIZON WORLDS SAFETY TOOLS

Meta's platform, 'Horizon Worlds,' is a free virtual reality social experience where users can explore, create, and socialise in a growing collection of user-generated virtual worlds using VR headsets. Like a range of other VR platforms, Horizon Worlds comes with built-in safety tools that you can use to stay in control while exploring the virtual world. These tools are designed to keep you and others safe, so let's unpack how to use them.



SAFE ZONE



VOICE MODE



BLOCK



MUTE



PERSONAL BOUNDARY



POLL TO REMOVE



REPORT



MODERATION

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[METAVERSE GUIDE](#)

[METAVERSE SAFETY](#)

[PHYSICAL TIPS](#)

[ONLINE TIPS](#)

[HORIZON WORLDS](#)

HORIZON WORLDS SAFETY TOOLS

SAFE ZONE

The 'Safe Zone' tool is a simple way to keep yourself safe in Horizon Worlds. If someone is harassing you or you're feeling uncomfortable, a safe zone allows you to hit pause on what you can see happening around you on screen without having to leave the world.

Sometimes it helps to take a breather! From here, you can block, mute, report, or continue with the action.

PERSONAL BOUNDARY

'Personal Boundary' is a default setting that stops other avatars from violating your personal space, by setting a boundary of 1.2 metres around you. If someone tries to touch, poke or hit your avatar, their hand will fade away, which is helpful if somebody is getting too close, annoying you or creeping you out.

There are three settings – on for non-friends, on for everyone, or off for everyone. This setting is automatically on for people who aren't your friends, but it's probably a good idea to keep the setting on for everyone.



[INTRODUCTION](#)

[METAVERSE GUIDE](#)

[METAVERSE SAFETY](#)

[PHYSICAL TIPS](#)

[ONLINE TIPS](#)

[HORIZON WORLDS](#)

HORIZON WORLDS SAFETY TOOLS

VOICE MODE

In Horizon Worlds, the 'Voice Mode' setting changes how you hear other users. By default, you can hear all nearby users at the same volume, but sometimes this can be overwhelming or you might hear things that you don't want to hear. By activating voice mode, you can switch to garbled voices, which makes the voices of users who aren't your friends sound unintelligible.

For teens, the default setting is garbled voices, but we recommend keeping this setting on if you're looking for a useful way to take control of your surroundings.



POLL TO REMOVE

The 'Poll to Remove' tool is a feature that allows anyone in a community to anonymously request other users to vote on whether to remove someone whose behaviour is out of line. It's a tool that Horizon Worlds provides to help people to peer-moderate the behaviour of users in their own community.

If the majority of people vote to remove someone, that person will be kicked out of the session.



[INTRODUCTION](#)

[METAVERSE GUIDE](#)

[METAVERSE SAFETY](#)

[PHYSICAL TIPS](#)

[ONLINE TIPS](#)

[HORIZON WORLDS](#)

HORIZON WORLDS SAFETY TOOLS

BLOCK

Just like traditional social media, the 'Block' tool allows you to anonymously block a user so you can't see or hear that person and they can't see or hear you. It doesn't remove them from the world on the spot, but afterwards you won't be matched in the same session as somebody you've blocked.



REPORT

As the name suggests, the 'Report' tool helps you to anonymously report others who may have violated Horizon Worlds' code of conduct.

This is similar to social media reporting, but reporting in Horizon Worlds triggers your device to automatically capture a rolling video of the last two minutes of your virtual experience. This is pretty cool, because bad behaviour in VR can often happen in real-time and it's important to have evidence on hand. The recording will be stored to your device – you can also attach it to your report where it will be reviewed by the Meta team to determine whether it breaches Community Standards.

[INTRODUCTION](#)[METAVERSE GUIDE](#)[METAVERSE SAFETY](#)[PHYSICAL TIPS](#)[ONLINE TIPS](#)[HORIZON WORLDS](#)

HORIZON WORLDS SAFETY TOOLS

MUTE

'Mute' is a tool that allows you to mute other people if they are too loud or saying things you don't want to hear. You can also mute your own microphone. To mute someone, select the shield icon on your wristwatch and choose the user's nameplate.



MODERATION

Finally, 'Human Moderation' is one of the safety features available in Horizon Worlds, involving real people who actively monitor and enforce the rules to maintain a safe and positive environment for users. There are two types of moderators you may come across: Community Guides and Live Moderators.

First, there's Community Guides – these people are ambassadors employed by Meta and their job is to welcome users and help them get to know public worlds. They encourage positive behaviour but can also swoop in to warn, report, or remove users who are causing problems.

There's also Live Moderators – these people work behind the scenes to moderate in real-time while staying invisible to users. They can remove and report users who break the rules and will be alerted to bad behaviour when it's being blocked and reported.

[INTRODUCTION](#)[METAVERSE GUIDE](#)[METAVERSE SAFETY](#)[PHYSICAL TIPS](#)[ONLINE TIPS](#)[HORIZON WORLDS](#)

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We acknowledge and give our sincere thanks to Meta for supporting this project, as well as their broader backing of PROJECT ROCKIT's work as we deliver significant, meaningful, and measurable support for young people to lead thriving digital lives.

This PROJECT ROCKIT guide, authored by Lucy Thomas OAM (CEO) and Emily Unity (Metaverse Project Manager), has been enriched by the invaluable input and 'youth-review' of our team members, including Carla Russo, Lachy Scott, Jayde Petrie, and the wider cohort of our Metaverse Youth Consultants who have shaped its development. We are so grateful, thank you.

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[INTRODUCTION](#)

[METAVERSE GUIDE](#)

[METAVERSE SAFETY](#)

[PHYSICAL TIPS](#)

[ONLINE TIPS](#)

[HORIZON WORLDS](#)