



Is IMVU Appropriate for Your Kids?

The website is called IMVU, a realistic Sims-like game and social networking virtual world purported to be for kids ages 13 and up.

IMVU players select an avatar and buy clothing and items to personalize its world. The avatars have adult bodies and not 13-year-old ones! Aside from customizing your avatar, the real focus of IMVU is interacting with other players. Users can chat with someone they know or click the “chat now” button to randomly connect with other players.

Kids can block an offensive chat buddy, but there is no chat filter to prevent them from being exposed to profanity or sexually explicit conversation, or keep them from giving out personally identifying information. If a player wants to get to know his chat partner better, he can visit their IMVU homepage which is unmonitored for age-inappropriate content.

As IMVU players chat, they can also make their avatars interact. Among more innocent activities, avatars can kiss, cuddle, and make out with each other. Interaction can be more explicit too.

If 13 sounds a little young to be engaging in this kind of virtual world, you’re not alone. Common Sense Media, a non-profit media rating site for parents, gives IMVU an “iffy for ages 15-18” rating. (“Iffy” means “somewhat edgy for the age.”) For me, what’s most disturbing about the site is the strong sexual undercurrent of the whole thing.

The bottom line: IMVU may be advertised as just another fun place for teens to interact and have fun, but it’s loaded with sexual innuendo that may be inappropriate for many children who are technically old enough to get an account. Always be intimately familiar with your child’s online gaming and social networking habits. If you aren’t comfortable, talk about it. Some kids may not be mature enough for the type of content sites like IMVU are offering.

-Article by Jenny Evans@Copyright © 2013-14 uKnow, Inc <http://uknow.co/1Opkzzk> via @uKnowKids