

# Facebook owner wants preteens to step into virtual reality with its Quest headset

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Oculus VR headsets sit on display at CES International on Jan. 8, 2019, in Las Vegas. The corporate parent of Facebook and Instagram plans to open a digital gateway for kids as young as 10 years old to enter virtual reality through the Meta Quest headset, according to a blog post Friday, June 16, 2023, despite rising concerns about children spending too much time on social media. Credit: AP Photo/John Locher, File

The corporate parent of Facebook and Instagram plans to open a digital gateway for kids as young as 10 years old to enter virtual reality through the Meta Quest headset, despite rising concerns about children spending too much time on social media.

Meta Platforms, which oversees a social media empire created by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, disclosed it will lower the minimum age for a Quest account [from 13 years old to 10 years old in a Friday blog post](#). The Menlo Park, California, company framed the change coming later this year as a family-friendly way for more people to explore artificial realms that Zuckerberg touts as the "metaverse."

The move to lure preteens into a [virtual world](#) filled with digital avatars and other technological fabrications comes just weeks after [U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy called upon tech companies and lawmakers](#) to take steps to protect children from the potentially harmful mental and emotional effects of too much exposure to social media.

Both Facebook and Instagram for years have been under fire for using tactics that get kids hooked on [social media](#) at a young age, undercutting their real-life relationships with friends and families while exposing them to the risk of online bullying and abuse by sexual predators.

In its blog post, Meta said that parents will retain control over their children's accounts for the Quest 2 and Quest 3 headsets and promised that preteen access will be limited to "age-appropriate" apps deploying [virtual reality](#), or VR. Preteens won't be able to have a Quest account without explicit approval from their parents and all apps used on the platform will require [parental consent](#), too, according to the company, which is recommending the younger age group be limited to a two-hour daily time limit on the [headset](#).

Other safeguards will include setting all preteen accounts to a private

setting by default and a pledge not to show them any ads that generate most of Meta's revenue.

"We're building this with our [Responsible Innovation Principles](#) and our commitment to building safe, positive experiences for [young people](#) at the forefront," Meta wrote in the blog post.

The company also is [providing parents with extensive guidance](#) when assessing whether they should allow a 10- to -12-year-old to use a [virtual reality headset](#). One section of the guide cites "a growing body of research examining the positive effects of VR in medical/clinical contexts, including interventions to support the development of social competence skills, to distract from painful or anxiety-inducing [medical procedures](#), and to support specific skill development in specialized populations," such as children with cerebral palsy.

By expanding the potential audience for the Quest, Zuckerberg appears to be taking another significant step toward his goal of sculpting the metaverse into a sphere that eventually will be as popular as Facebook and Instagram have become since he started the company in a college dorm room nearly 20 years ago.

The metaverse so far has mostly been a digital ghost town, even though millions of Quest headsets have been sold. The Meta division that oversees the Quest headset and metaverse lost \$13.7 billion last year while bringing in \$2.2 billion in revenue.

What's more, Meta is facing formidable new competition from Apple, which last week [unveiled a headset called Vision Pro](#) that's capable of thrusting users into virtual settings, too. The high-end headset, priced at \$3,500, [received enthusiastic responses in carefully staged demos](#), but it won't be in stores until some time early next year.

Meta already has announced the next Quest headset will cost \$500 as a way to get more people to buy it before the Vision Pro is released and now is taking steps to get preteens on board.

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