



YSGOL GYMRAEG PARC Y TYWYN

'Nid da lle gellir gwelw'

PWYSIG: GEMAU CONSOLE AC AR-LEIN

16/05/2022

Annwyl Riant/Gofalwyr,

Rwy'n ysgrifennu i rannu rhywfaint o wybodaeth am gyfrifiadur / consol / gemau fideo. Rydym wedi cael cwpl o ddigwyddiadau lle mae disgyblion wedi siarad am chwarae gemau nad ydynt yn briodol i'w hoedran.

Fel mater o E-Ddiogelwch, mae'r ysgol yn cynghori rhieni/gofalwyr i ystyried effaith emosiynol ac ymddygiadol posibl y mathau hyn o gemau. Rydym yn aml yn gweld plant yn 'chwarae' ac yn actio'r 'gemau' hyn ar fuarth yr ysgol. Hefyd, os oes gan y gêm swyddogaeth aml-chwaraewr ar-lein efallai y bydd eich plentyn yn dod i gysylltiad ag iaith amhriodol gan chwaraewyr eraill.

Mae llawer o blant yn dweud eu bod yn gwylio eu brawd neu chwaer hyn yn chwarae'r gemau hyn, neu'n 'eu chwarae yn nhŷ eu cefnder', felly mae'n bwysig bod yn ymwybodol o'r hyn y mae eich plant yn dod i gysylltiad ag ef.

Efallai na fydd rhai rhieni yn gwybod beth yw sgôr gêm – mae wedi'i argraffu ar y clawr blaen neu'r clawr cefn. Mae'n bosibl na fydd clawr wedi'i gynnwys mewn gêm sydd wedi'i chopio.

Isod mae rhai disgrifiadau cyffredinol o pam mae gêm yn cael ei graddio o oedran penodol. Rwy'n siŵr y byddwch yn cytuno bod rhywfaint o'r cynnwys posibl yn gwbl anaddas i blant yn yr ysgol gynradd.



Ni fydd gan gemau PEGI 3 ddisgrifiydd trais ond gallant gynnwys trais slapstic "Tom a Jerry" os nad yw'n cael ei ystyried yn peri pryder.



Gall gemau PEGI 7 sydd wedi'u fflagio â disgrifiydd trais gynnwys "trais nad yw'n realistig tuag at gymeriadau ffantasi" neu "drais ymhlwg".



Bydd gan PEGI 12 y disgrifiydd trais i gyfeirio "trais tuag at gymeriadau dynol tebyg" ond rhaid i hyn fod yn afrealistig fel nad yw cyrff yn aros yn y gem pan gânt eu lladd. Gall hyn hefyd gynnwys chwaraeon treisgar fel bocsio ar yr amod nad oes gwaed.



Mae gemau PEGI 16 yn cael eu fflagio am "drais tuag at gymeriadau dynol" sy'n ymateb i gael eu saethu fel y byddent mewn bywyd go iawn. Bydd hyn yn aml yn cynnwys gwaed a bydd cyrff yn aros unwaith y byddant wedi marw. Cynnwys rhywiol fel rhyw efelychiedig.



Mae gemau PEGI 18 yn cael eu fflagio am gynnwys trais tuag at fodau dynol a allai eich gwneud chi'n "wince" neu corddi'ch stumog. Mae hyn yn cynnwys darluniau bras o bennau, breichiau, a choesau'n cael eu tynnu trwy gadwyn - llifio neu ddryll a lladd sifiliaid ar raddfa fawr. Mae hefyd yn cynnwys trais rhywiol fel treisio.

Mae'r gemau a nodir yma ymhlith y rhai mwyaf poblogaidd y clywn amdanynt yn yr ysgol—nid yw'r un ohonynt yn briodol ar gyfer plant oed cynradd. Rwyf wedi atodi gwybodaeth am gemau fel canllaw 'Beth sydd angen i rieni ei wybod' Mae'r canllawiau hyn hefyd ar gael ar ein gwefan.

<https://parc-y-tywyn-school.secure-primariesite.net/e-ddiogelwch-e-safety/>

Cysylltwch â'r ysgol os oes gennych unrhyw gwestiynau neu bryderon am hyn. Diolch am eich cefnogaeth barhaus.

HS Roberts

Miss H Roberts (Dirprwy Bennaeth)



What parents need to know about AGE RATINGS



If you have children, it is understandable to have concerns about the films and TV shows they watch, as well as the games they play. In this guide, we take a look at the two official ways you can assess if a particular title is suitable for your child. Both the BBFC and PEGI have search facilities on their websites that can be used to look up individual titles so you can check their ratings.



RATINGS FOR FILMS, TV & MUSIC VIDEOS

Since 1912, the BBFC (British Board of Film Classification) has informed UK residents of the age suitability of films, TV and music videos - providing parents with the information needed to assess whether or not it is appropriate for their child's age. This applies to cinema releases, DVDs and streaming video services such as Netflix.

WHAT ARE THE BBFC RATINGS?

BBFC ratings are broken down into seven age categories:



Universal, suitable for all ages



Parental Guidance required



Suitable for people aged 12 and over



Suitable for people aged 12 and over; anyone younger must be accompanied by an adult



Suitable for people aged 15 and over



Suitable for people aged 18 and over



Adult content only available in specially licenced cinemas and specialist retailers

WHAT ELSE CAN BBFC REVEAL?

Accompanied with the age suitability rating, BBFC also provide an additional warning regarding the content and what to expect, such as swearing, sexual content, violence and anything you may consider to be inappropriate for your child. In addition to this, the content is also rated in three levels: frequent, mild or strong.

LIMITATIONS OF BBFC RATINGS

It's important to note that there is no obligation on streaming video services to use or display BBFC ratings. Due to this, we advise that you check the rating online before your child streams the content. It may also be a good idea to watch the content first yourself or discuss it with other parents to help you decide whether or not it is suitable for your child.

RATINGS FOR GAMES

PEGI (Pan European Game Information) is a content rating system that ensures all video games are labelled with a minimum age recommendation. These age recommendations are based on the types of content featured within a game. With each game, PEGI also provide a content descriptor that indicates the potential issues and concerns, including sex, violence, bad language and drugs.

WHAT ARE THE PEGI RATINGS?

PEGI ratings are split into age restriction and content descriptors. Additional 'content descriptors' help parents and children to understand the type of content featured within a particular game, including sex, fear, bad language, discrimination, gambling, drugs, violence, and in-game purchases. In combination, the two different ratings can provide a good level of information to help make informed decisions regarding the suitability for your child.

PEGI age ratings are broken down into five categories:



www.pegi.info



www.pegi.info



www.pegi.info



www.pegi.info



www.pegi.info

PEGI content descriptors are broken down into eight categories:



LIMITATIONS OF PEGI RATINGS

It's possible for young people to buy games online without a required proof of age, opening them up to age-inappropriate content without you knowing. We advise that you regularly monitor your child's gaming activities and maintain a honest and healthy dialogue with them about the online world.

PARENTAL CONTROLS

It is a good idea to put in place parental controls for all online accounts which your child may use to purchase or download online games e.g. The App Store, Google Play Store, PlayStation Store and Microsoft Xbox Store etc.

Source: www.bbfc.co.uk

Source: www.pegi.info



**National
Online
Safety**

A whole school community approach to online safety
www.nationalonlinesafety.com

Email us at hello@nationalonlinesafety.com or call us on 0800 368 8061

EA SPORTS FIFA20

You don't need to be the biggest football fan in the world to have heard of FIFA (Federation Internationale de Football Association) - the governing body for football. And, the video game series bearing the organisation's name is one of the most successful ever. The lure of this football series is that official licensing gives your child the opportunity to play games in the role of their favourite players. They can either work through a story mode version of the game or play online in competitions against other players. The game, released annually by Electronic Arts under the EA Sports label, is available for a range of consoles, and there are also mobile versions available for smartphones and tablets.

AGE RESTRICTION
3+
If under 18, supervision of a parent or legal guardian required.



What parents need to know about FIFA 20



CONSTANT SERIES REFRESHES

The big selling point for the FIFA range of games is that it includes current players; a feature which no other football video game offers. However, this means that a new version of the game is released every year, with updated teams, players and stadia, plus new gameplay features and tweaks. And, with every annual update of the game, there is an expectation that it will be far better than the previous one, so the pressure to upgrade and buy the new version is likely to be immense!

FAKE EMAILS AND SCAMS

Your child may receive an email or see a message on social media or in forums which appear to be a genuine FIFA promotion. While the link may seem like a FIFA login page, it's a phishing scam to capture a login name and password. Scammers may use names that sound legitimate, like 'EA Admin' or 'FIFA Developer'.



JUST ONE MORE GAME

Your child could be playing FIFA games on their computer or console for very long periods of time. That's not to say that computer-based matches are a full 90 minutes long, but a series of 20-minute matches can very quickly fill up a day! The World Health Organisation has classified 'gaming disorder' as a mental health problem - this is when children have trouble controlling their gaming behaviour and let it reign over their lives and daily routine.

IN GAME CHAT

While the FIFA video game is suitable for children of all ages as it does not include any inappropriate content, there is the issue of in-game chat. Your child can play with other people online and chat with them using headsets. As this is largely unregulated, it could mean that your child is exposed to language or conversations that you deem unsuitable.



BUYING ADD-ONS

In-game purchases are to be expected in any modern game and FIFA is no different. FIFA Ultimate Team (commonly called FUT) is a mode in FIFA that lets gamers build teams of players from any league, playing both offline and online to win coins. These can be used to buy better players or packs containing random players. While some purchases can be made using in-game currency, other purchases involve spending with real world money, which could become expensive. There have been reports of parents receiving large credit card bills resulting from in-game purchase made by their children.

FIFA GAMEPLAY

The FIFA series has been criticised for the competitive nature of gameplay leading to aggression in some players. Add to this the chance to converse with other players via in-game chat, and the potential for anger levels is likely to rise... especially if you're losing heavily!



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Top Tips For Parents

ABOUT THE SERIES REFRESHES

As a parent, the implications of this really depends on the age of your child and your relationship with them. It may be that playing and sharing games is part of your family life and so this isn't a problem, but just be mindful that being involved with the FIFA franchise is unlikely to be a one-off event - it's the start of a gaming journey that could last for many, many years and involve numerous (potentially expensive) upgrades.



STEER CLEAR OF SCAMMERS

You should teach your children to stay clear of scams. Explain to them that they must be wary of any link which asks them to either verify their username and password or provide other sensitive information; game developers will never send a message asking for login information. Console messages, emails and websites, or social media posts promoting contests for in-game content, such as packs, players, or coins requiring login information are fake.



MONITOR ACTIVITY

The parental controls on consoles can be used to restrict the amount of time spent playing. Physically monitoring how much time your child is spending in FIFA is recommended - just as you might monitor how much time they spend watching TV. Keep an eye out for warning signs, such as a lack of interest in other activities, tiredness or fatigue, neglect of personal hygiene, changes in character or anger issues where your child is told to stop playing a game.



HAVE THEM REPORT ABUSE

It's unlikely that you'll be able to convince your child to play FIFA without making use of the chat facility - it's something that adds to the experience. However, you should ensure your child is aware of how to silence any abusive players and how to report anyone who becomes problematic.



RESTRICT PURCHASES

To spend real money in FIFA, a credit or debit card must be linked to a gaming account, so ensure that your card is not being used for this! There's also support for PayPal payment, so also check who has access to this type of account. Depending on the platform your child is using to play FIFA, there are different parental controls that can be put in place to restrict spending should you allow them to link a card to their account. There is also a payment option called Paysafecard, which allows you to make payments online without the use of a bank account or credit card. As you can top up balances, this makes it easy to control spending.

ENCOURAGE BREAKS

Monitoring in-game chat may be difficult as you're likely to only be able to hear one side of a conversation. However, noticing how your child is reacting may be a reasonable indicator of the general mood. Dealing with both the frustrations of a game as well as troublesome people can serve as useful life lessons, but as a parent, you know your child better than anyone else. If you notice your child is getting too upset or angry, that's the time to intervene and try to encourage them to take a break from the game.

Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGBible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.



SOURCES
<http://press.ea.com/products/p1532/ea-sports-fifa-18>, <https://help.ea.com/en-gb/help/fifa/be-safe-with-fut-coins-and-fifa-points/>,
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/relationships/afterhood/10886939/My-son-spent-hundreds-of-pounds-on-in-app-purchases-without-me-knowing.html>

MINECRAFT

There's a very good chance you've heard of Minecraft. The block building phenomenon is, arguably, the most beloved video game of all time which has managed to maintain its popularity since its first release back in 2011. Nine years later, it still has a huge userbase of 112 million people playing the game every month. Accessible to those 7+, Minecraft can be a gateway into a world of learning and exploration which encourages players to use their imagination to build three-dimensional worlds with virtual building blocks. While Minecraft is considered relatively safe generally speaking, there are some safety precautions parents may want to consider before allowing their children loose on the game.

AGE RESTRICTION
7+
If under 18, supervision of a parent or legal guardian required.



What parents need to know about MINECRAFT



OPEN TO HACKING

Hackers can be a real problem in any online game, including Minecraft. Some individuals can access other people's games to disrupt their play time, or even worse, access private details about players such as their names, email addresses, dates of birth and so on. It would be incredibly rare and unfortunate to encounter a player like this, but it does happen and must be taken as a serious risk.



CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

Most players aged 7 and over will be able to play the game comfortably and, whilst creating an account does ask you to input your date of birth for confirmation, there's no way to check if the information is correct nor to check someone's real identity. This could mean that children younger than 7 could access the game. However, what is more concerning is that adults pretending to be children could theoretically be using false information to access the game and be interacting with your child.

'SCARY' CHARACTERS FOR YOUNGER GAMERS

For the most part, Minecraft is not a scary game. Despite this, there are certain characters in the game that younger children in particular may find frightening. Creepers, zombies and various other 'baddies' can be commonplace in some parts of the game and young minds may find it difficult to disassociate them from real life once they switch off the game.

RISK OF GRIEFING

Griefing is when someone purposely upsets another player during the game. This can be done by ruining somebody's creation or generally doing something to spoil someone's gameplay and can essentially amount to a form of cyberbullying. In open servers, or even private ones among friends, it can be difficult to keep track of who's saying what, and an innocent comment in one person's eyes could be seen as bullying by somebody else. Stealing supplies, destroying things that take hours to build and harassing innocent players can all be commonplace if care isn't taken.

ADDICTIVE NATURE

Minecraft can be an incredibly exciting game but it can also be very addictive. Too much time on the game could impact on your child's behaviour, causing them to become irritable or angry when being asked to stop playing. This might suggest it might be time to enforce some time away from the game. Addictive behaviour can be compounded at a young age and encouraging gaming in moderation is always recommended.

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Safety Tips For Parents



BLOCK STRANGERS AND UNWANTED CONTACT

Despite the fact that private messages can no longer be sent in the game, strangers may still attempt to interact with your child. From the pause menu, players can block chat and friend requests from others in the game. This causes any profanities, email addresses and phone numbers to become automatically blocked, meaning it's harder for people you don't know to potentially contact your child.



LEARN FROM YOUTUBERS / TWITCH STREAMERS

There are a lot of Minecraft focused YouTubers and Twitch Streamers that offer a huge variety of fun, engaging content. Many of them focus on making videos specifically for younger audiences, which don't include bad language or anything scary. If you're unsure about the game, check out some of the biggest streamers and more importantly, ask who your children like. This will help you to understand what the game is about and also make sure that your children are watching age-appropriate content online.



PLAY IN CREATIVE OR PEACEFUL MODES

Playing the game on Creative or Peaceful mode ensures that the experience is strictly safe. Peaceful mode allows children to explore with friends without having the survival element of normal Minecraft, while Creative mode allows imaginations to run wild with unlimited resources, encouraging creation of vast, personalised worlds. There really are no limits as to what can be accomplished and getting involved yourself can make it a great way to bond with your child and give you a long-term project to complete with them.



MONITOR GAME TIME

Being able to play on a wide variety of platforms can be beneficial however it can also make it more difficult to put the game down. Play time should be monitored and it's always a good idea to talk to your child if you feel they are spending too much time on the game or showing signs of addictive behaviour.



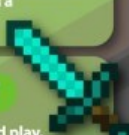
CREATE A PRIVATE SERVER

The best way to avoid unwanted strangers or griefers in a server is to simply create your own. Private servers do exactly what they say on the tin by offering a safe, secure place for children to play and create with their friends, free from outside interference. They (and you) control who is allowed in the server and what kind of things they can do in it, making it the closest thing Minecraft offers to parental controls.



LEARN TO PLAY YOURSELF

Minecraft is an incredibly easy game to pick up and play. Furthermore, it doesn't require an expensive console or computer, with versions available for smartphones and tablets. Learning to play yourself and playing alongside your child is the best way to understand the game and will help to put your mind at ease in respect of what your child is viewing and who they may be interacting with.



CREATE SERVER WHITELISTS

Username you know to be safe, like your child's friends or relatives, can have their accounts whitelisted as safe. Essentially, this means that server moderators can create a community made up of people they know to be friendly and children will only be playing alongside people both they and you know, reducing any risk of contact with strangers or experiencing griefing.



Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.





The Switch is a hybrid console released by popular video game company Nintendo in 2017. It's classed as a hybrid because it's designed to be played both at home on a television, like traditional consoles (think a PlayStation or an Xbox) or out and about like a portable console, such as a GameBoy. It uses two detachable and wireless 'Joy-Con' controllers on either side of the console's screen, which can be used by one or two players. The Switch can be played on the internet with the purchase of Nintendo Switch Online, in the living room together or on the go during long journeys, but bear in mind it needs to be charged just like anything else!



What parents need to know about NINTENDO SWITCH



NINTENDO SWITCH ONLINE

Nintendo Switch Online is a paid service that allows the console to be played (you guessed it) online, by linking to other Switch consoles around the world. It can be purchased through the Nintendo eShop for a single account on the device, or with a family membership plan which covers 2 accounts. The purchase options come in three tiers; 1 month, 3 months and 12 months but be aware these auto-renew unless you specify otherwise.

ONLINE DANGERS

While online, your children will be able to play with and chat to people on compatible games, which will mostly be good-natured fun, but could potentially expose them to vulgar language, indecent images or worse. There are options to limit this though, which are detailed below. It's worth remembering that many games can be played offline, so while it's not essential to get Nintendo Switch Online, it is certainly something to consider.

NINTENDO eSHOP

The Nintendo eShop is where games can be purchased over the internet and downloaded directly onto the device. If you choose to enter your bank details (or PayPal account) onto the Switch, you can save them for easy access later on. Do note however that these can be viewed by anybody with access to the console, unless you specify otherwise. A child might accidentally purchase a game or item from the shop if these details are left improperly protected, which could leave you with a nasty surprise.

NINTENDO'S VIDEO GAME SELECTION

Nintendo as a company offers some of the most entertaining and safe video games on the market. Games featuring characters like Super Mario, Donkey Kong and Yoshi are always a safe bet for a child-friendly experience. It's always prudent to check each game before you buy it (especially if the game hasn't been made by Nintendo) but as a rule of thumb, anything official containing well-known names like these will be great for your children, giving you peace of mind while they enjoy them.

PORTABLE GAMING

Being able to take the Switch anywhere is a huge bonus when travelling. What's more is that almost every game can be enjoyed without the need to 'dock' the console with a television. Battery life on the Switch varies depending on what it's being used for but typically it will last around 3 or 4 hours before needing to be recharged. When the time comes, any USB-C charger will be able to do the job, but it's best and quickest to return it to the dock, which requires a normal plug socket.



Top Tips For Parents



PARENTAL CONTROLS

Nintendo released a free downloadable app that can be used in tandem with the Switch called Nintendo Switch Parental Controls. Once you've got the app on your mobile device, it's a simple process to pair your two devices, giving you a suite of options to help make sure your child is having fun in a safe and structured environment curated by you.

ONLINE RESTRICTIONS

Another major inclusion in the app is the ability to block your child from seeing anything to do with age restricted games. There's also an extremely helpful feature that restricts access to games that have free communication features between strangers on the internet. This includes things like private messages and unsolicited images. Should you be concerned that strangers might be using the games to talk to your child, a simple press of a button will disallow any access they might have.

PLAY WITH YOUR CHILD

One of the wonderful things about the Switch is that there are an abundance of great games you and your child can enjoy together, and even with the whole family. Nintendo has a long history of making and supporting fun, family friendly games like Mario Kart and Mario Party, both of which can be played with two or more players using the Joy-Con controllers.

NINTENDO ESHOP SETTINGS

In the Nintendo eShop you can set up a password to help stop your child or somebody else from accessing any sensitive information, such as bank account details. The options here include entering a password to access the eShop to begin with, when any saved credit card information access is attempted, or when PayPal is accessed. Choosing which areas are password protected helps ensure you're deciding what level of access is given on the device. For example, if you're happy to have your child browse the shop for games they might want, you can allow access to the eShop but introduce the password before a purchase is made ensuring no mishaps occur.

LIMITING PLAY TIME

By linking the app with the Nintendo Switch, you can set time limits and reminders when you think enough time has been spent playing. It also lets you see if a game is still being played and gives you the option to automatically put the console into sleep mode if the message is ignored. This should only be used as a last resort though as it could cause some friction between you!

SET PLAY TIMES

Another handy feature is the ability to set different playtimes for days of the week, allowing you to tailor play time around you and your child's schedules. This is great for setting boundaries and encouraging gaming as part of a healthy routine. It will also help your child organise with their friends when they can all be online.

SEE PLAY HISTORY

The Nintendo Switch Parental Controls app can also send a report telling you how much time your child spends playing each game. This is a great way to spot their favourite or most played games and might be a nice way for you to find out more about a title before talking to your child about it. It could also help identify any possible issues around playtime before they arise.



Meet our expert

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ROBLOX
Powering Imagination

According to the Roblox website, 'Roblox is the world's largest interactive social platform for play'. For those of you not so familiar with the game, it is a multi-player online gaming platform which allows children to play and create a variety of games in a 3D world. Roblox is free to play and available on all modern smartphones, tablets, desktops, Xbox One, Oculus Rift, and HTC Vive.



What parents need to know about **ROBLOX**



ROBLOX STUDIO

The Roblox Studio allows users to create their own games and 'worlds' for others to play on the platform. As the games are user generated, it gives users the freedom to potentially include things you do not want your child to be exposed to, for example, weapons, violence and even pornographic content. There are no age restrictions on the games created in the Roblox Studio and Roblox can only rely on people reporting negative/violent content in order to remove the games from the platform.



CHATTING AND FRIEND REQUESTS

Whilst the games in Roblox are aimed at 8 to 18-year-olds, there are currently no age restrictions for signing up. This means both adults and young people can play and communicate with each other and send friend requests through the platform. Once a friend request is accepted, this means that they can communicate with each other outside of gameplay.



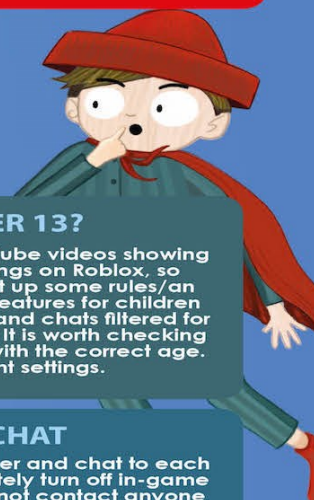
ROBUX ONLINE PAYMENTS

When a user creates a game, they earn something called 'Robux', which works as a currency within the platform, allowing the purchase of upgrades and memberships. If the created game is of good quality and attracts multiple players and in-game adverts, children have the potential to earn a lot of 'Robux'. Once a user has earned a certain amount of Robux, they can convert this to real cash and withdraw it to a PayPal account. To withdraw money, users need to be over 13, have a PayPal account and have paid for the Roblox premium subscription.



National Online Safety

Top Tips for Parents



UNLIST SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

Make sure your child's social media accounts are not listed in the settings/account info. If they are, advise them to make them private or remove them in their account. This will ensure nobody can find and contact them on their social media platforms outside of Roblox.

CHECK SHARED INFORMATION

In the account settings, check that your child is not giving away any personal information in their bio/profile. For example, their full name, phone number or snapchat name. If you see that they have, explain why this is potentially dangerous and remove immediately.

2 STEP VERIFICATION

Roblox has a great 2-step verification security feature which we recommend you enable to add an extra layer of security to your child's account.

HAVE A CHAT ABOUT 'GRIEFING'

Griefing is when someone purposely upsets another player in a game. This can be done by setting traps, damaging or stealing something from another player, intentionally killing them and just generally doing something in the game to spoil gameplay for them. Essentially, 'Griefing' is a form of cyberbullying and can be extremely frustrating and upsetting for players.

IS YOUR CHILD UNDER 13?

Unfortunately, there are hundreds of YouTube videos showing children how to change their age settings on Roblox, so firstly, you should talk to your child to set up some rules/an agreement. There are additional safety features for children under 13, for example having their posts and chats filtered for inappropriate content and behaviour, so it is worth checking that your child has set up their account with the correct age. You can find this in their account settings.

DISABLE IN-GAME CHAT

Roblox is great for children to play together and chat to each other. However, if you wanted to completely turn off in-game chat for your child (meaning they could not contact anyone including their friends) you can do so by following these steps: When logged in, go to the Account Settings page by clicking on the gear icon at the top right corner of the page, then click Settings. Next, click on the Privacy tab and under 'Who can chat with me in game?' select 'No one' and this will disable in-game chat.

RESTRICT PAYMENT METHODS

Roblox is a free to play game, but there are still options to make additional in-game purchases. If you do not want your child to make payments, ensure your card is not associated with their account. If you are happy for your child to make payments in the game, but want to limit spending, we suggest using a games console gift card. These can be purchased in specific amounts, which will allow you to limit how much your child spends and removes the need for a credit/debit card to be used with their account.



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This is not a definitive guide. Please always check with the app's support information to see if your security and privacy concerns are addressed.

www.nationalonlinesafety.com

FORTNITE

Fortnite: Chapter 2 has finally landed! With a whole host of new in-game features including a brand-new map, more water-based activities, upgraded character skins and a more streamlined arsenal of weapons, this Fortnite is promising to be the best yet. Almost all of the changes are cosmetic which means the concept of the game remains the same, with players still aiming to be the last man standing. Players will no doubt find the game much more enjoyable with so much more to explore. For parents and carers however, it pays to remain vigilant.

AGE RECOMMENDATION
13+



What parents need to know about

FORTNITE

CHAPTER

2

BATTLE ROYALE

Battle Royale games have become very popular over the last couple of years, and most tend to follow a very similar setup. Taking Fortnite as an example, 100 players drop into a map, loot buildings for weapons and armour and attempt to beat all the other players to be crowned victor at the end. If you've ever seen the Hunger Games movies, you'll have an idea of what this entails. Each game can take up to 20 minutes (assuming you last to the end) and can be restarted relatively quickly once 100 free players have been found.

IS FORTNITE ADDICTIVE?

Fortnite is at the forefront of gaming addiction discussions because it is so popular with young people. But whether it actually contributes to gaming addiction is up for debate. WHO (World Health Organisation) have classified gaming as a legitimate addiction, but this is not solely a concern with Fortnite. Signs of addiction can include irritability when not playing, lying about the amount of time played and a preoccupation with thoughts of the next gaming session. Realistically, it must be down to parents and carers to recognise these symptoms and act accordingly if they think they are developing.

FREE TO PLAY... OR IS IT?

While Fortnite is technically free to play (in that you can download and play it without paying) it does come with the caveat that spending money on things like skins and emotes in-game is heavily pushed to players. The currency used in-game is called 'V-Bucks' and can be bought with real money through the game's online store. It's worth remembering that these purchases are absolutely not necessary, are cosmetic only and that V-Bucks can be earned in-game with enough play time.

SEASONAL UPDATES

Every 10 weeks or so Fortnite is updated with a new season. This essentially adds new things like skins and emotes to the game, while also sometimes changing up the game map in interesting ways. These seasons are free to everybody and don't require additional money to play, though battle passes for each season can be bought with V-Bucks. A battle pass will typically allow a player to earn experience faster and gain fun in-game items by completing a host of daily challenges.

CROSSPLAY IS AVAILABLE

One of the wonderful things about Fortnite is that it can be played cross-platform. This means that no matter what platform a person plays on (PC, PlayStation 4, Xbox One etc) they can play with friends who own the game on a different platform. To do this, an Epic Games account must first be created online (which is free) and then linked with your platform account. Doing this removes the age-old boundary of not being able to play together because you don't have the same console and opens up a whole new world of playing online with friends.

IS FORTNITE VIOLENT?

Fortnite has been rated by the ESRB (Entertainment Software Ratings Board) as 'Teen', as it contains cartoonish violence and the weapons and acts depicted in the game are some way removed from their real life inspirations. Characters don't draw blood when shot and instead of dying, they are simply beamed up off the map. Naturally, players younger than the recommended age limit will want to play the game and that should be at the discretion of parents and carers.



Top Tips For Parents

BUYING V-BUCKS

As mentioned, Fortnite does contain in-game purchases and microtransactions in the form of V-Bucks which can be bought with real money. If you do decide to let your young one spend money in the game, be sure to delete your card information afterwards as it can be very easy to purchase more items at the press of a few buttons. It's important to set a limit on any purchases (as mentioned they are absolutely not necessary to play the game) and a suggestion would be capping the spending at around £50 - this is the normal retail price of a game.

GAMING WITH STRANGERS

Fortnite Battle Royale is an online game, and as such, there is a chance that young children could come into contact with strangers who are randomly placed into their groups in a game. It's difficult to predict what another person might say or do in a game, so it's a good idea for friends playing together, to be grouped together. The only real countermeasure to interacting with strangers offered by Fortnite is to turn off all mic communications, which can be done in the game's settings. Using outside chat apps, like Skype or Discord while playing, is a great way to make sure you know who you're talking to and that nobody else is listening in.

LIMIT TIME, BUT BE FLEXIBLE

A game of Fortnite can last up to 20 minutes, so be flexible when it's time to put it away. The approach of 'one more game' as opposed to '10 more minutes' will stop any complaints that a match is still ongoing. Better still, play with your child and take it in turns; that way you're helping control the time played and can keep an eye on what they're experiencing.

TALK TO OTHER PARENTS / CARERS

If you're concerned about play time or spending money in the game, talk to other parents and carers of your child's friends. If you approach as a collective, it will be easier to know when their friends are online and you don't have to worry about who they're playing with. It can also help curb expectations on spending money on battle passes and skins if you stick together.

CAN DEVELOP SOME IMPORTANT SKILLS

It's often overlooked just how good gaming can be for young people. Fortnite encourages team play, quick and complex problem solving and communication; that's not to mention the lightning fast reflexes gamers can develop. While taking breaks to do other activities is of course important, there are benefits to screen time which might not be immediately obvious.

PLAY THE GAME YOURSELF

There's no substitute for sitting down and playing the game yourself to learn all about it. Fortnite is available for free on almost anything you can imagine, even your smartphone, so there's never been a better time to get involved and see what all the fuss is about. You never know, you might even be able to impress your children when you show them your impressive Victory Royale tally!

Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGbible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.



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What Parents Need to Know about SQUID GAME

AGE RESTRICTION
15+
Suitable only for 15 years and over.

With themes of horror and violence, it's important for parents and carers to understand the potential risks posed for young audiences by the viral TV show, Squid Game. The nine-episode Netflix-exclusive TV show is rated 15+ and is about a world where contestants who are deeply in debt play children's games in order to win cash prizes. The losers, however, are violently killed. The show's popularity has meant it has spread across online platforms, and there is a great risk of young people being exposed to unsuitable scenes, meaning parents and carers have to be vigilant when allowing children to use devices.

INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

Some might argue that Squid Game contains content that might not even be suitable for older teens, let alone young children. Characters are brutally tortured and killed through stabbings or getting shot as a result of rules developed and enforced by a masked game master. The show also features sexual content and threats of sexual violence, as well as a strong theme of gambling that runs throughout the whole show.

APPEAL TO YOUNG PEOPLE

Whilst the content is very much adult-themed, some features of the show seem to appeal to young children at face-value. The name "Squid Game" may be interpreted as a programme aimed at children rather than adults. The content itself, such as the bright and childish aesthetics, may also appeal to young children, particularly as there's a focus on playground games to go with it.

SIMILAR CONTENT SUGGESTIONS

When using social media and streaming sites, content is recommended based on what is the user has consumed i.e. what they have watched or searched for. Therefore, there is a greater chance of your child being exposed to similar violent or horror-themed content on social media after watching a show like Squid Game.

VIRAL SPIN-OFFS

As well as Netflix, Squid Game has grown in notoriety and prevalence on other platforms, like TikTok and YouTube, with clips of the show going viral. On YouTube Kids, a number of successful channels have taken advantage of the Squid Game trend, creating content such as "How to Draw Squid Game Characters" videos. Its popularity has also led to the creation of app games that put the player in the role of a contestant who is killed if they lose a game.

SCENE RE-ENACTMENTS

Squid Game's pervasive presence on social media has encouraged many content creators to re-enact scenes from the show, which has led to reports of children wanting to also imitate those scenes displayed on social media at home and in school. Much of this content stems from the "Red Light, Green Light" game from the first episode, where contestants attempt to make it past a giant animatronic girl before she shoots them. episode, where contestants attempt to make it past a giant animatronic girl before she shoots them.

Advice for Parents & Carers

USE PARENTAL CONTROLS

Netflix has easily accessible built-in parental controls that allow you to set up a profile for your child with a specific age rating, block them from watching certain shows and even lock their account so it can't be accessed by anyone else. Netflix also allows you to access your child's viewing history to make sure they're not watching anything inappropriate for their age.

MONITOR ONLINE ACTIVITY

Squid game has become a social media craze and it's possible your child will see some content related to the show on various platforms. Therefore, it's important to be aware of which websites your child has visited on their smartphone, tablet or laptop, and to also keep an eye out for which accounts they are following on social media platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok.

MONITOR BEHAVIOUR

Due to the viral nature of the show, even if your child has not seen Squid Game, it's important to keep an eye on their behaviour. There have been reports from schools of children "playing Squid Game" in the playground and acting aggressively towards the losers as a way to replicate the consequences of losing in the TV show. Viewing content that makes your child feel uncomfortable could also cause them to feel distressed or distracted, so it's important you can easily spot the signs.

CHECK AGE RATINGS

Age ratings on TV shows and films are a way to gauge what is suitable for audiences of different ages. If you are unsure about the content your child is watching, check the age rating to see if the TV show or film is deemed suitable for their age group. If not, try watching the show yourself or talking to other parents who have seen it before to get a better understanding of why it's been rated a certain way.

HAVE OPEN CONVERSATIONS

Making sure your child is comfortable telling you about what they see online can go a long way to ensuring you are kept in the loop about their online use. Showing an interest in what your child is doing online gives you the opportunity to discuss what is and is not appropriate for their age group, and how they might recognise their own feelings towards content they see.

WATCH THE SHOW

If you're trying to figure out whether you should let your child watch Squid Game, it might be a good idea to watch the show yourself first. Doing so will allow you to get a better understanding of the show's content and themes, as well as help you decide if this is something you'd feel comfortable with your child being exposed to.

Meet Our Expert

Carly Page is an experienced and highly respected freelance technology journalist, editor and consultant. Previously the editor of tech tabloid The INQUIRER, Carly now works as the news editor for Computer Shopper and IT Pro and writes for a number of publications including Forbes, TechRadar, Tes, The Metro, uSwitch and WIRED.



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What parents & carers need to know about...

CALL OF DUTY BLACK OPS COLD WAR

PEGI
18

Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War (CoD) is an online first-person shooter. It's available on PC, PlayStation and Xbox. CoD allows players to select from different game modes including campaign, multiplayer and 'Zombies'. Players can customise their character and weapons in the game.

Graphic Violence & Language

A story of covert warfare and ruthless operatives, Black Ops Cold War features extreme violence: players harm and kill enemies in brutal and graphic ways. Several scenes depict intense interrogation and torture. Unsurprisingly, there's a strong horror element in 'Zombies' mode. The language used is unsuitable for under 18s.



In-game Payments

Players can gain an advantage over other users by spending money on new characters and attributes. The currency in the game is known as CoD points. They can't be earned by playing the game – only purchased in the online store. CoD point packs range from £1.79 to £84.99.



Online Multiplayer

Most modes of Black Ops Cold War require an internet connection so that the player can battle against other users online: the game has integration into the existing 'Warzone' battle royale mode. A multiplayer round usually lasts between 10 and 30 minutes. Because of the game's immersive nature, it can be difficult for children to recognise their limits and know when to stop playing.



Chatting to Strangers

During a multiplayer game, if your child's PC or console has a microphone, it's possible for them to talk to any other player around the world. As it's an adult game, the language used in these chats may often be inappropriate for young children. Due to the competitive nature of gaming and the fact that conversations are not moderated, your child could be at risk of cyberbullying.



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Safety Tips for Parents & Carers

Discuss Time Limits

It's not possible to pause a multiplayer game of CoD, so it's a good idea to agree with your child a limit of matches they can play in one session. In 2018, the World Health Organisation recognised 'gaming disorder' as health condition, so it's important to monitor how long your child spends on the game.



Remove Violence & Profanity

At the beginning of the game, players are given the chance to disable the graphic content. You also have the option to do this in the game's settings. You can change the profanity setting in the content filters tab, so that the bad language doesn't appear in the game. In addition, there's an option to change the zombies mode to a more cartoonish rendering, making this mode slightly less frightening.



Disable Communication Features

It's important to talk to your child regularly about who they're interacting with online. If you have serious concerns, you can disable the voice chat function in the game's audio settings and disable the text chat function in the content filters section too.



Monitor & Limit Spending

To avoid your child incurring hefty CoD point costs, it's best not to link their device to your bank account. Alternatively, you could allow limited access by setting up parental controls on their console. To keep a rein on spending, it's a good idea to use a gift voucher or a Paysafe card (if they're using an Xbox or PlayStation).



Block Unsuitable Content and Users

You can prevent your child from viewing any user-generated content by changing the settings via the in-game options menu, so unsuitable content won't show on screen when your child is playing. If your child feels that they've experienced cyberbullying in the game, there is a facility within the game to report offensive behaviour.



Encourage Alternate Activities

Players are given incentives during the game to reward more time spent playing. They can also earn rewards by watching influencers playing the game via Twitch. This presents a risk that your child could want to spend even more time in front of a screen. Make sure you talk to your child regularly about the importance of alternative activities away from their device – such as physical exercise or pursuing a creative interest.



Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for five years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGBible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.



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Call of Duty is undeniably one of the most recognisable video games on the planet. The first game was released for the PC way back in 2003, and the franchise has spawned a whopping 16 titles to date, and featured on almost 20 gaming consoles and devices. Despite being one of the most popular games on the market, CoD has never been a stranger to controversy; themes of war, terrorism and other adult subjects parents and guardians might feel uncomfortable exposing their children to, have always been a part of the series. The latest iteration, Call of Duty: Modern Warfare, is no different, even doubling down on some of these mature themes. So with that in mind, here's a helpful guide to aid you in navigating the world of Call of Duty.



What parents need to know about **CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE**



VIOLENCE AND GRAPHIC CONTENT

Call of Duty has been given an 18+ rating due to "violence against vulnerable and defenceless characters, motiveless killing of innocent characters, graphic violence and use of strong language." Despite the rating, the game is still extremely popular amongst under 18's who could be exposed to violent themes or foul language that parents and carers may not deem suitable or age appropriate for their children.



INCREDIBLY RAW CAMPAIGN

The single player campaign in Call of Duty: Modern Warfare focuses around a war in the fictitious Middle Eastern country of Urzikstan. It features special forces operations, large open battles, chemical weapons and torture. Infinity Ward (who developed the game) have gone on record saying this is the most realistic and grounded game they've ever made, so it stands to reason that the campaign has generated a huge amount of controversy, especially in today's heated political climate. While younger players might not fully grasp what's going on on screen, it's bound to raise some uncomfortable questions if they're left to play it unsupervised.



CHATting TO STRANGERS

By far the biggest pull for players to Call of Duty is the expansive multiplayer. As well as offering up a wide variety of competitive game modes, Modern Warfare also includes some co-op gameplay modes. Ideally, this means players and children can join a group with their friends and play together online. However, players can play against or with anyone in the world and, with no filter, the language used may often be inappropriate for young children. Due to the competitive nature of gaming and the fact conversations are not moderated, your child could also be at risk of cyberbullying.



ADDICTIVE NATURE

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare has promised to be the best yet. The game features a number of new game modes and now includes crossplay for the first time, whereby players can now play each other across any device (i.e. Xbox, Playstation or PC). As always tends to be the case when a new game is released, players spend large amounts of time getting to grips with the new features and the repetitive nature of COD means children can find it difficult to stop playing and realise their limits.



LOOT BOXES SWAPPED FOR BATTLE PASSES

Previous versions of Call of Duty have included 'loot boxes', which have been widely discussed in the news and are considered by critics to essentially promote a form gambling. Players could unlock items as they progress but wouldn't know what they were purchasing beforehand. Modern Warfare however has swapped loot boxes for 'battle passes'. This means a greater level of transparency as players know exactly what they are buying, how they will be unlocked and when they will receive them in the game.



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Safety Tips For Parents

STICK TO THE PEGI RATING

It really can't be stressed enough how much this game is not for younger children. While you could argue that most of the horrific scenes are in the single player campaign, and you can just play multiplayer and co-op to avoid them, those modes are not without their shortcomings. For example, one of the killstreaks you can attain in multiplayer is white phosphorus - a chemical weapon that can do indescribable things to the human body. This really comes down to the personal judgement of the adult, and the emotional maturity of the child, but if there's still any doubt, stick to the PEGI rating - it's there for a reason.



BE WARY OF GORE AND VIOLENCE

There's no getting around the fact that this is an incredibly realistic game, from the themes down to the gameplay, and that includes the amount of gore in the game. While there is an option to disable dismemberment of bodies in the game (options > general > dismemberment off) it still includes a rather visceral amount of violence that is prevalent throughout.



STAY SAFE DURING IN-GAME CHAT

By default, Modern Warfare allows multiplayer in-game lobbies to have an open chat feature. This basically means that anybody in the lobby with a mic can hop in and say whatever they like. Naturally, this could lead to some profane language or undesirable viewpoints being expressed. Turning this off is as simple as going to the game options, clicking the audio tab, then setting voice chat to off. Be aware that this also disables the mic on your end too, so the safest and best option is always to make sure children are in a party with their friends before they start the game, then they can still chat to each other without outside interruption.



TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT THE THEMES

Modern Warfare at its heart, is a game about good vs bad and the grey areas in between. Morally complex characters and situations are more prevalent in today's modern age than they've ever been before, and it does carry some important political and social commentary. If you're okay letting children play the game, it's definitely worth sitting down with them to discuss the themes and why it's important to approach them critically. For example, Captain Price is clearly a good character, but he does questionable things in order to achieve his goals. Does this make him a bad character? If kids are old enough to see these situations, they're old enough to question why.



Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGBible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.



AGE RESTRICTION
18+

What parents need to know about **GRAND THEFT AUTO (GTA)**

**grand
theft
auto**

Grand Theft Auto is an action-adventure video game series where players control criminals and wreak havoc in order to complete missions and progress through the game. During the early stages of the game, it solely focuses on completing missions to go up a level. However, as the game grew more popular the makers of GTA decided to introduce a narrative to each edition of the game. The aim of this was to increase user engagement, making gamers believe that they were not just playing as the character, but they became the character. Grand Theft Auto is accessible on a number of devices including: PlayStation and Xbox, desktop computers, PSP, Nintendo DS, and Mobile.



Top Tips for Parents

THE RISK - PLAYING WITH STRANGERS

When buying GTA V you automatically have access to Grand Theft Auto Online, a version of the game that allows players to play online. They can play alone, invite players to a game, or be involved in public 'sessions' where people will be picked at random to play. When you first load into a game you are automatically placed into an open lobby, meaning you play with random people. The 'social club' is GTA's very own social platform where users can bet money, share in-game photographs (which users can like and comment on), and even message other users directly.

What parents can do

To prevent your child playing with strangers on the game, you can change the settings to ensure they only play with their approved friends list. Upon signing up to the 'social club', it automatically sets a player's visibility settings to 'everyone', meaning their name and profile information is made public. Parents can alter this by changing the visibility settings to 'only me'.

WARNING!

Due to the nature of the game and the age restrictions, GTA includes content that is inappropriate for anyone under the age of 18, including sex, nudity, violence, profane language, and substance abuse. These are the main components that make up the game - you have to do certain things and witness certain things in order to move on in the game. Exposing your child to this type of content could affect their morals and understanding of right and wrong. Additionally, your child could become desensitised to similar situations, reinforcing the fact they they would find it hard to differentiate between right/wrong and good/bad.

THE RISK - ONLINE HACKERS

Hackers can make money by helping users cheat in the game. They can do a number of inappropriate things, including killing people, stealing weapons, spawning money into the game, and even raping other characters. Spawning money tends to be a gamer's most popular choice, being able to buy \$100,000,000,000 (of in-game currency) for as little as five US dollars.

What parents can do

Actively monitor your child's online activity. These websites are very easy to find, meaning children and young people can easily navigate their way to these websites and pay for hackers. Not only is this an illegal activity, but you have the risk of giving your personal information to someone who may misuse it.

THE RISK - ADDICTION

Addiction is a risk with any game. Game developers use persuasive design techniques to force users to invest their time, and often money, in a game. Within GTA, your character is able to progress through the game for completing missions within a certain time frame, encouraging children to keep returning to the game. Gaming addiction is now a recognised health condition and the side effects are concerning, including sleep deprivation, decreased attention span and erratic emotional behaviour.

What parents can do

There are a number of things you can do if you are concerned about your child's screen time, including setting time limits within the home, especially during meal times and before bedtime. Talk to your child and ask why they are spending so much time on the game, and encourage healthy alternatives such as outdoor activities and spending quality time with friends and family.

THE RISK - LIVE CHAT

When playing GTA online, players have the option to use a microphone to broadcast their voice live to other players involved in the 'session'. These live voice chats are not moderated, meaning anything could be said, including inappropriate language, as well as verbal forms of bullying.

What parents can do

Talk openly with your child about not giving away personal information. Also remind them that conversations can be recorded, which could damage their online reputation. Depending on the device/platform, there will be ways to mute conversations. Make yourself aware of the device's/platform's individual settings and ensure that your child knows how to block and report.

THE RISK - MICROTRANSACTIONS

By completing missions and partaking in certain activities you earn in-game currency. This allows you to buy things such as prostitutes, vehicles, weapons, ammo, new outfits, cars, apartments and more. However, the items that are available to buy often have a high price that require a lot of game time, meaning the items are pretty unrealistic to buy.

What parents can do

If you do not want your child to make payments, ensure your card is not associated with their account. If you are happy for your child to make payments in the game, but want to limit spending, we suggest purchasing a pre-paid gift card for your child. These can be purchased in specific amounts which will allow you to limit how much your child spends and removes the need for a credit or debit card to be used with their account.

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It can be challenging for parents and carers to know whether children are spending too much time on their devices. Furthermore, it's even more of a challenge to know whether a child is addicted to the internet and social media. As technology is becoming more pervasive, children and young people are experiencing tech - related dependencies. Do we as parents and carers have the knowledge to identify and support children and young people who may be developing an addiction to their devices?

47%
of parents
said they thought their
children spent too much
time in front of screens



What parents need to know about SCREEN ADDICTION

SMARTPHONE ADDICTION IS A RECOGNISED HEALTH CONDITION

Children as young as 13 are attending 'smartphone rehab' following growing concerns over screen time. There are now help centers in the UK which deal with screen addiction for children and adults showing the seriousness of device addiction.

IT CAN CAUSE SLEEP DEPRIVATION

7 out of 10 children said they had missed out on sleep because of their online habits and 60% said they had neglected school work as a result. It is important that children get the sleep they need in order to focus the next day.

CONFIDENCE, SUPPORT & ACCEPTANCE

The Children's Commissioner report 'Life in Likes', explored how children aged 8-11 are using social media today. It showed that children are using their devices to speak to their online friends about their problems and seek acceptance and support, removing face to face interactions.

APPS CAN BE ADDICTIVE

Apps have been designed with 'psychological tricks' to constantly keep grabbing your attention. One example of this is on the app Snapchat, where you can gain 'streaks' when interacting with your friends. If you don't respond, you lose the streak. This addictive nature of apps aims to engage children and keep them coming back for more.

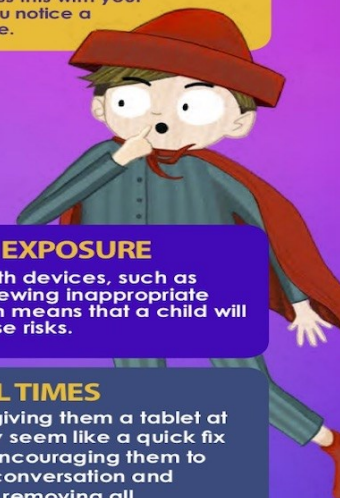
LOSS OF INTEREST IN OTHER THINGS

Your child may become less interested in anything that does not include their device. You may notice that your child is missing school time and generally being less engaged with other activities in the home. It is important to discuss this with your child as soon as you notice a behaviour change.



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Top Tips for Parents



LIMIT SCREEN TIME

In today's digital age, technology is an important part of a child's development so completely banning them from their device will mean they are missing out on a lot, including conversations and communication with their friends. Rather than banning them from using their devices, we suggest setting a screen time limit. Work out what you think is a suitable and healthy amount of time for your child to be on their device per week. Remember that your child may need to use devices for their school homework so only set screen limits on recreational time on their device. Once you have established this, have the conversation with them to discuss why you are implementing a screen limit. There will be others in your child's friendship group who will not have screen limits set and will be sending messages when they do not have access to their phones.

ENCOURAGE ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES

It may seem like an obvious solution, but encouraging children to play with their friends, read a book, or playing outdoors will help them realise they can have fun without their device. Playing football, trampolining, camping, going for a walk or swimming are all healthy replacements for screen time. Try to join them in their outdoor activities to show your support.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Children model their behavior on their peers, so if their parents are constantly on their device, they will see this as acceptable. Try limiting your own screen time and follow the same rules you have set for them. If you have asked your child to not use their device at the table, make sure you don't. Try setting house rules that the whole family abide by.

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<http://uk.businessinsider.com/how-app-developers-keep-us-addicted-to-our-smartphones>
Journal of Youth Studies: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/tech/one-five-kids-losing-sleep-7653986>
University of Leeds: <https://medhealth.leeds.ac.uk/news/article/1276/lack-of-sleep-damaging-for-children>

LESS TIME MEANS LESS EXPOSURE

There are many risks associated with devices, such as cyberbullying, grooming, sexting, viewing inappropriate content etc. Less time spent on a screen means that a child will be less exposed to these risks.

MOBILE-FREE MEAL TIMES

Have you tried to settle your child by giving them a tablet at the dinner table or restaurant? This may seem like a quick fix to calm them down but in reality, it is encouraging them to use their device as a distraction from conversation and dealing with their emotions. We suggest removing all technology from the dinner table and having conversations with your family about how their day has been.



REMOVE DEVICES FROM THEIR BEDROOM

Setting a rule about removing devices from bedrooms will help your child to get the sleep they need and be more focussed the next day at school. 20% of teenagers said that they wake up to check their social network accounts on their devices. Even by having a device switched off in their bedroom, they may be tempted to check for notifications.





Suggested Apps and Games For 7-11 YEARS



Learning



MAGIC PIANO BY SMILE

While Magic Piano doesn't strictly teach you how to play the piano, it does teach hand-eye coordination and can help spark creativity in young minds. Users can play along to a variety of popular songs on a range of difficulty levels in an attempt to get through the song with as few mistakes as possible, increasing dexterity and reaction times. Free on iOS & Android, the game does contain some ads and in-app purchases, so be sure to check these out before letting younger players unleash their musical side. Magic Piano is PEGI 3 rated but requires slightly more nimble hands to master so older kids will get the most from this.



AZOOMIE

Azoomie houses over 1,000 games, videos and activities for kids of all ages to play, have fun and most importantly, develop their key skills in. The app is award winning, BAFTA nominated, supported by the NSPCC (according to the description on their app page) and comes with a suite of parental controls built in. As well as educational games, activities and kid's favourite TV shows, the app also has a built-in chat feature where they can talk to their friends safely. A nice little touch is that if you buy a subscription to Azoomie for unlimited premium content for £4.99 a month, a portion of the money raised goes towards supporting the NSPCC. The app is available on iOS, Android and Amazon.



POLY BRIDGE

While Poly Bridge could be easily enjoyed solely as a game, it's actually an incredibly clever way to learn critical thinking and engineering skills in a kid friendly way. It's set in a colourful, cartoony world and has extremely simple gameplay. In Poly Bridge, it's your task to get cars, buses, trucks, boats and more safely to their destination by designing bridges that are safe and practical. How those bridges are created is entirely up to you. With over 100 levels, a sandbox mode and almost infinite playability, Poly Bridge is available on PC, Android, iOS and Nintendo Switch at various price points, so be sure to check which is the best option for you.



CROSSWORD PUZZLES (WUBU APPS LTD)

Crossword puzzles might not immediately seem like a learning game for younger kids, but they're incredibly effective at building strong word skills and problem solving. This one by Wubu Apps Limited is exclusive to iOS and constantly changes its roster of daily crosswords and challenges, although there are a whole bunch of apps available out there which do similar things. The app is rated 4+ but would likely be suited to kids a little older as the crosswords are designed for adults as well. As mentioned, Crossword Puzzles is only available on iOS devices and is free to download but does contain in-app purchases.



SCRIBBLENAUTS UNLIMITED

Scribblenauts is a game like few others in that it actively encourages children to use their intuition to solve a variety of puzzles. Armed only with their imagination, players must complete levels by conjuring potentially useful items for main character Maxwell to collect the Starites and achieve his goal. The game helps create strong vocabulary and word association to a fun 2D backdrop. While any version of Scribblenauts is good, Unlimited is the most readily available, being released on Wii U, PC, Nintendo 3DS, iOS and Android devices, PS4, Xbox One and Nintendo Switch.



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Just for Fun



SUPER MARIO ODYSSEY

Widely regarded as one of the greatest games Nintendo have ever made, Super Mario Odyssey provides family friendly fun and a challenging environment for kids to learn new skills in a video game. Rated PEGI 7, Odyssey can be enjoyed by almost any age range, even those who are young at heart. The caveat is that the game is only available on Nintendo Switch, so some investment will need to be made, but the console boasts a host of other child-safe titles and the ability to play on the go as well as at home.



NETFLIX

As obvious as it may sound, Netflix's children's section is ideal for keeping young ones and toddlers out of trouble on long journeys or at home. The specific profile for kids allows them to only view content appropriate for younger audiences which lets you and them watch their favourite shows and movies anywhere, at any time. Curated playlists, easy navigation through TV series and movies, and no-hassle auto-play means a stress-free guarantee. The only downside to the app is that it requires a Netflix subscription in order to use it but if you're happy to pay the monthly cost, it's an absolute must for any parent.



MINECRAFT

Minecraft is one of those rare, timeless classics that can be enjoyed by every age group. Coming in both a console version and a pocket edition for mobile devices, the sandbox world-building fun in Minecraft can be an amazing place to let your imagination run wild. The game can be played online with friends and supports cross-play, meaning that no matter what device everybody has, it can be played together. While the game isn't free, it will undoubtedly provide hours and hours of fun for the whole family so it's worth the investment of a one-time purchase. As one of the most popular games ever released, it inspires critical thinking, problem solving and above all, fun.



LEGO MOVIE MAKER 2

The LEGO Movie Maker 2 app lets users create their own stop-motion movies and upload them for others to watch online. Kids can create a short LEGO movie in whatever genre they like using a range of easy to use tools and are able to add in sounds and visual effects to make the videos look super realistic. All movies are moderated before they make it online so you can be sure no sensitive information is uploaded or viewed by third parties. The app is free to download on both iOS and Android devices but does require creation of a LEGO account to upload videos. The only information needed for an account is the country you live in, your email address and date of birth. While it's rated for 4+, kids of 8 and up will get the most out of this one.



ADVENTURES OF POCO ECO: LOST SOUNDS

If something more slow-paced and chilled out is on your radar, Adventures of Poco Eco should be able to scratch that itch. With an emphasis on creating a rich and inviting musical soundscape over hardcore gameplay, the puzzle action is perfect for unwinding young minds, as opposed to challenging them. The single-player game is available on all iOS and Android devices, as well as the Amazon Kindle Store and you can also nab yourself a free copy of the soundtrack with the purchase.



Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGbible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.





There's a good chance you already know what the PlayStation 4 (PS4) is. Sony's video game console is often touted as being one of the best-selling of all time, with over 100 million units shifted worldwide. With over seven years of polishing and fine-tuning under its belt, you'd expect the console to be one of the safest around. While this is overwhelmingly true, there are still things parents should be on the lookout for whether they're children are starting it up for the first time or they're already experienced users.

AGE RESTRICTION
GAME SPECIFIC PEGI RATING - See Individual Title Packaging

What parents need to know about PLAYSTATION 4



SAFETY CONCERNS

PlayStation users are able to add each other as friends by simply inputting another player's username and sending them a friend request. If accepted, they can chat openly from the console's dashboard, including voice chatting in a private party. If players know each other, this can be a great way to talk privately while in games, without having to interact directly with others. But, similarly, if a stranger adds a child and is accepted as a friend, they have direct access to them.



ACCESS TO PERSONAL INFORMATION

The PlayStation Network (or PSN) is essentially used to house all the other PlayStation services (like PlayStation Plus and PlayStation Store) under one roof. Accounts are free and come in two forms; master accounts and sub accounts, with master accounts having access to the parental controls on a console. If a user's ID and account password were compromised (if a child was tricked into revealing it or if a hacker obtained the details otherwise) then it could provide access to personal information or banking details.



ONLINE BULLYING

Sometimes in an online game, players will be able to freely chat with each other. While these interactions will mostly be positive and about having fun in a game, some people will take this opportunity to use offensive or abusive language or may just want to aggravate other players. In some cases, it may amount to harassment, trolling or cases of online bullying.



ADULT CONTENT IN GAMES

The PlayStation offers a huge variety of different games, all with different age ratings. From shooting games to driving, sports, educational titles and everything in between, they all need special attention when considering a purchase, as some can contain adult content or explicit language with isn't always suitable for young children. The best way to know what a game involves is to check out its PEGI rating which will be on the game box, or on the website page before you buy. Remember that these ratings serve as a guide, and the ultimate choice lies with parents to know what is acceptable and appropriate for their children.



SCREEN ADDICTION

The PS4 can provide hours of entertainment. As well as being an avenue to play games, it provides the ability to browse the internet, watch live TV or stream video services such as Netflix, Amazon or YouTube. Such is the variety, that it can be easy to switch between modes and rack up time in front of the screen. Some children may also find it difficult to control the amount of time they play games, potentially leading to gaming disorder.



Safety Tips for Parents & Carers



CREATE 'CHILD FAMILY MEMBER' ACCOUNTS

The PS4 allows parents to set up different accounts for different family members, including children. This will allow you to control different aspects of your child's PS4 experience including the ability to set age restrictions on gameplay, limit play time sessions, disabling chat messaging and the ability to access the internet.



DISCUSS PSN RISKS WITH YOUR CHILD

It's always a good idea to discuss with your child how to stay safe on the PlayStation Network and how to respond if people they don't know contact them. Advise your child to report anybody who upsets them or makes them feel uncomfortable and to never share personal or private details or images with anyone online. You can also block other users if they are abusive or your child feels threatened by their behaviour.



SET MONTHLY SPENDING LIMITS

It's a good idea to set a limit on how much can be spent on things like new games, or for skins or card packs in games like Fortnite and FIFA. This can be done using your master family account and then selecting your child's account. Go to Applications/Devices/Network Features from where you should be able to select Monthly Spending Limit and adjust it as you see fit.



IMPLEMENT PRIVACY CONTROLS

Sometimes it's easier to block potential risks at the source when playing online. Through Network Features, you can select whether a child's sub account can communicate with others while on the PSN or whether they can view content created by other players. This means disabling the ability for your child to communicate via chat or messages or displaying and entering comments for friend requests and game invitations. It also means you can block videos, images and text created by other users from view.



SET AGE RATING LEVELS FOR GAMES, DVDS AND BLU-RAYS

As well as controlling what age rating level of a game your child can play, you can also set appropriate controls for DVDs and Blu-Rays. To set this up, simply go through the Family Management setting and then Applications/Devices/Network Features and select the type of content you would like to restrict.



LIMIT PLAY TIME

Play time can also be managed through the PlayStation's parental controls. On the family manager accounts, go to Settings, Parental Controls, Family Management and select the child account you'd like to limit play time for. From here, set a Time Zone, then configure the Play Time Settings to preference.



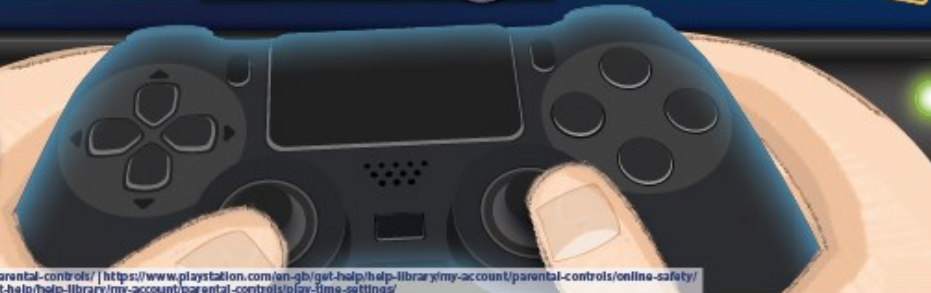
KEEP ACCOUNTS SECURE

To stop children from changing parental controls and adjusting their own limits and restrictions, you can create a system restriction passcode to disable guest login and set up a log-in passcode so that only you can access your account. To protect against hackers, you can activate 2-step verification (2SV) which will alert you of any new logins. You can also set up a password at 'checkout' in the PlayStation Store so that there is an additional layer of security if anybody attempts to make any unauthorised purchases.



Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGbible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.



SOURCES: <https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/get-help/help-library/my-account/parental-controls/ps4-parental-controls/> | <https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/get-help/help-library/my-account/parental-controls/online-safety/> | <https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/get-help/help-library/my-account/parental-controls/play-time-settings/>

What parents & carers need to know about ... PLAYSTATION 5

The PlayStation 5 is the next-generation video game console from Sony. It offers improved graphics, sound and much quicker loading times. It also has a new controller with motion- and force-feedback features for a more immersive experience. Parents should note that there are two different versions available that support discs or digital downloads.

Safely setting up your Playstation 5

PlayStation 5 Blu-ray

PlayStation 5 Blu-ray is the larger of the two consoles, although not by a lot. It enables you to play games on disc or by digital download. Although all new games are available digitally, the disc drive is still useful to watch movies from discs as well as play most existing PlayStation 4 games you own. It also enables you to purchase second-hand games on a disc, which is often much cheaper.



PlayStation 5 Digital

PlayStation 5 Digital is slightly smaller as it doesn't contain a Blu-ray drive. This means the console is cheaper but can only run games you download via an internet connection. Unlike the Xbox Series X and the cheaper Series S, the digital-only PlayStation 5 is just as powerful as its more expensive disc-and-download counterpart.



Family Settings

Both PlayStation 5 models offer important family controls that should be set up before your family starts using the system. Although this can take a little time, it ensures that children have their own accounts and sets limits on spending, interactions and age ratings. If done correctly, children cannot circumvent these controls that require the parent's password to alter.



Setting Limits on Play Time

You can specify how long, and at which times of day, the console can be used to play without needing a password. Talk to your children and agree how long is appropriate, then set this on their profile, so it's something they understand and accept. You can set different time limits on each of the users on the system.



Managing Spending

You can set a limit on spending via Parental Controls. This means that any additional purchase requires your password. Another alternative is not to put credit card details into your account and instead add credit as they need it using the book token-like cards in-store or online. A nice feature on the PlayStation is setting an amount of pocket money to spend on games each month.



Setting Age Ratings

You can set a limit that stops any older-rated games being played without a password being entered. This is not only a good way to ensure children are playing appropriate content but is a good chance to talk about the games they are playing.



Downloading the PlayStation App

The PlayStation 5 uses the same PlayStation app as the PlayStation 4. This is a super-easy way to tweak the user settings for your family without having to log on to the console. It's also a good way to keep track of what different people are enjoying on the system. The app can also be used as an easier way to log-on by scanning the QR code.



Creating Guest Account Password

An important step during the PlayStation 5 set-up is specifying the default settings for guest accounts as well as a passcode for your own account. This ensures that all users need to access the system with their own account and related limits and settings.



Managing Online Interactions

Another important area of the Parental Controls is specifying how and who your child can interact with online. Modern consoles enable players to share text, voice, images and video with each other. You can set whether they can do this, and also apply a password before they can add new friends.



Game Subscriptions

In addition to buying individual games digitally or in-store, you can also subscribe to services that offer access to hundreds of games for a monthly fee. PlayStation Plus is needed to play games online with other people and offers a set of games you can immediately download for the new system. PlayStation Now enables you to stream (and download) a wider set of games.



Types of Accounts

Set up Parent Accounts

Setting up a parents' account is important so you can manage the console for your family. After plugging your console in, connect to the internet and wait for updates to finish. Once updated, create a parent user account with an email address you regularly check and password specified.



Set up Child Accounts

Setting up child accounts are important to be able to limit play time, spending and apply age ratings automatically. Separate accounts for each child user can be set up. It's a good idea to specify a password for the guest account so children cannot access this also.



Meet our expert

Andy Robertson is a freelance family technology expert who often works for the BBC. He runs the Family Gamer TV YouTube channel and contributes to a range of national media on the topic of video games and family.



National Online Safety

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What parents & carers need to know about... XBOX SERIES X|S

The Xbox Series X and Series S are the next-generation video game consoles from Microsoft. They offer improved graphics, sounds and much quicker loading times. Parents should note that the two versions available are quite different.



Safely Setting up Your Xbox Series X / S

Xbox Series X

Xbox Series X is a larger device, with a disc drive, twice as much storage and higher performance chips. It can play the new Xbox games at the highest resolution and with the best visuals. It enables you to run games from disc or digitally.

Apply Family Settings

Both Xbox models offer important family controls that should be set-up before your family starts using the system. Although this can take a little time, it ensures that children have their own accounts and sets limits on spending, interactions and age ratings. If done correctly, children cannot circumvent these controls that require the parent's password to alter.

Managing Spending

You can set a limit on spending via the family settings. This means that any additional purchase requires your password. Another alternative is not to put credit card details into your account and instead add credit as they need it using the book-token-like cards in-store or online.

Setting Limits on Play-Time

You can specify the time of day and how long the console can be used to play without needing a password. Talk to your children and agree how long is appropriate, then set this together so it's something they understand and accept. On the Xbox Series X|S you can also limit time on a particular game, which is a good way to encourage children to play a wide range of experiences.

Game Subscriptions

In addition to buying individual games digitally or in-store, you can also subscribe to services that offer access to 100's of games for a monthly fee. Xbox Game Pass is often bundled with the Xbox Gold subscription you need for playing online. Most of the bigger Xbox games are provided as part of the service, as well as a wide range of independent games that often offer educational and wellbeing based experiences.

Xbox Series S

Xbox Series S is a smaller, disc-less version of the console which plays all the new games but with reduced visuals or possibly frame-rates. Because it doesn't support discs you can't play old games from discs and must purchase new games digitally. It also has smaller storage, offering 500GB which is about half that of the Xbox Series X.

Setting Age-Ratings

You can set a limit that stops any older rated games being played without a password being entered. This is not only a good way to ensure children are playing appropriate content but is a good chance to talk about the games they are playing.

Managing Online Interactions

Another important area of the Family Settings is specifying how and who your child can interact with online. Modern consoles enable players to share text, voice, images and video with each other. You can set whether they can do this, and also apply a password before they can add new friends.

Creating Guest Account Password

An important step on the Xbox Series X|S set-up is specifying a passcode for your own account and a password to access the Guest account. This ensures that all users need to access the system with their own account and related limits and settings.

Types of Accounts

Set-Up Parent Accounts

Setting up a parents account is important so you can manage the console for your family. After downloading the Xbox app to aid set-up, connect to the internet and while the console updates, use the app to start specifying settings. Once updated, create a parent user account with an email address you regularly check and password specified.

Set-Up Child Accounts

Setting up child accounts are important to be able to limit play-time, spending and apply age ratings automatically. Separate accounts for each child user can be set-up. It's a good idea to specify a password for the guest account so children cannot access this also. You can also download the Xbox Family Settings app to help you adjust these settings in the future without having to access the console directly.

Meet our expert

Freelance family technology expert for the BBC. Andy runs the Family Gamer TV YouTube channel and contributes to a range of national media on the topic of video-games and family.



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In today's digitally connected world, children and adults are constantly presented with new ways to engage, react and contribute. We're sociable beings; it's a natural human instinct, especially amongst younger audiences, to want to belong and join in. Viral Challenges (as they're often known) draw on these emotions and, as the name suggests, spread and gather pace very rapidly. New challenges are constantly emerging and evolving. They're often completely innocent, raising awareness of worthy causes or simply providing amusement. However, they can have much more sinister undertones, putting children at risk of physical harm or, in extreme cases, fatal injury.



What parents need to know about ONLINE CHALLENGES

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

As well as having the potential to cause actual physical harm, some challenges can be extremely upsetting for children. Many are created with the sole purpose of instilling fear in an individual in order to coerce them into doing things that could have a long-term emotional effect on them.

VARYING LEVELS OF RISK

As a parent or carer, it's important to take a balanced view and understand that not everything online has the potential to do harm. Mass-following and interaction can be a force for good. For example, the Ice Bucket Challenge, which swept the nation, set out to raise money and awareness of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). At its height, over 28 million people uploaded, commented on, or liked Ice Bucket Challenge related posts on Facebook. It's equally important to be aware though that online challenges often have a darker side. Malicious trends and challenges can expose children to dangerous or even life-threatening situations, so it's critical that parents and carers are aware of the latest risks and understand what steps to take to mitigate them.

'FOMO' - FEAR OF MISSING OUT

The 'Fear of Missing Out' (FOMO) is a strong emotional characteristic, particularly displayed in young people. The nature of viral challenges encourages children to explore and push boundaries. They tap into FOMO by feeding on a child's natural desire to join in, be accepted and share experiences with their friends and the wider online community. A recent study also found that FOMO is one of the greatest causes of Social Media addiction.



STRIVING FOR LIKES

In a major study by the Children's Commissioner, it was found that children as young as ten years old are reliant on 'Likes' for their sense of self-worth. A major concern around viral challenges is not knowing how far children will go to earn 'Likes'. Couple this growing appetite for acceptance with commonplace peer pressure and the potential problem is compounded. The result is that when young people are drawn into online challenges, because it is what all their friends are doing, saying 'no' can seem like a very hard thing to do.

"The coolest person at school will start a trend and then everyone copies her"
Merran, 12, Year 7

"If I got 150 likes, I'd be like that's pretty cool it means they like you"
Aaron, 11, Year 7



Top Tips for Parents



COMMUNICATION & MONITORING

It's important to talk to your child regularly and monitor their online activities. Encouraging honesty and openness, will give you a much clearer viewpoint of how your child is interacting online and what concerns they have. Create an atmosphere of trust. Ensure they feel they can confide in you or another trusted adult regarding anything they may have seen or experienced online that's upset them.

THINK BEFORE ACTING

As with most concerns in life, let common sense prevail when it comes to Viral Challenges. Young people need the freedom and space to explore and going in all guns blazing may well be counter-effective. Address the importance of safety and wellbeing, both online and offline, by getting the facts and understanding the risks. Start a discussion about the Online Challenges that may have captured your child's interest, gauge their likely involvement and explain the importance of thinking and acting independently when it comes to participating.

SETTING UP EFFECTIVE PARENTAL CONTROLS

As with all online activity, ensuring you have effective parental controls set up on all devices will help filter and restrict the dangerous or inappropriate content you don't wish your child to access. Additional measures for protecting your child include checking the privacy settings on your child's devices, monitoring their friends list, ensuring their personal information is safe and secure and keeping a watchful eye on the content they're sharing.

REPORTING & BLOCKING

Parental controls can only go so far in blocking potentially harmful content. A rise in the decoding of social media algorithms, has led to age inappropriate content increasingly appearing on platforms and apps used by children. Where possible, you should regularly monitor what your child sees online and flag/report any content which is inappropriate or dangerous. You should take the time to talk to your child, define what you consider to be appropriate content and show them how to report and block users/accounts themselves.

VALIDATE SOURCES

Not everything is as it seems. Some people create fake content that's designed to 'shock' in order to encourage rapid sharing. If your child has seen something online that has triggered concern you should encourage them to check its origin, verify that it came from a credible source and check the comments made for any clues to its validity.

FACING REALITY

Trends and Viral Challenges can be tempting for children to take part in; no matter how dangerous or scary they may seem. As a parent or carer it can be difficult to keep pace with the very latest Online Challenges emerging. In recent months these have included potentially dangerous crazes, including the 'Bird Box' challenge, which was inspired by Netflix's popular film and encourages followers to upload videos of themselves attempting everyday tasks while blindfolded. The best advice is to keep talking to your child. Show that your taking an interest and not just prying. Ensure your child knows they don't have to get involved and if they're unsure, let them know you're there to talk before they consider participating. Children often need reassurance that not everything they see online is real. If your child has viewed distressing or frightening content it's important to talk to them about their experience, support them and, if required, help them find additional support.



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7 questions to help you start a conversation with your child about online safety

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1



Which apps/games are you using at the moment?

THIS WILL GIVE YOU A GOOD OVERVIEW OF THE TYPES OF THINGS YOUR CHILDREN ARE DOING ON THEIR DEVICES, ALONG WITH THEIR INTERESTS. REMEMBER THAT THEY MIGHT NOT TELL YOU EVERYTHING THEY ARE USING, SO IT IS A GOOD IDEA TO ASK THEM TO SHOW YOU THEIR DEVICE. BECAUSE NEW APPS AND GAMES ARE RELEASED REGULARLY, IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE THIS CONVERSATION OFTEN TO ENSURE YOU ARE UP TO DATE WITH WHAT THEY ARE DOING.

Which websites do you enjoy using and why?

AS IN THE TIP ABOVE, ASKING THIS QUESTION WILL ALLOW YOU TO FIND OUT WHAT YOUR CHILD IS DOING ONLINE, AND ENCOURAGE POSITIVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THEIR ONLINE ACTIVITY. ASK THEM HOW THEY USE THE WEBSITES, AND TAKE AN INTEREST IN HOW THEY CAN USE THEM IN A POSITIVE WAY, ALSO ASKING THEM TO SHOW YOU IF POSSIBLE.



2

3



PLAY AGAIN?
YES NO

How does this game/app work?
Can I play?

SHOW A GENUINE INTEREST IN WHAT THEY ARE DOING. WHILST YOU ARE PLAYING A GAME OR USING AN APP WITH THEM, IT MIGHT HIGHLIGHT SOMETHING THAT THEY DON'T NECESSARILY THINK IS A DANGER TO THEM. IF THEY ACT LIKE THEY DON'T WANT TO SHARE THEIR ACTIVITIES WITH YOU, QUESTION WHY.

Do you have any online friends?

CHILDREN CAN FORM POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE ONLINE, AND THIS HAS BECOME MORE COMMON THANKS TO ONLINE MULTI-PLAYER OPTIONS, BUT THEY MAY NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FRIEND AND A STRANGER. YOU COULD MAKE THE QUESTION MORE SPECIFIC TO YOUR CHILD. FOR EXAMPLE: "HAVE YOU MET ANYONE ONLINE THAT YOU LIKE TO PLAY GAMES WITH?" THEY MAY NOT WANT TO SHARE THIS INFORMATION WITH YOU, SO ENSURE YOU TEACH THEM ABOUT HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS.



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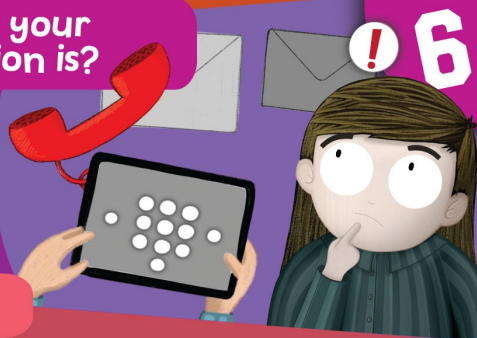


Do you know where to go for help?

ALTHOUGH YOU MAY BE THE ADULT THEY TRUST THE MOST, SOME CHILDREN STRUGGLE TO TALK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS ONLINE DUE TO CONFUSION OR EMBARRASSMENT. BECAUSE OF THIS THEY MAY STRUGGLE TO APPROACH THE NORMAL PEOPLE WHO WOULD HELP, SUCH AS YOURSELF OR A TEACHER. HAVE A CHAT TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT EXACTLY WHERE THEY CAN GO FOR HELP, AND HOW THEY CAN REPORT ANY ACTIVITY THAT THEY BELIEVE IS INAPPROPRIATE ONLINE.

Do you know what your personal information is?

YOUR CHILD MAY ALREADY KNOW WHAT THEIR PERSONAL INFORMATION IS BUT THEY MIGHT NOT THINK ABOUT HOW IT CAN BE SHARED. HAVE A CONVERSATION ABOUT WHAT PERSONAL INFORMATION IS AND HOW THIS CAN AFFECT THEM IF IT IS SHARED BEYOND THE INTENDED RECIPIENT. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOUR CHILD UNDERSTANDS THE DANGERS OF SHARING CONTACT DETAILS OR PHOTOS, AS INFORMATION SUCH AS THIS CAN SPREAD QUICKLY ONLINE.



6

7



Do you know your limits?

CHILDREN MAY NOT UNDERSTAND THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF DEVICE OR GAME ADDICTION. TALK TO THEM OPENLY ABOUT HEALTHY HABITS AND ASK WHETHER OR NOT THEM SPENDING TIME ONLINE OR PLAYING A GAME IS AFFECTING THEIR SLEEP, PERFORMANCE AT SCHOOL OR IF THEY ARE GENERALLY LOSING INTEREST IN OTHER ACTIVITIES. YOU MAY LEAD ON TO ENCOURAGING ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSING THE INTRODUCTION OF TIME LIMITS WHEN AT HOME.

