

Keeping Online Gaming Safe and Fun



It was a great to see so many of you join the Parent Workshop session on 4th April. It was a pleasure to deliver and we hope you found it useful!

The following guide has been put together to recap main points from the session, and to offer further advice around keeping online gaming safe and fun.

If you weren't able to attend live, please do feel free to contact us with any questions you may have.

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We hope to see many of you again in the near future, and want to thank you for all of the lovely feedback we have recieved so far.

Trudie and Emma

Understanding Game Ratings and Age Appropriateness



Games are rated using the PEGI (Pan European Game Information) system, which determines their suitability based on content rather than difficulty:

- PEGI 12: Infrequent mild violence
- PEGI 16: Moderate violence
- PEGI 18: Realistic and intense combat scenes

Before allowing your child to play a game, always check its age rating and content descriptions to ensure it aligns with their maturity level.



Popular Types of Games and Their Risks



Sandbox Games

Games like Minecraft and Roblox give players a high degree of freedom to explore and create. While they promote creativity and problem-solving, their open-ended nature means children can encounter unmoderated content and strangers.

Role-Playing Games (RPGs)

These games involve immersive storytelling and character development. Popular RPGs include Animal Crossing and Pokémon. They encourage teamwork and strategic thinking but may expose children to toxic online communities and excessive screen time.

Popular Types of Games and Their Risks



Multiplayer Shooter Games

Games like Fortnite (12+), Apex Legends (16+), and Call of Duty (18+) are popular. Please be aware that such games often contain violence and competitive pressure, which can lead to aggressive behaviour, stress, and possibly even desensitisation to violence.

Although your child may be too young to play these games according to their PEGI rating, you may find peer pressure, or a feeling of 'missing out', leads your child to explore such games early. Fortnite, for example, is very popular among primary-aged children and is free to download so is easily accessible.

The Benefits of Online Gaming



Online gaming isn't all bad, we promise! It may provide:

- **Social Interaction:** Many games encourage teamwork, friendships, and collaboration.
- **Problem-Solving Skills:** Strategy-based games improve decision-making abilities.
- **Creativity:** Games like Minecraft foster imagination and design skills.
- **Sense of Community:** Games with guilds or teams can create strong social bonds.

However, balance is key to ensuring gaming remains a positive part of a child's life.

The Risks of Online Gaming and How to Reduce Them



Gaming Addiction & Screen Time

Playing for hours, neglecting homework, sleep, and physical activity.

How to Reduce It:

Set time limits using parental controls. Encourage breaks, outdoor play, and diverse activities.

Frustration & Emotional Impact

Losing in multiplayer games can cause stress and anger.

How to Reduce It:

Reinforce that it's just a game and losing is okay.

We play games because they are fun. If it stops feeling fun, encourage taking a break or turning it off to do something else.

The Risks of Online Gaming and How to Reduce Them



In-Game Purchases & Microtransactions

Many games use 'loot boxes' and pay-to-win mechanics, leading to accidental or excessive spending.

How to Reduce It:

Disable in-app purchases or require a password for transactions.

Use prepaid gift cards instead of linking a credit card.

Enforce spending limits and review purchases regularly.



The Risks of Online Gaming and How to Reduce Them



Exposure to Inappropriate Content

User-generated content may expose children to violence, inappropriate language, or harmful interactions.

How to Reduce It:

Enable content filters and parental controls.

Encourage children to report inappropriate content.

The Risks of Online Gaming and How to Reduce Them



Online Safety & Stranger Interaction

Online multiplayer modes allow interactions with strangers, increasing risks of cyberbullying, inappropriate conversations, and predatory behaviour.

How to Reduce It:

Disable voice/text chat or set it to friends-only.

Use parental controls to limit interactions. Teach children to block and report toxic players.

Parental Controls and Safe Gaming Practices

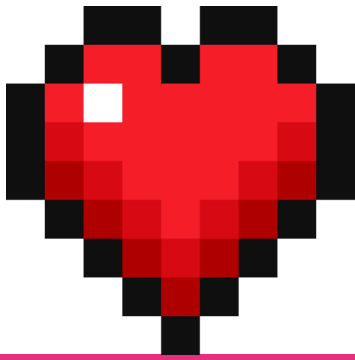


ROBLOX

Roblox Safety Settings

- Create a parent-controlled account and link it to your child's.
- Enable 'Account Restrictions': Limits games to age-appropriate content.
- Set a Parental PIN: Prevents unauthorised changes.
- Monitor friend lists and chat messages.

Parental Controls and Safe Gaming Practices



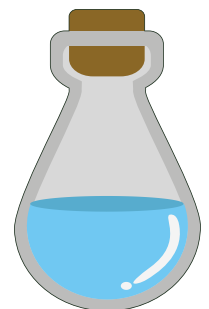
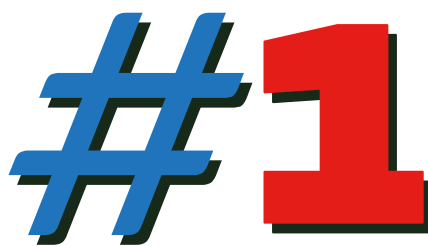
Minecraft Safety Settings

- Use a Microsoft Child Account and the Family Safety app.
- Restrict multiplayer access and in-game chat.
- Block in-game purchases to prevent unauthorised spending.

Parental Controls and Safe Gaming Practices

Fortnite Safety Settings

- Set up parental controls via Epic Games.
- Restrict 'Item Shop' access and purchases.
- Turn off voice chat or set it to friends only.



Creating a Healthy Gaming Environment



- **Set Boundaries:** Have clear gaming schedules and break times.
- **Encourage Offline Activities:** Balance screen time with outdoor play, reading, and hobbies.
- **Stay Involved:** Ask your child about their favourite games and experiences.
- **Use Gaming as a Learning Tool:** Some games teach problem-solving, teamwork, and creativity.

By staying informed and involved in your child's gaming world, you can help ensure they have a safe, enjoyable, and balanced experience.

What's Next?

Upcoming Empowering Parents Workshops:

InCel Awareness (May)

Setting Healthy Boundaries and
Staying Safe Outside School (June)

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