



DECEMBER 2018 ISSUE

Dear Parents,

Welcome to our next eSafety update. We hope you enjoyed the information regarding Fortnite. With Christmas coming this month's updates will focus on gaming and the consoles available on the market for your child.

Gaming devices

Gaming devices provide a variety of interesting activities and ways for young people to engage with their friends and families. However, it is important to be aware of what these devices can do and how you can talk with your child to help them to use this technology in safe and positive way.

All modern gaming devices offer parental controls to help you manage how your child uses their device, but these do need to be set up in order for them to be operational.

Three steps for parents:

1. **Understand the capabilities of gaming devices and how you as a parent can support your child to be smart and safe in their gaming.**
2. **Find out about the parental controls available - it helps if you are the one to set up the gaming device so you are in control of these.** Gaming devices have parental controls to help parents manage their children's gaming, for example, to prevent internet browsing or restrict access to age-restricted games (see the tips for Nintendo, Xbox or PlayStation 4 and PlayStation 3 devices on the following link:

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers/parents-guide-technology/gaming-devices>

3.). Find out about **PEGI age ratings** to help you decide which games are appropriate for your child's age.

4. Talk with your child about safe and responsible gaming and agree a set of family rules. Perhaps you could agree rules with your child about how long they are



allowed to play for, how they should behave towards other gamers and agree rules about not meeting up with people they have only met online. See our **Family Agreement** for more ideas. Remember that gaming devices like the Xbox 360, Wii and PSP connect to the internet, so the same advice and rules for keeping safe online apply.

FAQs

How long should I let my child play games for?

Consider what is appropriate for the users in your house and their gaming needs. This may depend on the type of game they are playing, for example, quest based games are unlikely to be completed within half an hour. Talk with your children about family rules for playing games online, which could cover safety considerations as well as play time limits. You may find it more appropriate to set a weekly quota for their internet use or to agree that certain games should only be played at a weekend. Some games consoles, like the Xbox 360 and the Xbox One, have a timer so that the console switches off after the allowed time. UKIE, the body that represents the interactive entertainment industry in the UK recommends that all games should form part of a healthy and balanced lifestyle and recommend that games players should take five minute breaks every 45–60 minutes.

How can my child access the internet using their gaming device? Can I control this access?

Gaming devices can connect to your home internet or wifi hotspots to support a range of functions, from playing games online with people, watching films and browsing the internet. It is helpful to find out all of the online functions that the device has and consider any parental controls that might be relevant. You can speak to your home internet service provider to see if they have options for filtering the internet on devices accessing your home internet.

How might my child communicate with people using their gaming device?

Many games offer users the ability to chat with other gamers while playing. Players can 'talk' by using Instant Messenger style messages which are typed during the game and they can often use voice chat (made possible through in-built microphones or headsets, depending on the console) which is similar to talking on the phone. Some consoles even have video chat functions. It is always a good idea to find out what chat functions are available, so that you understand how your child could be using their console.



Parental control tools are available, which can limit certain functions in games, including chat. Make sure your children know how to protect their privacy; advise them never to give out any personal information, pictures of themselves, or agree to meet someone in person, either when using online chat or sharing information in their user profile. If your child does play against people they don't know, make sure they know how to block and report other players and use the mute function which can disable chat in many games.

Encourage your child to use an appropriate screen or character name (also called gamer tags) that follow the rules of the game. These names should not reveal any personal information or potentially invite harassment.

In addition to chatting within a game, many gamers chat on community forums and content sites related to the games they are playing. Gamers use these sites to exchange information about the games as well as to provide tips and hints to others. It is important to encourage your child to remember to respect their privacy on these sites too and make sure they know how to report any issues they encounter.

How can I ensure that my child doesn't run up a big bill when using their gaming device?

Gaming devices with online networks, such as Xbox LIVE or the PlayStation Network, allow you to make purchases online. This may include games, game add-ons or films. It is helpful to understand how your child could spend money on their device. You should talk to them about agreed spending limits or use parental control settings to restrict spending as necessary.