

Helping children to play video games in a safe environment



A guide with ideas to help your children play video games safely





Video games are fun and engaging. They can encourage children to meet challenges, develop concentration and to solve problems by themselves or through working with others. However there are concerns that parents need to be aware of:

<p style="text-align: center;">CONTENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can contain violent, sexually-explicit or racial hatred themes • Can appear very realistic • Many devices used for gaming allow users to browse the internet, watch films and TV. Some of this content may not be appropriate • Games may not be suitable for the age of the child 	<p style="text-align: center;">CONTACT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many games include text, voice or video chat • Other players may use offensive or aggressive language • Bullying can occur (known as 'griefing' - when players single out others) • Potential for children to make themselves vulnerable through contact by those with a sexual interest
<p style="text-align: center;">CONDUCT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive time spent on games can harm other aspects of their lives • Gamers can become addicted • Gamers can forget they are talking to people with feelings • Activities in online games can cause damage to offline friendships 	<p style="text-align: center;">COMMERCIALISATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The buying of 'extras' within games can become expensive • There can be hidden advertising of real-life products • Some games encourage gambling • Danger of downloading viruses from 'unsafe' servers

Based on : <http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-and-resources/parents-and-carers/parents-guide-to-technology/gaming-devices>



The very best gaming is safe and responsible gaming. The ideal way to ensure your children are playing the right games, and playing sensibly, is to take an active interest in what they are doing. Here are a few tips:

- **ENGAGE** - Find out what your children are playing and take an interest. Better still, join in the fun and play along yourself!
- **TAKE BREAKS** - Some games can be especially intense, so regular breaks are vital for healthy gameplay. Encourage your children to take breaks at least every 45 minutes.
- **BE AWARE** - Explain to your children how the online world differs from home or the school playground. Online your children will meet total strangers – who may not be who they say they are. Often the chat will be uncensored, so they should be cautious about what they say. Your children should be careful not to give out private details such as their name (always use a nickname), address, email address, passwords, telephone numbers or the name of their school.
- **REPORT** - Make sure that your child recognises which behaviours can be ignored, what should be reported and how this can be done.
- **CONSIDER CONSEQUENCES** - Be ready to spot when your child has become too involved, angry or upset by the interaction in games. Avoid it spilling over into school, other socialising or affecting personal care.
- **TAKE CONTROL** - Take advantage of the Parental Control settings available (see 'How to protect your children at home?' booklet) . You can decide which games are played using the age rating and PEGI descriptors (see next page); or whether interaction with other games players is permitted at all.
- **ALTERNATIVES** - Most games are reviewed on www.askaboutgames.com and <http://www.common sense media.org/game>. These suggest other games that you might find more suitable, and ways families can enjoy gaming together. Don't forget there are plenty of active games that can get your child up from the sofa!
- **CREATE A FAMILY CHARTER** - discuss and agree together a set of rules around the playing of video games.



Some of this advice has been taken from Warwickshire safety advice for parents and carers: <http://bit.ly/1eZ75Hx>



Video games are given PEGI ratings by experts according to eight categories



Violence



Bad
Language



Fear



Sex



Drugs



Discrimi-
nation



Gambling



Online



- Some violence in a comical context
- Characters are not real , they should be fantasy
- Will not contain any sounds or pictures that are likely to scare or frighten young children
- No bad language should be heard



- May contain some possibly frightening scenes or sounds



- Violence of a slightly more graphic nature towards fantasy character
- Non graphic violence towards human-looking characters or recognisable animals
- Some nudity
- Bad language is mild and falls short of sexual expletives



- 'Real life' violence (or sexual activity)
- More extreme bad language
- Concept of the use of tobacco, drugs and the depiction of criminal activities



- Gross violence
- Depictions of specific types of violence that cause revulsion

<http://www.pegi.info/en/index/id/33/>

