



The Academy of Woodlands

Latest advice for Parents and Carers

Term 3 2025 PEGI Ratings



Online gaming is hugely popular with children and young people. Research conducted by OFCOM shows that gaming is still one of the top activities enjoyed by 5-16 year olds online, with many of them gaming via mobile devices and going online using their games console.

While there are numerous benefits to children using devices, many apps and games available are not appropriate for their age. This can lead to various issues, such as online bullying and children discussing upsetting content they've encountered online. Such conversations can affect others negatively. Additionally, children may mimic the behaviours or language of characters from games, TV shows, or films, which can result in unkind interactions with their peers. At our school, we work diligently to teach our children about online safety, their digital footprint, and the skills necessary for responsible technology use. However, once they leave school, we rely on parents and caregivers to continue this vital work. We urge all parents to be vigilant and monitor their children's time spent on devices, as well as their use of apps, games, TV programs, and films. By working together, we can reduce the potential risks associated with technology. Age ratings serve to ensure that entertainment content, including games, films, and mobile apps, is clearly labelled with recommended minimum ages based on its content. While many games are appropriate for all ages, some are intended only for older children and young

Parental controls

Parental controls allows you to block and filter upsetting or inappropriate content. They work across your WiFi, phone network, individual apps and devices.

Parental controls can help you to:

- plan what time of day your child can go online and how long for
- create content filters to block apps that may have inappropriate content
 - manage the content different family members can see.

Would you like to know more about online safety?

Free online safety course for Parents
Presented by Myleene Klass



In this exclusive FREE course, follow Myleene as she takes you through online safety risks for each age group, and how to tackle them.

uk safer internet centre for information and guidance around gaming content.

Advise on how to keep your child safe online and using Parent controls from CEOP or how to use the parental control settings on consoles, handheld devices and operating systems for PC and Mac from PEGI.

Further online safety advice from the NSPCC

Safety net for helpful information and guides

For help and support with parent controls for a range of devices such as Xbox, Nintendo switch, PlayStation please visit PEGI info website.

CEOP website provides advice and guidance for the risks of child exploitation and online protection. Parents can also report online safety concerns directed to CEOP.

Childline have a range of activities, advice and information to help parents and their children to stay safe whilst using online platforms.

A Parent's Guide to Cyberbullying



Many young people who are victims of cyberbullying suffer in silence.

They feel they can't turn to parents or a trusted adult for support as they fear they may get in trouble or have their devices taken away from them. It can carry on all day, all evening and all weekend for the world to see, causing a lot of emotional stress to the victim and their family.



scan the QR code with your phone's camera for Parent Guides on how to help keep your children safe online



It can very quickly lead to the victim feeling trapped, scared and vulnerable to grooming and blackmail.



Online safety is when young people know who they can tell if they feel upset by something that has happened online.

Advise on how to keep your child safe online and using Parent controls from CEOP or how to use the parental control settings on consoles, handheld devices and operating systems for PC and Mac from PEGI.

Working with Home Office 'PREVENT', The Police and Crime Commissioner and Children's Safeguarding Partnerships to help keep children safe online.

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What Parents & Carers Need to Know about SETTING UP APPS, GAMES AND SOFTWARE

Millions of new phones, tablets, laptops and games consoles will be nestling under Christmas trees this year. However, even if parents and carers have gone to the trouble of setting up these new devices and enabling the safety features, there are still potential hazards in the apps, games and software that children will want to install and use. Knowing what to look for and discussing those risks with your child may help avoid any nasty surprises this Christmas. Here are our top tips for ensuring that unwrapping this year's presents doesn't unleash any unexpected dangers.

TAKE NOTE OF AGE RATINGS

Back when most games were bought in shops, checking the age rating was easy: it was on the front of the box. Now that most games are downloaded, it's tougher – but not impossible. All reputable download stores show a game's age rating at the point of purchase, and you can check the suitability of a specific title your child wants to play at videostandards.org.uk/RatingBoard/games.

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'FREE' ISN'T ALWAYS FREE

The games market has changed radically in recent years. Many titles are free to download, but then tempt players to pay for cosmetic items (as in Fortnite) or to unlock additional content. There can be huge peer pressure for children to pay for these items. Agree a budget for in-game purchases before the game is downloaded, and make sure children can't authorise in-game purchases by themselves.

DISABLE IN-APP PURCHASING

It's not wise to leave children with devices that can make in-app purchases without your permission. Ideally, set up computers, consoles and phones so child accounts need an adult's authorisation to buy anything. On shared devices like iPads, which don't allow user accounts, check the settings to ensure that in-app purchasing requires the account holder's password, fingerprint or face ID.

APPS ARE AGE RATED, TOO

Like games, apps in the major stores have age ratings, too – so you can see in advance whether an app's appropriate for your child. Additionally, phones' parental control settings allow you to set age limits, preventing young ones from downloading unsuitable apps themselves. These ratings aren't infallible, however: we've seen TV apps featuring adult shows with an age rating of 3, for example.

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CONSIDER STORAGE

Most apps and games will tell you in the online store how much space they need on a device. Check this carefully – especially with games, which can run into hundreds of megabytes and beyond. If you don't have enough free storage on a device to run the game or app, you won't get a refund from the store. You can normally check a device's available storage space through the settings menu.

WATCH OUT FOR IMITATORS

Even in the official stores, untrustworthy rogue apps can slip through the net. Common tricks are apps or games that have a slightly different name to the genuine article (Fortnite rather than Fortnite, for instance) or use logos which deliberately look very similar to the official app. To avoid downloading these imitations, read the app's description and check who the publisher is listed as.

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LEGAL APPS THAT BREAK THE LAW

There are many apps that are perfectly legal but enable illegal activity – streaming apps which let people watch football matches, say, without paying for Sky or BT Sport. Prosecution for using such apps is rare, but they can lead to risky behaviour like viewing rogue streams on sites teaming with malicious links. Watch for children installing unusual apps with 'TV', 'stream' or 'sport' in the name.

IN-APP REGISTRATION

It's common for apps and games to ask users to register: entering personal details like email address, date of birth and other information you might not want your child to divulge. Ask them to get your permission before giving any personal info to an app – and consider using your details rather than the child's, so they're not targeted by marketing spam or put at risk of having their data stolen.

STAY UPDATED

Most games and apps are subject to regular updates, which not only offer new content and features but also provide critical security improvements. Children tend to ignore such updates – usually because they don't understand why they're important, or they simply want to get straight on with gaming. Check your child's devices periodically to make sure these updates are being installed.

Meet Our Expert

Barry Collins has been a technology journalist and editor for more than 20 years, working for titles such as the Sunday Times, Which? PC Pro and Computeractive. He's appeared regularly as a technology pundit on television and radio, including on Newsnight, Radio 5 Live and ITV News at Ten. He has two children and has written regularly about internet safety issues.



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