

Keeping Children Safe Online

Gaming

Gaming has become an increasingly popular form of entertainment. It is expected that by 2025 there will be just under 52 million gamers in the UK alone! Given how popular an activity this is, it is important for parents to understand its impact on children, both positives and negatives. Below will outline the pros and cons of gaming to help parents make informed decisions about their children's gaming habits.

Pros of Gaming:

1. Improved hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills
2. Enhanced problem-solving and strategic thinking abilities
3. Opportunities for social interaction and teamwork
4. Improved mood and reduced stress levels

Cons of Gaming:

1. Addiction and excessive use leading to decreased physical activity and poor sleep habits
2. Exposure to violent and age-inappropriate content
3. Decreased attention span and academic performance
4. Increased aggressive behaviour and decreased empathy

Tips for Parents:

1. Set limits on screen time and ensure that gaming does not interfere with other important activities such as school and physical exercise.
2. Monitor the content of games to ensure they are age-appropriate.
3. Encourage a balanced and healthy lifestyle, including a healthy diet and regular physical activity.
4. Foster alternative interests and encourage children to pursue other forms of entertainment and leisure.

Streamers / Content Creators:

It is not just the playing of videogames that has increased in popularity, but the watching of people play games also. These people are known as streamers / content creators and they livestream themselves playing videogames on the internet whilst other people watch and chat in their chatrooms. This is a booming industry and is very popular with children. This activity shares some of the same pros as above: Opportunities for social interaction, garnering a feeling of community / belonging. It also shares some of the cons: decreased attention span, addiction and exposure to inappropriate content. There is an added thing that adults must be aware of which is that this livestreaming is often monetised with viewers encouraged to donate to support their favourite streamers.

Age ratings:

All games come with a suggested age rating. PEGI (Pan European Game Information) assigns age-appropriate ratings to games based on factors such as violence, language, and sexual content. These ratings give parents an idea of the content in the game and can help them make informed decisions about what their children should or should not be playing. It's important to remember that while PEGI ratings can provide valuable information, they should be used in conjunction with other resources and alongside parents' own judgement. Here are a few examples of popular games and their PEGI ratings:

Fortnite - PEGI 12 (violence, online gameplay)

Minecraft - PEGI 7 (fantasy violence)

Call of Duty - PEGI 18 (strong violence, strong language)

Grand Theft Auto - PEGI 18 (strong violence, strong language, strong sexual content)

FIFA - PEGI 3 (mild violence)



Useful links:

XBOX Parental controls

[Xbox Live Parental Controls and Privacy Settings | Internet Matters](#)

Nintendo Switch Parental Controls

[Nintendo Switch Parental Controls and Privacy Settings - Internet Matters](#)

Playstation 5 Parental Controls

https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CAMQw7AJahcKEwjInZCHwe_8AhUAAAAAHQAAAAAQAw&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.playstation.com%2Fen-gb%2Fsupport%2Faccount%2Fps4-parental-controls-and-spending-limits%2F&psig=AOvVaw1ByxqkqNAoTSZhHPVPxY6x&ust=1675175457560936

Childnet International: "Gaming: The Pros and Cons" - <https://www.childnet.com/resources/gaming-the-pros-and-cons>

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC): "Screen Time: Parental Controls and Family Agreements" - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/screen-time-parental-controls-family-agreements/>

The Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH): "Gaming: The Pros and Cons" - <https://www.rsph.org.uk/our-work/policy-and-influencing/policy-briefings-and-responses/gaming-the-pros-and-cons.html>

Gaming Key Takeaways



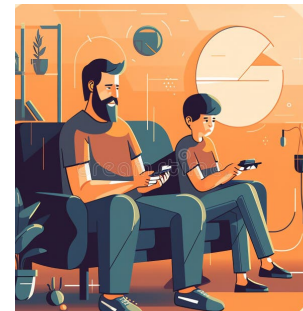
Video games can be great.

Talking about games being played helps you understand.



Always follow PEGI age ratings.

If you're not sure if a game is suitable, check it yourself.



Encourage children to also pursue other forms of leisure.