



E-SAFETY NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the second edition of the Wilberforce E-safety newsletter. This month's edition will focus on **Gaming and how to keep your child safe.**

ONLINE GAMING:



1. Online gaming, an introduction

Online gaming is hugely popular with children and young people. Recent research shows that gaming is one of the top activities enjoyed by 9-16 year olds online, with gaming more popular than social networking. From sport related games to mission based games and quests inspiring users to complete challenges, interactive games cater for a wide range of interests, and can enable users to link up and play together. Games can provide a fun and social form of entertainment often encouraging teamwork and cooperation when played with others. Just like offline games, they can have educational benefits, and be used, for example, to develop skills and understanding.

Traditionally, games could be bought from shops, often in the form of a disk for use on a PC or console. Now, games can also be downloaded online. Games are played on many platforms, with those bought in shops often having an online component to them. Internet connectivity in a game adds a new opportunity for gamers as it allows players to find and play against, or with, other players from around the world (in a multi-player game). We know that parents and carers do have questions and concerns about games, often about the type of games their child plays, and for how much time their child is playing.

This leaflet provides an introduction to online gaming and advice for parents specifically related to online gaming.

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2. Online gaming, where and how?

There are many ways for users to play games online. This includes free games found on the internet, games on mobile phones and handheld consoles, as well as downloadable and boxed games on PCs and consoles such as the PlayStation, Nintendo Wii or Xbox. Some of the most common devices on which online games are played are listed below.



Consoles: These games are played on home entertainment consoles designed to work with a TV. Games for consoles are mostly boxed products bought in shops and also online, containing a game disc and usually a manual. According to Ofcom, nearly three quarters of children aged eight and over, have a games console in their bedroom. Consoles like these are capable of connecting to the internet via a home network just like other computers. This allows users to download games or 'expansions' to existing games as well as playing online, although a subscription may be required for this. All of the three main manufacturers (Nintendo, Sony and Microsoft) include parental control functions in their consoles that are linked to age ratings systems.



PC Games: These games are played on a personal computer the same way as other software programmes. They can be bought from shops or purchased and downloaded directly from the internet. Many PC games make use of the internet, and many 'Massively Multiplayer Online' (MMO) games, where gamers interact together in virtual spaces, are PC games.



Web Games and Applications (apps): Some games are accessed through a unique website, and there are also websites hosting hundreds of different games. Many of these games are free of charge online, although some may have paid-for components.

Applications can be accessed through, and downloaded to, social networking profiles which allow users to play games on their profile as well as enabling them to play games with their friends, generally for free. Smart phones with internet connectivity also enable users to download games to play, some free, some charged for. In contrast to console and PC games, many web games and downloadable app games are not rated.



Mobile Games: Mobile games can be free or chargeable. There may be costs associated with mobile gaming, as within some games, even free ones, there are opportunities to purchase added functionality such as 'in-app' purchases. These functions however can be de-activated, usually through the phone settings.



Handheld Games: Handheld games are played on small consoles. Two of the current popular handheld consoles are the Nintendo DSi and the Sony Playstation Portable (PSP). Handheld games can also be played on other devices like the iPod Touch or iPad. These devices can also access the internet wirelessly, and allow for playing games with others online.



3. Online gaming, the risks

Internet safety advice is directly applicable to the games environment because risks of **Content**, **Contact**, **Conduct** and **Commercialism** also apply to games.



Content: inappropriate material is available to children online. The quality of graphics in many games is very high. Some games might not be suitable for your child's age – they might contain violent or sexually-explicit content.



Contact: potential contact from someone online who may wish to bully or abuse them. If your child takes part in multi-player games on the internet (where they play against other people, potentially from all around the world) they might be at risk of hearing offensive language from other players, being bullied, or making themselves vulnerable to contact by those with a sexual interest in children if they give out their personal details. Bullying on games is known as 'griefing'. This is when players single out others specifically to make their gaming experience less enjoyable.



Conduct: children may be at risk because of their own and others' online behaviour, such as the personal information they make public. Specific conduct risks for gamers include excessive use to the detriment of other aspects of their lives. This is sometimes referred to as 'addiction'. Some websites might not have the game owner's permission to offer a game as a download i.e. copyright infringement, the same as for music and film, and by downloading it the user might be breaking the law.



Commercialism: young people's privacy can be invaded by aggressive advertising and marketing schemes. Children and young people can get themselves into difficulty by inadvertently running up bills when playing games online. Some online games, advergames, are designed to promote particular products.

4: Online gaming, Top-tips

»»It may seem daunting, but one of the best things parents and carers can do is to engage with the gaming environment and begin to understand what makes it so attractive to young people as well as the types of activities that they enjoy!

»»Talk with your children about the types of game(s) they are playing. Are they role-playing games, sports games, strategy games or first person shooters? If you're not sure what they are, ask them to show you how they play and have a go yourself.

»»Some games may offer children the chance to chat with other players by voice and text. Ask them who they are playing with and find out if they are talking to other players. If chat is available, look at the type of language that is used by other players.

»»Remember that the same safety rules for surfing the net apply to playing games on the internet.



Take control!

Check you settings



Windows Vista not only allows you to restrict access to games depending on age classification but also by PEGI content descriptors.

To restrict access by age classification:

1. Click on the Window Vista Start button at the bottom left corner of the screen.
2. Click the **Instant Search** field and enter "par" to search for Parental Controls
3. Click on **Parental Controls**
4. Select the user account for which you wish to set Parental Controls
5. Click on, **enforce current settings** and then click **ok**.
6. Under **Window Settings**, click **Games** and then click on **Set game rating**. Select the age rating you wish to apply. Users will be able to play games of this rating and below.

To select the types of games, as defined by PEGI descriptors, you wish your children to play: Repeat steps 1-6, then select the content you wish to block under the **Block these types of content** heading

PLAYSTATION 3

On the PlayStation®3 guardians can set security levels to restrict access to games depending on age ratings. DVD and Blu-ray movies can also be blocked completely.

To set security levels:

1. To set game levels, from the Main menu scroll across, using the to **Settings** and then down, using to **Security Settings** Press to Select.
2. Scroll down to **Parental Control** and press .
3. Enter your PIN Number then press (The default PIN Number if you have not previously changed it is 0000).
4. Select required **Security Level** by scrolling from **Off** to **Levels 1 - 11**. Press to confirm.
5. The following settings provide a guide corresponding with PEGI ratings:
2 - PEGI 3+ 7 - PEGI 16+
3 - PEGI 7+ 9 - PEGI 18+
5 - PEGI 12+
6. The PIN can be changed from the **Security Settings** menu.



The XBOX 360 allows you to restrict access to games depending on a game's age classification. You can also add a timer, restricting just how long each day or week your children can play.

To limit games played by age rating:

1. From the main Menu scroll across to the System tab on the right using .
2. Scroll, using , to the second option on this tab, **Family Settings** and Press to Select.
3. Scroll to **Console Controls** and press .
4. Enter your 4 digit pass code. (If you have not previously set a pass code you will need to set one on the **Console Controls** menu by selecting **Set Pass Code**).
5. Scroll to **Game Ratings** and press .
6. Now scroll to the age rating you wish to apply and press . Users will be able to play games up to but not over this rating.

To limit games played by time:

1. Scroll to Family Timer, and on the Console Controls menu, press .
2. Scroll , to choose daily or weekly limits and press .
3. Then scroll to the time bar 45 Minutes and to set usage limit in minutes.
4. Scroll down to Continue and press . Exit and save the settings by scrolling down to Done and press . When you are asked if you wish to save the settings, scroll to Yes, save changes and press .



The Wii allows you to restrict access to games depending on age classifications. But this console also allows parents the chance to limit online communication with others.

To restrict games played by classification:

1. Use the Wii Remote to move the cursor over the Wii button in the bottom-left corner of the screen and press the button.
2. Click on **Wii Settings** .
3. Press the blue arrow to reach the Wii System Settings 2 menu options.
4. Select Parental Controls and confirm.
5. Enter your 4-digit PIN in the white box. (If you have not already set a PIN you will be prompted to do so now). Click OK. And again to confirm.
6. Click on **Game Settings and PIN**.
7. Now adjust the Highest Game Rating. Allowed by clicking on this option. On the menu that appears next, use the blue arrows to scroll to the desired setting. Once you have made your selection, hit OK. Click Confirm and then, on the next screen, Settings Complete.

PEGI ratings...

The Pan-European Game Information (PEGI) age rating system was established in 2003 to help parents make informed decisions when buying video games.

PEGI operates in 29 countries and the British games industry was a moving force in establishing the system several years ago. The PEGI ratings give an indication of the type of content found in a game and its suitability.

As well as PEGI age ratings, game packaging also carries PEGI descriptors that help explain the kind of content that might be found in a particular game. Descriptors appear as a set of icons that cover such themes as fear, bad language, violence and drugs.

Most publishers that are signed up to the PEGI rating system are also part of the PEGI Online scheme. PEGI Online extends the comprehensive PEGI age ratings scheme to the online environment.

Increasingly games are being played online against many players at a time and often across many country borders. So PEGI Online was devised to give parents greater peace of mind when their children play multiplayer games in the online arena.

For more information about PEGI and PEGI Online, head to www.pegi.info. More general games advice for parents and guardians can be found at www.askaboutgames.com

Under the current rating system in the UK, some games for older players are rated by the BBFC (British Board of Film Classification) at potentially 12, 15 and 18. It is an offence for a retailer to sell BBFC rated games to anyone younger than 12, 15 or 18 respectively.



Descriptors shown on the back of the packaging indicate the main reasons why a game has received a particular age rating. There are eight such descriptors: violence, bad language, fear, drugs, sexual, discrimination, gambling and online gameplay with other people.



Bad Language

Game contains bad language



Discrimination

Game contains depictions of, or material which may encourage, discrimination



Drugs

Game refers to or depicts the use of drugs



Fear

Game may be frightening or scary for young children



Gambling

Games that encourage or teach gambling



Sex

Game depicts nudity and/or sexual behaviour or sexual references



Violence

Game contains depictions of violence



Online gameplay

Game can be played online



PEGI 3

The content of games given this rating is considered suitable for all age

groups. Some violence in a comical context (typically Bugs Bunny or Tom & Jerry cartoon-like forms of violence) is acceptable. The child should not be able to associate the character on the screen with real life characters, they should be totally fantasy. The game should not contain any sounds or pictures that are likely to scare or frighten



PEGI 7

Any game that would normally be rated at 3 but contains some possibly frightening scenes or sounds may be considered suitable in this category.



PEGI 12

Videogames that show violence of a slightly more graphic nature towards fantasy character and/or non graphic violence towards human-looking characters or recognisable animals, as well as videogames that show nudity of a slightly more graphic nature would fall in this age category. Any bad language in this category must be mild and fall short of sexual expletives.



PEGI 16

This rating is applied once the depiction of violence (or sexual activity) reaches a stage that looks the same as would be expected in real life.

More extreme bad language, the concept of the use of tobacco and drugs and the depiction of criminal activities can be content of games that are rated 16.



PEGI 18

The adult classification is applied when the level of violence reaches a stage where it becomes a depiction of gross violence and/or includes elements of specific types of violence. Gross violence is the most difficult to define since it can be very subjective in many cases, but in general terms it can be classed as the depictions of violence that would make the viewer feel a sense of revulsion.