Keeping Kids Safe While Gaming Online

Whether it's on the computer, gaming console, tablet or phone, online games have become a huge part of kid's free time fun.

This massive digital playground is home to hugely popular games like Fortnite, boasting an eye watering 350 million players worldwide. Games like Minecraft, Roblox and Rec Room are also popular with kids, letting them explore vast in-game worlds, express creativity through building and battle other players. With over 80% of kids playing games online and more than half admitting to playing with strangers, it's vital to teach kids online safety so they can enjoy games without the worry of unwanted contact or cyber bullying.

Understanding online games

Online games can be a great way for children and young people to keep busy and stay in touch with friends and family, but it's important that they play safely.
Things to consider if your child games online:

- age ratings of games they play
- messaging and contact functions on the games
- in-game purchases
- trolling, griefing and scams
- how to report problems
- where they can get further support

Also, if you have more than one child in your home, be aware that games suitable for one child to play or watch, may not be suitable for another.

Parent tips

1) **Look at the PEGI rating of the game**
   Is it age appropriate? Look below on more information about PEGI.

2) **Play the game with your children**
   One of the best ways to learn about what your child is playing is to play with them. It can be a great way to bond, see how it all works and have some fun in the process.

3) **Teach kids how to block and report**
   Make sure kids understand what to do if someone makes them feel angry, scared or upset. Explain that these behaviours are not ok and explain how to block and report offensive players.

4) **Help kids find a balance**
   While games are a fun way to relax, it's important to have a balance.
   Set time limits for kids to play games, and balance it out with other activities like walking the dog or going for a bike ride.
   Games can be a whole heap of fun not just for kids, but the whole family.
   By understanding what safety settings are available, we can ensure kids have a happy, safe and fun online gaming experience.

What is PEGI?

The PEGI system is designed to inform the public of what's suitable and what's not for different ages. It can be a helpful tool in helping you to decide what games are appropriate for your child.
PEGI's professional analysts look at hundreds of video games every year and determine what is suitable for different age groups using a set of criteria.

This criteria has been established by experts in the field of child protection, psychology, the law and media. It helps analysts to decide what game content is appropriate in each of the five rating groups.

How are games rated under PEGI?
All games released in the UK will have one of the following PEGI age ratings on the packaging: 3, 7, 12, 16 or 18. The rating means that the game shouldn't be played by a young person under that age.

Why? Because there may be content within the game which could potentially be harmful, frightening or worrying to children. As well as an age rating, PEGI also uses icons showing content descriptors, letting you know if a game contains: violence, drugs, bad language, discrimination, fear, gambling, sex, or in-app purchases.

Please have a look on these links below:

Gaming - what's appropriate for your child?

How to Ensure Your Children Stay Safe While Playing Online Games | NSPCC

In the know - Hwb

| Pegi Public Site

Get online safety advice by age, apps and activity | Internet Matters