THE GOOD ONLINE GAMING GUIDE
A GUIDE TO ONLINE GAMING FOR PARENTS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

THINK U KNOW .co.uk

More than ever Games are heading online. Everything from Scrabble to World of Warcraft can be played online over the Internet and against other human opponents - playing against real people rather than computer-controlled opponents is invariably a lot more fun. Increasingly, of course, we will also be downloading games and additional game content direct from publishers online.

To play against other people online in multiplayer showdowns means more choices. Players can usually communicate with each other, perhaps using text messages that are typed during the gameplay. In fact, most online games now have chat facilities of some description so that the players can swap their thoughts freely whilst competing – and some games offer fully-fledged voice communication that seems as commonplace and relaxed as a 'phone conversation.

There is clearly a very real need for parents and guardians to fully understand the ever-evolving online world as it relates to video games. This leaflet is aimed both at adults and – on the flip side – children. You can freely download this leaflet, and find out more about sensible and safe gameplay, from www.askaboutgames.com.

THE PEGI SYSTEM

Europe's games industry fully understands the need for games to be properly rated to ensure that only the right games get into the right young hands. So more than five years ago it set up the 'gold standard' PEGI, which stands for the Pan-European Game Information rating system. You can find out more about the PEGI system in our sister leaflet, The Good Gaming Guide, at www.askaboutgames.com.

YOU CAN TAKE ON THE WORLD ONLINE - BUT STAY SAFE!

SAFE ONLINE GAMING TIPS FOR PARENTS

DO

Do explain to your children how the online environment differs from home or the school playground. Online your children will meet total strangers – some who may not be who they say they are. Often the chat will be uncensored, so they should be cautious about what they say and be careful not to give out private details such as their name, address, email address, passwords, telephone numbers or the name of their school.

Do know what games your children are playing online. There are several different game genres today – including sports games, strategy games, role-playing games and first-person shooters.

Do get involved with what your children are playing online. Ask them to show you any new games they want to play and, better still, join in yourself.

Do take advantage of any available Parental Control settings available. These are wide-ranging controls on consoles and PCs that can allow you to limit gameplay options. You can decide which games are played by age rating and PEGI descriptors or whether online interaction is permitted at all. For more details, please see our accompanying free-to-download .pdf, The Good Gaming Guide, at www.askaboutgames.com.

Do be aware of your children's online contacts. Make a point of asking who they are chatting to online, how they know them and so on.

Do ensure that you know how to report inappropriate behaviour or content to moderators or customer support teams on the game websites that your children use.

DON'T

Don't take your children's safety for granted when they are playing online. Apply the same precautions that you would if they were playing outside the home and interacting with others.

Don't allow your children to meet up with 'friends' they have met while playing online – remember not everyone is who they say they are online.

Don't downplay the seriousness of Cyber Bullying. If your children are being harassed by a classmate or any other player online, follow a game's grief-reporting procedures and log a complaint as well as turning on appropriate user-blocking controls.

Don't be 'blinded by science'. If you don't understand how online gameplay works or what it involves, ask your children to show you.

Don't assume that all online games are suitable for children. Some are suitable only for adult players – and may contain adult themes, imagery and language – so check the age rating of what they want to play. Only games rated PEGI 3 are suitable for players of any age.

Don't let your children download anything without your express permission. Sometimes cheat programmes are offered that claim to help players get more from a game – but these could be malicious and carry Trojans and viruses or damage your computer some other way.

GOOD GAMING IS SAFE GAMING!

askaboutgames.com

• Online Dos and Don'ts • Blocking Chat • Reporting Cyber Bullies

THE GOOD ONLINE GAMING GUIDE
SAFE ONLINE GAMING TIPS FOR CHILDREN

IN ASSOCIATION WITH **THINK U KNOW** .co.uk

Games are fun and today's games are played by everyone – from children and teenagers to grandparents and even great grandparents. But there are things you should know – and things you should or should not do – that ensure your gaming online remains fun.

The problem with everyone playing games today, especially when they head online in games, is that it is not always easy to work out just who you are playing. Some players pretend to be someone they are not – and usually there is no way of finding out if they are telling lies. But games can still be fun so long as you follow some simple rules designed to protect you and your friends.

The basics are pretty easy to grasp. Don't give away personal information that you may regret later or anything about you, your family or friends, and do treat everyone you encounter online with some sensible suspicion. When you strike up conversations over the Internet with new people, never tell them your real name, email address or home address – and deal swiftly with Cyber Bullies. Cyber Bullies will try to find out information about you and then find ways to use it to annoy or upset you. Just like real life bullies, they are cowards who need closing down – and the best way to close them down is the simplest, block them from being able to send you any messages at all.

Games are fun – and that is how it should be. Follow our simple rules here to ensure that even online they remain so.

FOR MORE ADVICE AND FURTHER READING CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING:

1 The Ask About Games website, **www.askaboutgames.com**, is sponsored by the UK Games industry and offers a plethora of advice for parents, guardians and players on ways to stay safe and healthy when playing games.

2 To report extreme Cyber Bullies and others, visit **www.ceop.gov.uk**

3 The three current console makers – Microsoft, Nintendo and Sony – all offer advice on responsible gaming. Click below to visit these pages:

  1 Microsoft - **http://www.xbox.com/en-GB/playsmart/**

  2 Nintendo - **http://www.nintendo.com/corp/parents.jsp#parental**

  3 Sony - **http://uk.playstation.com/help-support/ps3/guides/detail/item48595/Safeguards-with-PlayStation/**

SAFE ONLINE GAMING TIPS FOR CHILDREN

DO

Do treat all the new people you meet online as strangers. Most will be very friendly but they may not actually be the person, or the age, they claim to be. As a rule of thumb, it is best to question everything and trust nothing when online until you know otherwise.

Do learn how to block another player if their behaviour is inappropriate or makes you feel uncomfortable.

Do not be a victim. If you think someone is a Cyber Bully and their actions have been especially mean and made you feel sad, ask a parent or guardian to report them to a game's moderator or customer support team.

Do look after one another online. Giving out a friend's personal information online – including photos – may seem harmless but it could put them at risk. So do not do it.

Do tell your parents if you are scared by anything anybody tells or shows you while playing online.

Do be careful when you use voice chat to communicate to other players online. It can feel as natural as chatting on the phone to friends, but remember here you will probably be chatting to a complete stranger.

DON'T

Don't let your guard down online – never forget that people may not be who they say they are.

Don't use your real name for your username or 'handle', use a nickname that is not going to attract the wrong type of attention.

Don't give out any private information to strangers. Your address, phone number or any other personal details are private and should remain private. Get a family email address that you can give out rather than private individual email addresses.

Don't show or send your picture to anybody online that you don't know.

Don't meet someone you have only been in touch with online. If they keep asking to meet up, tell your parent or guardian.

Don't use webcams unless it is with people you know - and remember to turn them off after use.

askaboutgames.com

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