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Tips and strategies to help children manage in-game spending



Use tools to control purchases on connected devices and gaming platforms

Agree a spending limit with your child. Using the available spending limit settings can be a sensible way to help them stick to this. It will give you the chance to have a conversation about the risk of overspending. Some good approaches to take are to either set a monthly limit or allow them to use their pocket money to purchase game credits (often in the form of a gift card).



www.internetmatters.org/parental-controls/gaming-consoles



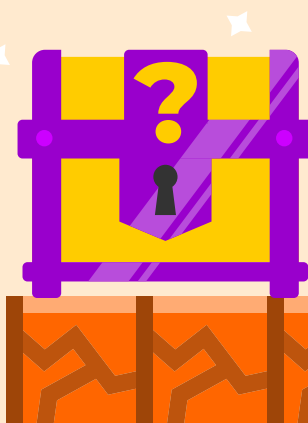
Talk about ways to manage what children buy in games

Discussing free versus paid for games is important. Help them to understand that nothing is really free – although there may be no up-front cost to download a game, users will be paying with their time (having to watch adverts in between each level) or their data (no one reads the terms and conditions but when you agree to these in order to be able to play you may be agreeing that your data can be shared widely.)

In game tools and settings will allow parents to determine what sort of transactions their children can make. **A discussion about loot boxes is particularly important**, explaining how they work and that the likelihood of getting something worthwhile is small – yes, the videos that show a celebrity opening a box and getting something amazing exist – but think about who they are – will it be the same for the rest of us? Talk about the business model here and how it works.



www.internetmatters.org/hub/news-blogs/response-to-the-loot-box-consultation/





Set a weekly or monthly spend on in-game purchases

Have a discussion and agree what would be a sensible amount. Try not to let your child spend all of their money on online items and encourage them to think carefully about the value/worth of what they are spending their money on. Game consoles and games themselves offer good controls that will help parents and children set up safeguards to prevent unwanted purchases. Try to set aside some time to look at these and use them properly.



Help children to maintain their privacy whilst online gaming

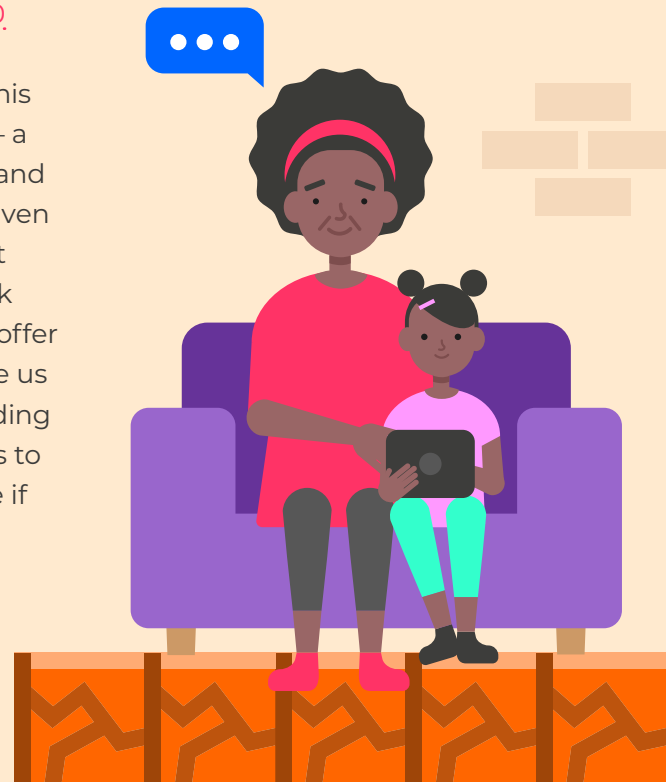
Most games will have parental controls that will allow some restrictions on who players can communicate with online. These can range from not allowing communication at all to only communicating with named individuals and friends that they are connected with. Some games moderate their chat features by not allowing personal information to be shared and blocking users who use inappropriate language. Some of the more sophisticated software is able to identify and prevent adults talking to children. **Encourage children to only use the in-game chat facilities rather than move away from the (relatively) safer space of the game into other social media platforms which may be unmonitored and where it is easier for a one-on-one chat to take place.**





Play games together

Research carried out after the lockdown in 2020 found that **1 in 5 parents were playing video games with their children during lockdown**. This is something that we should all try to continue – a shared experience will help foster the dialogue and discussion that is so important. If children are given the impression that we aren't interested in what they are doing (or only interested when we think there is a problem) then they will be unlikely to offer information about what they are up to or involve us in discussions. Equally, having some understanding of the game and what it entails will help parents to give a more appropriate and balanced response if and when something goes wrong.

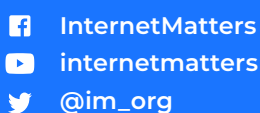


Talk about the importance of age ratings (PEGI ratings) on games

Have a conversation about why games have been given the age ratings that they have. PEGI has two different types of labels – one that shows the age that the game is suitable for and others that are content descriptors. Explain that this is not just about the type of content that children will encounter but also about the capabilities within the game to make purchases or to chat with other users. A common misconception is that the PEGI age ratings relate to the level of difficulty or the skills needed to complete a game – but they only refer to the age suitability.



Visit internetmatters.org for more advice



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