

My First Console

Setting your child up for responsible gaming



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- ➔ What to know about console safety
- ➔ Finding the right console
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Introduction

Gaming can be a fantastic source of fun, challenge and social interaction for children.

It can help develop hand-eye coordination, problem-solving skills and strategic thinking. Alongside the many benefits, parents should be aware of the tools and tips available to help ensure a positive experience for all.

In this guide, you'll learn about some of the different consoles and the parental controls available to you. You'll also get guidance on managing communication, content and how to manage in-game spending to help ensure a safe and enjoyable gaming experience for your child.



Next section

What to know about console safety

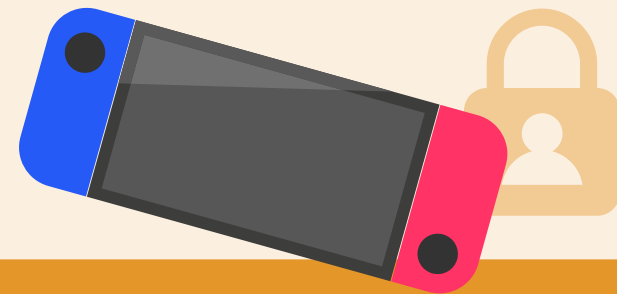




What to know about console safety

Children who play online video games can choose to connect and socialise with friends from school and, potentially, gamers all over the world. For many children, this means that they also find a community and a sense of belonging.

This section dives deep into what you might want to consider when it comes to console safety and how to approach parental controls, in-game purchases and the games your child can play. It will equip you with the knowledge you need to help ensure your child has positive gaming experiences.



What should I be aware of?



How to set your child up for a positive gaming experience



What should I be aware of?

Communication



Some online games let players communicate directly with their teammates or other users. This might happen via text and/or voice chat. Other games only let players communicate with pre-approved messages or gestures.

Most games and consoles with chat options have built-in parental controls, which you can use to customise who your child can talk to. As a family, decide on the level of communication you're comfortable with. You can even block all forms of communication until your child is older. As they grow, you can revisit these settings to better reflect their needs.

Spending



Many video games now let players enhance or customise their playing experience through optional in-game purchases. The types of purchases vary depending on the game. Common examples include items for a player's avatar, in-game items, in-game currencies and expansion packs.

Parents can manage their family's in-game spending via the parental controls available on their games consoles or in-game. It's a good idea to involve your child in these decisions so they understand why they're in place, understand that real money is involved and know to come to you if there's something they'd like to purchase.

Content



As your child explores their first console, they'll discover a wide range of interactive experiences available to them – from action games to puzzles to story-driven narratives.

The parental controls on their console will help you make sure that your child only has access to the video games that best suit their age, interests, ability and maturity.

While most online gaming experiences will be both positive and fun, it's important to make sure your child knows what to do if they come across anything that makes them uncomfortable or has the potential to cause them distress.

How to set your child up for a positive gaming experience



Set parental controls

Most gaming consoles, along with some video games, offer parental control settings on the device or through a separate app. You can use these controls to restrict online interactions, limit access to mature content and manage in-game spending. Remember to regularly review and revisit these settings as your child gets older.



Have regular and open conversations

Talk openly with your child about positive online gaming experiences and what they look like. Discuss things to watch out for and what to do if something goes wrong or if they feel uncomfortable. Examples could include coming to you and reporting or blocking other players or content.



Lead by example

Practise responsible online behaviour and encourage your child to act as respectfully and inclusively as they would in their offline interactions. For instance, take regular screen breaks, treat others with respect and consider setting yourself monthly spending limits.



Consider offline play

Many games offer offline modes, which do not contain any chat or messaging features. This is especially helpful for younger children who you might not yet want to interact with others online.



Play together

Gaming with your child allows you to monitor their online interactions and model safe online behavior. It's also an excellent and fun way for your family to spend time together.

By actively managing online safety and having regular conversations, you can help your child safely enjoy the many benefits of gaming.

Remember that online safety is ongoing, so regular check-ins are a must. Revisit these topics regularly as your child grows and explores the online world further.

Next section

Finding the right console

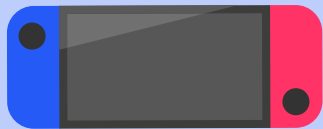




Finding the right console

There are a range of video game consoles for your family to choose from. Three of the most popular consoles are Nintendo Switch, PlayStation® 5 (PS5®), and Xbox Series X|S.

Learn about these and other gaming consoles along with the parental controls they offer to manage in-game spending, content and more.



Nintendo Switch



PlayStation 5 console



Xbox Series X|S consoles



PC Gaming



Other consoles

Nintendo Switch

The Nintendo Switch is designed to fit your life, transforming from home console to portable system in a snap.

You can play the games you want, wherever you are, however you like – at home or on the go – with Nintendo Switch. Bring the full home-gaming experience with you and your family to the park, on an aeroplane, in the car or to a friend's house. The Nintendo Switch family is home to exclusive games from franchises like Super Smash Bros.™, The Legend of Zelda™, Mario Kart™ and many more.

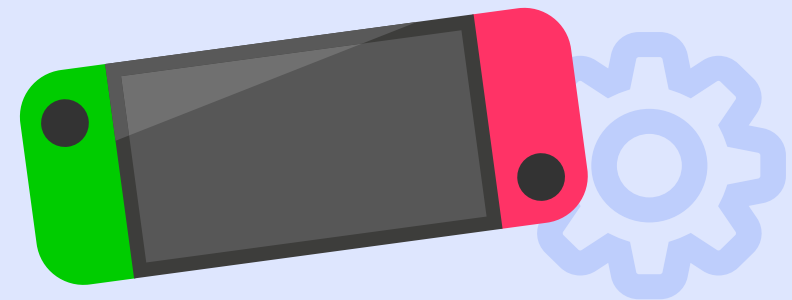
Parental controls

The Nintendo Switch Parental Controls app is a free smart device app which you can link with Nintendo Switch to easily monitor what and how your children are playing. If you do not have a smart device, you can also set certain restrictions on Nintendo Switch directly.

The Nintendo Switch Parental Controls app allows you to set guidelines that work for you and your family. With the app, you have the power to monitor what games your child is playing, set a time limit for how long your child is allowed to play and prevent your

child from playing games that are inappropriate for their age, alongside a variety of other features.

A parent or carer can access account-specific parental controls for supervised accounts via their Nintendo Account settings or by clicking to their account from the Nintendo Switch Parental Controls mobile app. [Please visit the website for the full list of possible restrictions.](#)



See step-by-step controls



PlayStation® 5 console

The PlayStation 5 console offers a wide variety of games, which means every gamer can benefit. It also has various features for a more immersive gaming experience, including 3D Audio and DualSense wireless controllers with haptic feedback and adaptive triggers that will bring gaming worlds to life.

Parental controls

The PlayStation Network (PSN) lets you set parental controls across PlayStation consoles, including PS5 and PS4. Like other consoles, you can set restrictions on communication, content and spending. You can access PlayStation's Family Management features through PS5 and PS4 consoles, or by downloading the PlayStation Family app.

[Visit the PlayStation website for more advice on setting parental controls.](#)



See step-by-step controls



Xbox Series X|S consoles



All Xbox Series X|S consoles deliver next-generation gaming, such as faster loading, the ability to seamlessly switch between multiple games with Quick Resume, richer and more dynamic worlds, and frame rates up to 120 FPS.

When combined with an Xbox Game Pass subscription, you can enjoy access to hundreds of Xbox games for a low monthly price, depending on the Game Pass plan you choose.

The primary difference between the consoles is that the Xbox Series X displays games at native 4K and can be equipped with a UHD Blu-ray Disc player. Xbox Series S is designed for disc-free gaming at 1440p (with the ability to upscale to 4K). All Xbox Series X|S consoles have the option to expand available custom storage via the Storage Expansion Card.

Xbox Family Settings

The Xbox Family Settings app empowers parents and caregivers to help manage their children's gaming on Xbox consoles via an iOS or Android device. Through the app, parents and carers can set screen time limits, set content filters, view weekly activity reports, manage their communication settings on Xbox and access to multiplayer titles, and more to ensure an even safer gaming experience for you and your family.

Through comprehensive settings that span across screen time, content, purchase, friends list and privacy restrictions, parents and carers can easily customise the gaming experience to fit their family's needs. Activity reports also provide additional peace of mind through a convenient way to stay updated on your family's activity on Xbox consoles. [For further information, visit here.](#)

See step-by-step controls



PC gaming

PC gaming can offer more potential for customising the gaming device as users can select different options for memory and graphics cards, for example.

Make sure the PC can support the specifications for the games your child wants to play. Do your research before you purchase to make sure it's the best choice for you and your family.

Parental controls

On a PC, the available parental controls will depend on which operating system the computer uses. In some cases, you might need to download an additional app

such as [Google Family Link](#) to support your child's safety. Apps like [Apple's Screen Time](#) for Mac and Microsoft Family Safety for Windows often come built-in and let you manage screen time, content, spending and more.



Other consoles

There are other consoles available, such as handheld consoles and retro consoles focused on classic games.

However, parental controls might not be as clear, so it's worth exploring the console settings to see what you can customise to keep gaming positive.



[Go to console buying guide](#)



[Find more parental controls guides](#)



[Next section](#)

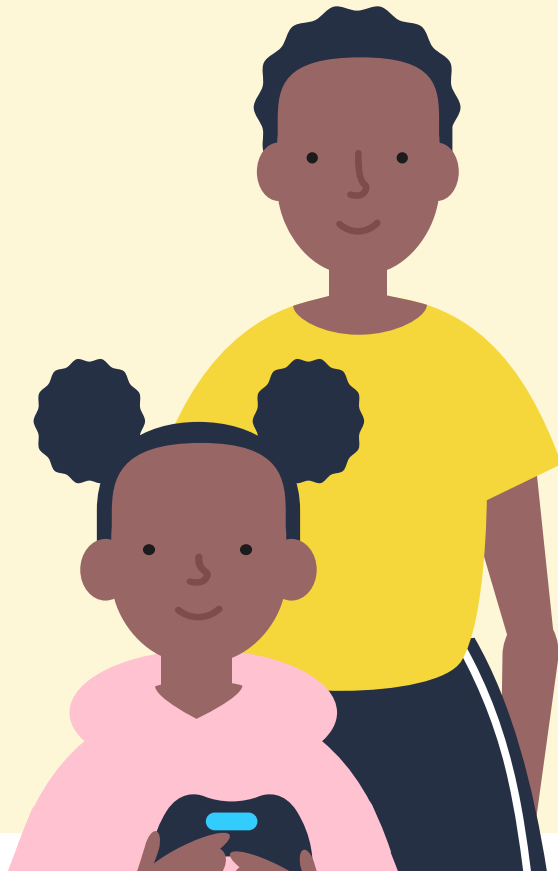
Things to consider





Things to consider

Before deciding on your child's first console, it's important to consider your child's age and interests, as well as what consoles their friends play on. You'll also want to think about your household's overall approach to gaming and what's right for your budget.



Understanding age & interests



3 things to keep in mind



Understanding age & interests

When choosing a console, consider your child's age and abilities to help you make the right choice for them.

Younger children (Under-8s):

For very young children, tablets are a good starting point when it comes to playing games. At this age, children might struggle to use standard video game controllers. Additionally, there are educational and age-appropriate games available that could help introduce gaming.

Primary school age (8-11):

At this age, your child might want to transition to a dedicated gaming console. You'll want to consider the types of games available for the different consoles to help you make a decision that best supports their interests. Setting up parental controls lets you customise who they talk to and what they can play.

Note: Some games are exclusive to certain consoles, so you don't want to accidentally purchase a console that doesn't support the game they want to play or that their friends aren't playing on. Matching their interests to the console's game library will help them get the most out of their gaming experience.

Teens (12 and up):

Children in secondary school tend to gravitate towards the social experience of their favourite games. Games consoles like PlayStation® 5, Xbox Series X|S and Nintendo Switch all have games with communication options that could benefit them while providing a range of safety features.



3 things to keep in mind

Budgeting



The cost of gaming consoles, games and accessories can add up quickly if you're not careful. Some consoles offer a catalogue of games through subscription services, and these can provide a cost-effective solution. Still, you should check that your child is interested in the games available and that they are appropriate for their age and ability before you sign up.

Whether using a subscription or not, set a realistic budget for any purchases and discuss it with your child. Popular consoles have built-in parental controls or apps to help manage spending.

Where the console is used



Where will the console live? Make sure you have a dedicated space for it with proper ventilation. Also consider whether there is a common space for your child to use it. This can make it easier to enjoy the console as a family and play together.

Family ground rules



Before your family starts playing, discuss and agree on rules around usage. This might include screen time limits, responsible online behaviour and expectations for game content and purchases. Again, you can make use of parental controls to help support these boundaries.



Next section

Conclusion





Conclusion

Video games can be a fantastic source of entertainment, learning and social interaction. As such, children getting their first console are entering an exciting milestone in their digital life.

By putting online safety first, setting clear boundaries and choosing a console that suits your family's needs, you can make sure your child enjoys the many benefits of gaming in a safe and responsible way.

Remember that, like most technology, video games and parental controls are constantly changing to help meet players' needs. This might mean the introduction of more ways to customise your child's gameplay experience or new features in the games themselves. You can stay on top of these changes at internetmatters.org.



Resources for video game safety



Terms you should know



Resources for video game safety

You can get support setting up your child's first console to keep them safe while they game with a range of advice and how-to guides.

Step-by-step parental controls guides

Learn how to set consoles and video games up to best suit your family's needs.

Online money management guide

Find expert tips and advice to manage your child's online spending and budgeting.

In-game spending guide

Learn about the forms in-game spending might take to help your child learn positive habits.

My first connected device

Find advice to support your child's online safety with their first device connected to the internet.

Console buying guide

Compare different video game consoles based on specs, price and safety.

Online gaming advice hub

Explore the benefits and potential watchouts of gaming along with expert safety tips about popular video games.

The future of esports

Dive into the world of esports to understand how it can impact children.



Find support in having conversations about video games, setting up parental controls and choosing the right games for your child.

Terms you should know

Improve your gaming vocabulary with the words and definitions below.

AR: Augmented reality. It refers to an app or game that combines virtual graphics with the real world. An example of such a game is Pokémon Go.

Block: An action users can take against others to stop contact and interaction.

Clutch: A slang term that, used in gaming, refers to someone helping win a game. E.g. She came in clutch.

Console: A dedicated electronic device used for playing video games like Nintendo Switch, Xbox Series X|S or PlayStation 5.

DLC: Downloadable/Downloaded content. It refers to additional content that players can download, usually for a price, to customise their gameplay.

Metaverse: A term used to describe a virtual space where users can interact through games, events and other activities across platforms.

Mods: Moderators or Modifications. Moderators review reports and help make gaming spaces safe. Modifications refer to gameplay elements that are changed by users such as adding an item that wasn't created by the game owners.

Take the L: A slang phrase for 'take the loss'. It's used when someone can do nothing else but accept a loss.

Report: An action that users can take against others or content that breaks a game's rules. It is anonymous.

W: Short for 'win'. Sometimes shortened further to 'dub' instead of W (double U).

See full internet glossary

