



ONLINE GAMING & VOICE CHAT:

A PARENT'S PLAIN-ENGLISH GUIDE

Online games are fun, social and exciting. But voice chat and online play come with risks. This guide helps you understand how to keep your child safe and confident.

Here's what parents need to know.

84%
of 3-17 year olds play video games online
Ofcom (2023)

70%
of kids play with others online at least weekly
Ofcom (2023)

60%
of players aged 8-17 use voice chat in games
Nielsen (2023)

1 IN 5
players have had a negative experience in-game
RSAC (2023)

1 WHAT IT IS

Playing video games online with or against others. Voice chat lets players talk in real time.

2 HOW IT WORKS

You connect through the internet. You can play, text or talk with people in the game.

3 WHAT KIDS LIKE

Teamwork, challenge, chatting with friends, winning, events, customisation and new updates.

4 KEY FEATURES

Multiplayer modes, voice or text chat, friend lists, clans, streaming and in-game purchases.

5 THE RISKS

Strangers, toxic chat, scams, bullying, inappropriate content and overspending.

6 THE CONVERSATION

Talk early. Listen often. Set clear boundaries and agree on what's okay.

WHAT MAKES GAMES SOCIAL (AND FUN)

 Teamwork Work together to win.	 Make Friends Play and chat with others.	 Events & Updates New content keeps games exciting.	 Progress & Rewards Levels, badges and rewards feel good.
 Voice Chat Talk in real time with your team.	 Customisation Skins, outfits and personal style.	 Watch & Learn Streamers and videos inspire and entertain.	 Competition Ranked play and challenges.

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO UNDERSTAND

- It's not just a game.**
It's social. It can shape mood, confidence and how kids connect with others.
- Not everyone is who they say.**
People can hide their age, identity and intentions online.
- Balance is important.**
Gaming can be healthy. Too much can affect sleep, school and wellbeing.

Your guidance helps your child make safe and smart choices online.

BY THE NUMBERS

 55% of children have talked to people they don't know while gaming Ofcom (2023)	 36% of players have heard offensive language in voice chat Nielsen (2023)	 26% of kids have been asked for personal information RSAC (2023)	 7 IN 10 parents worry about online interactions Parent Zone (2023)
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SAFETY FEATURES / SETTINGS

<p>WHAT EXISTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Privacy & Profile Settings Control who can see and contact your child. Voice & Text Chat Controls Mute, block or filter players and chat. Friend & Party Controls Manage friend requests and party invites. Content & Age Ratings Games have age ratings and content info. Reporting & Blocking Report players and block unwanted contacts. 	<p>WHAT TO CHANGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set accounts to private. Limit who can message or invite. Turn on chat filters if available. Disable voice chat with strangers. Review privacy and data settings. <p>Find these in: Settings > Privacy or Account > Communication</p>
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STEP-BY-STEP: KEEP YOUR CHILD SAFE

- Set up accounts together.**
Use real info, strong passwords and privacy settings.
- Know their games and friends.**
Ask who they play with and how they met.
- Talk about voice chat.**
Explain kind language and what to do if someone is mean.
- Set time limits.**
Agree on screen time and take regular breaks.
- Manage spending.**
Use parental controls and agree on budgets.
- Stay involved.**
Show interest. Play together. Keep the conversation going.

THE RISKS WORTH KNOWING

- Strangers & Grooming**
Adults may try to befriend kids for harm.
- Toxic Behaviour**
Swearing, insults and hate can hurt confidence.
- Bullying & Harassment**
Targeted players may feel scared or upset.
- Inappropriate Content**
Voice chat or game content may not be age-appropriate.
- Scams & Phishing**
Fake giveaways or links can steal information.
- Overspending**
In-game purchases can add up quickly.

THE 10-MINUTE CONVERSATION

- What games are you playing right now?
- Who do you play with or chat to?
- Has anything online ever upset you?
- What would you do if someone was mean or made you uncomfortable?

TRUST OVER SURVEILLANCE
Open talks build trust and keep kids safe.

IF THINGS GO WRONG

STAY CALM & GATHER EVIDENCE

- Listen and reassure your child.
- Save screenshots or recordings.
- Note dates, times and usernames.
- Do not delete anything.

REPORT & SEEK HELP

- Report the player or content in-game.
- Use the platform's report tools.
- Block the player.
- Contact Childline if you need support.
- Get help from school if needed.

You did the right thing. Help is available.