

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO MINECRAFT

Many parents are puzzled by the game Minecraft. It looks like virtual 3D lego building game but this video game doesn't have levels to pass through until your get to the end of the game. This game focuses on the endless possibilities of build with your imagination and is what has kept Minecraft so popular. Chances are your child either wants to play, is just starting out with the game or is right into the Minecraft world!

This guide is intended to be a quick jump start into learning more about Minecraft, just for parents. Included is:

- An overview and things to be aware of
- Quick start guide and further resources to help
- Tips and conversation starters to have with your child(ren) about their use of the game
- A Bonus! Watch our video chat with parent, Tara and her daughter Sojo, a 10-year old avid minecrafter



Video URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IrtCDe40jg>

SoJo's YouTube Channel: [Statafuel](#)

Her first video touring her minecraft world: [01 Minecraft My Dojo](#)

What is Minecraft?

Minecraft is a multi-platform "sandbox" adventure game (like a virtual 3D lego-like building game) which means that players are given a hollow virtual world with which they can build things. Players explore the world and use the building blocks of the game (wood, stone, bedrock, iron ore, sand, etc) to create nearly anything they can imagine - from castles, to oceans, to rollercoasters, to cities to replicating their own backyard/house/school even their town! The possibilities are endless! It has been rated as suitable for 7+ up to 13+ depending on which version of the game you are playing.

Why do kids like it?

It's a game where you have the ability to play anyway you want and with nearly endless space and resources in which to do it. It doesn't come with any rules, instructions or guidance as to what a player should do (or should not do) - it's play for the sake of play which is probably what makes the game so appealing. Every single Minecraft map generated (the space in which players play and explore) is unique.

What are the benefits?

Not all video games are equal and we know there are some really silly, pointless, time-wasting video games out there - Minecraft has proven itself to not only be a fun game but a [worthwhile game](#) to play. There are a number of skills that can be learned and developed from playing minecraft so much so that some schools are incorporating Minecraft into the classroom. In the linked video you heard Tara talk about how Sojo's Grade 2 class incorporated minecraft into a citizenship unit with some outstanding results.

Some of the benefits of playing Minecraft include:

- Develops problem solving skills
- Improves computer literacy (basic programming/software skills)
- Encourages creativity and helps to develop design skills
- Encourages collaboration and improves collaboration skills
- Improves mathematical, spatial and analytical skills
- Builds an understanding of 3D environments

Quick Start Guide

What can you play it on?

There is a version of Minecraft for every platform.

Minecraft PC Edition *(desktop/laptop computers; Windows and Mac OS X)*

The traditional and most full-featured way to play, the PC Edition has the most advanced in-game components and elements, better multiplayer support and overall superior Minecraft experience. It also supports modding. Modding allows players to introduce new elements to the game (other dimensions to explore, in-game tools and resources plus other improvements). We'll discuss modding a bit more in the Things to Be Aware Of section. The software is free to download, but you have to pay a one-time fee of \$US26.95 to create an account. The program won't run unless you log in.

Minecraft Pocket Edition *(app for mobile devices; Android, iOS, Windows Phone)*

This is the cheapest, and easiest to install. It's \$US6.99 on [iOS](#) and [Android](#). Once it's installed, you just hit Play, create a world, and you're off. Some of the elements from the PC Edition are missing (extra dimensions, no hunger in survival mode) and the worlds are smaller, but it is still an extremely popular version. It can be modded (technically) but it is a huge hassle to do so.

Minecraft Console Edition *(Xbox360, Xbox One, PlayStation 3 & 4, Vita)*

With varying prices in the \$US20-30 range, the console licenses are available either through direct download or physical copies, whichever you prefer. Once you've installed the version of Minecraft of your (or your child's) choice, create a Single Player world for starters, and begin exploring. The console edition has the great feature of local splitscreen multiplayer (which PC or Pocket Edition doesn't have). It's closer to the general Minecraft PC Edition experience than the Pocket Edition. The Console Edition supports multiplayer but the player must be logged into a user account

on the Xbox or PlayStation that currently has a paid online subscription. (Without the subscription there's no online play so if you don't have a paid subscription then you don't need to worry about your child getting online.) Modding console games is extremely difficult so the Console Edition can be considered unmoddable.

Player Options

This part can get a little confusing. We've tried to keep it simple as best we can. Essentially, Minecraft has two main player options.

Singleplayer

No one can join the player's game and no one can contact you through the Minecraft chat.

Multiplayer (Local and Remote)

Players can join any game they want, public or private. Players can also see, speak and interact with others, whether they are friends or strangers.

'Local' means players who are on the same local area network (LAN).

'Remote' means either a private server (purchased and/or hosted by a Minecraft server hosting company) or a public server (accessible by anyone).

You can have a rich and rewarding Minecraft experience without ever playing on a remote multiplayer server, but many kids do want to play online as their friends also play online (and there are some really cool servers out there to explore). And if you want to play with your child(ren) you'll need to learn about multiplayer Minecraft.

There are three general ways to play multiplayer:

- Children can play together with friends (and/or their parents) in the same location or room if they are sharing the same internet connection (LAN). On a computer, after creating a single player world, you can choose "Open to

LAN" to enable others to connect to the world you've created. Your friends will need to know your IP address and port to connect to your server. Each player needs their own Minecraft account, so you'll have to pay again if you want to play with your child: one account for you, one for your child. When you see a bunch of children clustered together with tablets and phones playing Minecraft, this is likely how they are doing it.

- You can [install a server](#) on another, separate computer to keep your world running all the time. The server software is free, but again each player needs their own account.
- You can sign up for [Minecraft Realms](#), a subscription service at \$US9.99 /month. Only the person who sets up the world needs a paid subscription, and they can invite others to play with them.

Pocket Edition, Windows 10, and Consoles support those same three ways of connecting with other players, but are incompatible with PC/Mac editions. Realms subscriptions are, likewise, available either for the PC/Mac edition or the Pocket/Windows 10 edition. That means you can't play on your phone and connect to your child's desktop-based world.

Minecraft Console Edition players can always turn on split-screen multiplayer which allows for tandem play by the same players using the same console. Both xbox and PlayStation versions support up to four local players on the same console via split-screen.

Game Modes (for both Singleplayer and Multiplayer)

When you start a new game there are 3 main modes (plus 3 other modes)

Creative

Players can do anything, monsters can't attack them and it's impossible for your character to die. This is the safest mode and is great for younger players to get used to the game

before they move on to the other levels. Players have all available resources instantly and don't need to work for anything. They can build structures, villages, mountains, people - basically whatever they want in their little virtual world.

Survival

Players must survive against monsters and hunger. But the monsters can be turned off by pressing escape, going into settings and turning the difficulty to "peaceful". Players must collect/earn their resources. For example, if they want wood, they must cut down a tree in the game. In this mode there are also creatures (slime, Enderman, etc) that can injure or kill the player's character. Don't worry, you won't see blood, broken bones or anything of the sort. And if the player dies, they just "re-spawn" (come back to like) somewhere safe in the game.

Players must collect resources, build structures, battle mobs, manage hunger and explore the world in an effort to survive and thrive.

Adventure

Players can't break any blocks, but can kill monsters and animals, or be killed by monsters.

Very similar to survival mode, adventure mode has all the characteristics of survival mode, but the players can create maps that limit the survival mode. The player must accomplish certain tasks before they can even reach their resources.

Hard Core

More difficult variant of survival mode

Spectator

Players can fly around and observe the world without interacting with it in any way

Demo

A demo version for those who have not yet purchased the game and would like to try it out first.

Additional Resources

(Just in case you're in need of more information on how to 'minecraft')

- [Official Minecraft Wiki](#)
- [Beginners Guide](#)
- [Surviving Your First Night in Survival Mode](#)
- [Learn the Controls](#)
- [Setting up your own LAN](#)
- [15 part Introduction to Minecraft](#)

Things to Be Aware of:

There's a few potential risks in Minecraft which you may be concerned about. Most however, can be easily managed.

Viruses, Malware and Mods

Viruses and malware may only be downloaded by buying illegal versions of Minecraft or additional "mods". We mentioned mods earlier - additional content that can be downloaded which make small or large changes to the game. Mods are unofficial, but kids love searching for new Minecraft skins, maps and mods.

You might want to:

- Always make sure that you only download Minecraft from the [official website](#)
- Allow your child access via a non-administrative account (they can't run any malicious software even if they come across it)
- Talk to your child about how there are people out there that want to trick them into downloading software that can hurt their computer
- Make a rule that they ask you before downloading anything
- [Use this guide](#) for legitimate sites

Online Interactions

There are no parental control or privacy settings in Minecraft. Many kids like to use multiplayer mode to play with their friends and to play with people around the world. As with most online games and apps, they are risks of encountering bad language, harassment, inappropriate content etc. In multiplayer mode children can chat with people they meet and there's no way of knowing who they are. To help avoid this, you can disable the chat option in multiplayer by:

- Clicking 'options'
- Select multiplayer settings
- Click on chat
- Choose shown, hidden or commands only

You could also avoid online interactions altogether by setting games for single-player only (see the game settings of your edition).

Players explore the world and use the building blocks of the game to customize that world to create nearly anything they can imagine. That also means other players can create whatever they can imagine as well, which could potentially lead to younger players coming across potentially offensive content while exploring random worlds online. There is no way to know what you're getting into until you've joined another player's game. This is when parents really need to keep an eye on where their children are visiting online.

Fortunately Minecraft servers are usually very well moderated and it is generally understood that a lot of kids play Minecraft. Most server administrators are very intolerant of offensive behaviour, and griefing (antagonizing a player, destroying player creations or part of the map etc).



Game Content

You may hear your child(ren) talk about such things as 'zombies, creeper, witches, villagers, skeletons, iron golems and the scary Enderman. (You can find out about any of the creatures and objects in the game by searching [here](#))

Minecraft contains very little violence, graphic or inappropriate content. For example there is no blood in the game and the graphics are very cartoon-like. Players can hit or kill animals but this is not the main focus of the game.

In creative mode you can play without ever striking anything or anyone, you don't need to kill passive mobs (like sheep or cows) to get the items they drop and you don't need to fight hostile mobs. There is nothing trying to attack you so if you want your child to play without conflict, use creative mode. In survival mode, the player can take damage from the environment (burns from lava, damage from a fall) as well as bloodless combat damage from the creatures in the game. Players whack at the creatures until it keels over and disappears with a little puff of smoke, leaving behind whatever resource it is carrying. Be aware that if you have multiple players together on a local shared game, players can attack each other in the game. If siblings and/or friends are likely to antagonize each other, it may be wise to have a conversation about how we treat others online even in a game.

Tips & Conversation Starters for Parents

As a parent of a child that plays Minecraft, understanding a little more about the game and having open and honest conversations with your child(ren) are the best ways to ensure that Minecraft is enjoyable for everyone. Here our top tips and conversation starters:

Invest in some time with your budding Minecrafters

You might want to

- Encourage your child(ren) to show you their creations and explain how they

made them or why they made them that way. Be prepared to be amazed by massive buildings, elaborate cities, wild roller coasters and volcanoes!

Ask about their game

- What are the goals?
 - What inspires your creativity?
 - What else would you build if you had the right tools?
- Try some of the easy, fun, and creative things to do in survival mode (you need to gather the materials) that [Beth Skwarecki](#) shares below. By the way, she learned them from her 6 year old son who learned them from YouTube videos!
 - **Watch the Sunset:** A new day dawns in Minecraft every 20 minutes. You get 10 minutes of daylight, 90 seconds of dusk, seven minutes of night, and another 90 seconds for sunrise. It's kind of beautiful.
 - **See in the Dark:** If a young child starts crying for seven out of every 20 minutes while playing, now you know why. After dark, just snag a Potion of Night Vision from your inventory. On the computer you can search for items by name; on mobile, scroll until you find it. It's dark blue. Right click, or tap and hold, to drink the potion.
 - **Change Your Skin:** Gameplay is typically in a first person point-of-view, but if other players are around, they will be able to see you. You can also switch views while playing and see yourself in the third-person. If you'd like to tweak your look, visit [minecraftskins.net](#), where you can choose a new skin. Hit Edit to customise it to your liking, and if you play the desktop edition, hit Change to submit it to Minecraft's account servers. (Your skin is considered part of your account profile.) If you play on the mobile

editions, Download the skin and save it to your device's photo library. Then you can change your skin from within the game.

- **Tame a Wolf:** No wolves? Look in your inventory for an egg called "spawn wolf." It does exactly what you'd think. Feed one of your new wolves a bone, and it will start following you and exuding hearts. Once the wolf has been tamed, it wears a red collar and is a dog. Do not hit your dog with a bone. They attack as a pack when one is hurt.
- **Ride a Pig:** Hold a carrot on a stick, and all the pigs around will follow you. Place a saddle on a pig, and then [you can ride it](#). The pig will walk constantly, but you can steer with your mouse as usual. To stop the pig, take the carrot and stick out of your hand.
- **Teleport:** If you're playing with your child in multiplayer mode, they're almost guaranteed to wander off. If you type a forward slash, you'll find you can enter commands. A handy one is / teleport, or /tp for short, followed by your kid's player name. You'll teleport right to where they are.

Search YouTube for videos on things to build

Many kids watch tutorials on YouTube to get help, hints and tips on the game. Some YouTube videos include bad language and/or inappropriate comments. You could make searching for minecraft videos something you do together or you could encourage them to use the suggested kid-friendly links shared below.

- [Statafuel](#) (Sojo's (from our video) new channel about Bionicles & Minecraft)
- [Clean Minecraft Videos](#)
- [CommonSenseMedia 10 best kid-friendly minecraft channels on YouTube](#)
- Kids Safe YouTube Minecraft Channels:
 - [CaptainSparklez](#)
 - [TheDiamondMinecart](#)
 - [iBallisticSquid](#)
 - [paulsoaresjr](#)
 - [MinecraftUniverse](#)



Use Child-Friendly Servers

If you're nervous about letting your child(ren) log on to a server with other people, it may help to know that they don't have to. There are lots of ways to set up a multiplayer world and keep it private (see LAN). Minecraft is also tons of fun in single-player mode. However, there are many servers in Minecraft that have been set up exclusively for families and children to play on safely. These servers have strict rules on language and behaviour, which is guaranteed by the moderators. There are even whitelisted family servers where you have to apply to play and only whitelisted players are allowed in. Any players who break the family-friendly rules of the server are "booted out". Some family-friendly servers to get you started:

- [Cubeville](#)
- [The Sandlot](#)
- [Intercraften](#)
- [Crazy Pig](#)



You will need to decide if you are comfortable with allowing your child to use multi-player mode or chatting to other players online.

You might want to

- Talk with your child about staying safe online. Ask
 - What are the ways we can protect ourselves from hurtful or inappropriate content?
 - What do we do if we see or hear something upsetting online?
 - What personal information do we not share online
- Play with them/beside them, at least at the start
- Check out our [Conversation Starters & Family Media Agreement Suggestions](#) PDF download for more ideas

Set time limits

You may encounter difficulties when it's time to put down the virtual blocks just like when it's time to put the real blocks or any other toys away. Setting agreed time limits and using a visual timer may help. The amount of screen time you're comfortable with allowing your child(ren) to have is entirely personal to you and your family. If you're not sure how long or where to start, you might like to check out our resource PDF

[Top 10 Tips for Managing Screen Time.](#)

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Want to learn more?

As parents, you already know everything you need to know to get started. It's really the same conversation you're already having with your children, just mirrored in the digital world.

If you're interested in learning more, please check out our eBook [Top 5 Concerns for Parents in a Digital Age](#)

The topics in this ebook and many of the suggestions for ways to support your child(ren) to stay safe online are also explored more in depth in our [Parenting in the Digital Age online course units](#). You can purchase one, or purchase them all!

The Course Units are:

1. Understanding the New Learning Landscape: exploring new ways that students are learning with technology today
2. Technology Never Sleeps: from phones, to laptops, to tablets, strategies for effectively managing distractions, and finding balance, with multiple devices at home
3. Citizenship in a Digital World: Learning how to build safe, responsible & respectful habits with your children
4. Social Media and Your Child: from Snapchat to Instagram, how, what and why are kids sharing online?
5. It's a Visual World: helping your child to navigate and manage what they see in a media-rich world
6. Embracing Creativity: Going Beyond the Tools: where and how are students expressing themselves, exploring their passions and developing essential skills in creative digital spaces

We have so many great resources, in-depth interviews, and fun quick activities to share with you!

