

Gaming

INFORMATION



For lots of children and young people, gaming is an activity that allows for socialising, creativity, and a space for them to express themselves. So how can you keep up with the positives of these communities while ensuring that children stay safe? Here's everything you need to know.

What are gaming communities?

Gaming is a passion that unites people from across the world. Meeting fellow fans in-game is common, but to really develop friendships and be a part of the wider community around a particular game, players tend to move into different sites that focus more on chatting about their experiences. Gaming communities are facilitated by external sites that offer gamers a place to connect with one another and share advice and inspiration.

Where do these communities meet?

Reddit and Discord are perhaps the two sites most associated with social gaming communities. Reddit has hundreds of gaming threads where users discuss tips and tricks, recommend different games or just share a gaming experience. Discord is by far the most popular external chat platform for gamers, primarily because it allows for easy, high quality voice and text chat mid-game. This makes it an easy social space for friends to communicate whilst playing. There are hundreds of subject-based servers on Discord, covering all kinds of different topics. This means that it's also a popular space to find new communities outside of gaming. Keep in mind that both Reddit and Discord have an age rating of 13+.



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What are the risks?



Age restrictions Nearly all of the external sites that facilitate these communities are rated 13+, and some have an older age rating. Keep in mind that even if a child is 13 and using these sites, they could be communicating with much older users. This could leave them vulnerable to experiencing bad language or other inappropriate comments. If you think that your child might not be ready for this or are worried about the risks, maybe encourage them to stick to the gaming platforms themselves.

Racist/misogynistic culture In 2014, the harassment campaign known as Gamergate was taken up by users of Reddit and the imageboard website 4chan. Users coordinated online attacks – including doxxing (the publication of someone's personal details online), death threats and injury threats – directed at game developer Zoe Quinn, who they felt had introduced overly liberal politics to the gaming community through creating the game Depression Quest. This resulted in lots of women and girls feeling ostracised from the gaming communities they were once a part of. While significant work has gone into rectifying this – with lots of Reddit pages dedicated to women discussing their gaming experiences – there is still a culture in lots of these communities that gaming is an elite experience with no room for women or any other marginalised groups. In more recent years, the gaming platform Roblox – which allows users to create their own games – has seen games based on the Christchurch Mosque shooting as well as Nazi role-playing games. Roblox has removed these games and increased its moderation, but there is always the possibility of new games in this style being created. Despite reports into gaming leading to alt-right radicalisation, such cases are very rare. Nonetheless, it's a good idea to keep an eye on the kinds of community your child is involved in, and ask them about the opinions they are seeing expressed there.

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What can parents do?

Explore safety settings and reporting/blocking functions Starting friendships through gaming communities is a great feature of online life, but it's important to remember that external channels may have different safety settings and age restrictions, and that they aren't all suitable for talking with someone you don't know in person. Make sure that your child understands the risks of moving to a different platform and that they don't message people they don't know on other platforms which aren't monitored by moderators (for example, encrypted messaging apps or other private messaging channels). Remember that it is significantly harder to respond to instances of harassment or abuse on these kinds of platforms.

Stay involved in your child's communities

Despite the stories of toxic behaviour within some gaming communities, they are usually an overwhelmingly positive space for young people to bond over shared passions and interests. Be sure to keep up a conversation with children about any communities they are involved in and continue to take an interest in whatever games they are playing. If you are concerned about a child getting involved in intolerant or otherwise unpleasant communities, explore this further with them and explain to them that games and their surrounding communities that victimise players are hurtful and inappropriate. Finding further support – useful helplines and websites Ask about Games- Online information about specific games and age ratings – including short videos parents can watch to give them a quick idea of a game's content. Childnet - Provides online information for parents around supporting children with gaming at different ages. You can download their Family Agreement template and find tips on using it with your family.

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RED - Toxic

Communités Valorant (18) 79% of Valorant players have received some form of online abuse while playing the game. League of Legends can be combat hostile behaviour, poor sportsmanship, and racist, homophobic, and misogynistic language in in-game chat. Counter-strike: Global Offensive The game was first released in 2012, which means that many people have reached their skill ceiling and want to start fresh. Unfortunately, for new players, that means constantly coming up against incredibly skilled players who might not always be tolerant of new players. Call of duty slurs - killing them, getting killed by them, having too high a kill/death ratio (you're cheating), having too low a kill/death ratio (you suck). Comments vary from a single slur to a detailed rant about how a player deserves to be raped and killed Dota 2 Often touted as an example of bad attitudes and hostile communities. free-to-play, competitive, and team-based can lead to nastiness between players, especially for newcomers.

Green- safer communities

Kerbal Space Programme Recommended for 11+. This may be the one and only game in the entire world where the reddit community is legitimately nice to one another and the toxicity level is at nearly 0%. Destiny ESRB Teen - people generally aren't attacking each other at all, and the actual in-game experience with a group of friends is a safe experience

