DIGITAL PARENT’S GUIDE TO GAMING

KEEP CALM & GAME ON

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Some experts say that battle over screen time has been lost; that screens, at this point, are simply part of the human experience. It makes no more sense to worry about eliminating screens as it does to worry about flying and driving. Sure, these experiences have risks—but you cannot reasonably eliminate them.

Even if you removed access to screens from your home, you would hardly be doing your child a favor given that their time outside your home, and later in independent life, will inevitably be intertwined with technology. So instead of avoiding the realities of modern life, you have to manage the risks around them. **As a parent of a young person in the digital age, you are a Digital Parent and you have a great responsibility to teach your child how to live with technology responsibly.**
THE TROUBLE (OR NOT?) WITH ONLINE GAMING

It’s likely not news to you that gaming is hugely popular with children and young people (as well as adults). In your own home, it may be the top screen-time activity that your child leans towards. From free games found on the internet, games on smartphones, tablets and handheld consoles, as well as downloadable and boxed games on PCs and consoles such as the PlayStation, Nintendo Wii or Xbox, there are seemingly endless gaming options.

Gaming is a major industry. Worldwide video game sales approached 108 billion in 2017, thanks to more than 2.2 billion gamers in the world—that’s more than 25 percent of the entire global population!

But does it feel like every time you turn on the news, you hear about another child predator interacting with kids on a gaming platform? Well, the cause for concern is warranted.

As technology relentlessly expands with each new social media networking site, game and gaming platform, so develops new ways for online predators to reach your children. Recent statistics show that the number of sexual predators and online sexual offenses has more than doubled in the last three years, with more than 82% of online sex crimes originating from social networking sites that predators use to gain insight into their victim’s habits and likes. The predators know what social media apps and games your kids are using, so that is where they head.

Whether your child is choosing a sports or mission-based game, what today’s games have in common is that the experience is online; it is interactive and users link up and play together. This online interaction allows users to take part in leader boards, join group games and chat with others, as well as, find and play against, or with, other players. Your child may be playing with their friends or family members but potentially may also be playing with other users in the game from anywhere around the world.

Are you concerned about gaming in your house? Try these tips. Ask questions about your child’s favorite games and learn what makes it exciting to them. Give gaming with your child a try or sometimes observe them playing. Share their excitement about release dates or take them to gaming-related events. Get involved in your child’s gaming worlds and together create family rules that make sense for your house.

• Focus less on screen time management and more on adventures off the screen.
• Make sure your child understands the difference between gaming talk and bullying. Remind them that the words they say and write can be hurtful to others, and hurtful to them if screen shots or other recordings are taken. Encourage your child to apply the same rules for relationships in real life to their gaming experiences.
• Set time limits, share this limit with your child before they start gaming and offer a reminder prior to the end time. This may lead to easier transitions.
• Be concerned by your child’s gaming habits, not necessarily from the number of hours played, but by behavioral characteristics like withdrawal, compulsion, lying and a shift of values.

Remember, you can’t decide on rules that make sense for your home and for your child without a deep understanding of your child’s online worlds. **Play with your kids AND show them that their gaming worlds are not an alternative to real life, just one fun aspect of it!**
ONLINE GAMING IS ALL ABOUT SOCIAL INTERACTION

Picture yourself at an arcade a few decades ago, trying to beat the high score listed on the leader board at the end of each game. This was a really big deal at the time. These days, the idea of competition amongst players is maxed out in the world of online multi-player games. Strategies and alliances during the game, especially in games like Fortnite Battle Royale, where the goal is to be the last player out of 100 others standing, are central to the playing experience. This social interaction is what multi-player games are all about.

As your child enters the world of gaming, you may naturally center your focus on the violent nature of video games. Despite what politicians and the media would have you believe, the actual correlation between violent video games and violent behavior may be largely overstated. Being concerned about what games your child is playing is important, but understanding the social aspect of today’s games is actually the area demanding your most diligent attention.

While Savvy Cyber Kids believes the absolute safest path is to only allow your child to play and communicate with people that your child knows in real life, we also recognize that this prescription is tone-deaf to the essence of multi-player games. This should be the rule for younger children but you may find yourself adopting more permissive boundaries as your gaming child gets older.

Many of the online games are designed for group playing environments with built-in voice/chat functions, from typing messages that can be seen by all players, to sending private messages to just one player and broadcasting audio of the players via a headset as they game.

Depending on the game, all, some or none of these functionalities can be disabled. As a digital parent, you need to be sure that you fully understand the social interaction on every internet-enabled device and game your child plays with and make rules that work for you and your child. Beyond that, you need to be having very direct conversations with your child about what he or she may hear, see or experience in the gaming world and let them know when they need to get you for help—especially if someone asks him or her for any personal information, asks them to talk on another non-gaming platform or meet up in real life.

Gaming experts support the idea of having ‘The Tech Talk’ with your child, purporting that conversations are more productive than restrictions and that each conversation is an opportunity to talk about how what you see in media may not be representative of real life.
“It’s important for you to make parenting decisions based on your actual child, not a hypothetical one—and to graduate your approach based on age. You should use your best instincts, with an eye toward education rather than keeping your child bubble-wrapped until they are thrust onto the stage of adulthood without having had serious conversations with you about sex, communication, racism, [and] aggression.”

For more Savvy Cyber Kids tips on how to talk about some of the more negative aspects of what your children will discover in the online worlds, read our Parent’s Guide: How To Talk To Your Child About Pornography.

THE RISKS

While the concerns about internet-enabled video games are complex, Experts warn that the biggest problem with video games is not the content—but the toxic culture.

“Listen to the voice communications of almost any popular online first-person shooter game and you will hear players constantly using racial and homophobic slurs. Make a mistake in just about any team-based combat game and it won’t be long before one of your teammates chastises you with some vile epithet.”

Areas you should be looking at include:

CONTENT:
The realistic nature of the imagery and movement in video games is astounding and when the game content is frightening, violent or sexually explicit, it may not be appropriate for your child.

STRANGERS:
The reality is that allowing your child to play multi-player games online, is like letting them go play in a park with strangers, potentially very dangerous ones. You need to set boundaries for all gaming interactions with strangers.

BAD BEHAVIOR:
Hearing offensive language, being bullied and becoming accessible to sexual predators are all potential outcomes to playing online multi-player games.
PRIVACY:
If your child shares personal or private information, their name or age, where they live or go to school, gaming account information, really anything from sporting interests to home life details, with people they do not know in real life (not someone they met through a screen!), they are risking a stranger taking advantage of them or worse.

COMPULSION:
Overuse of gaming is something to be concerned about. If your child chooses gaming above all other activities and can’t transition to life off the screen, you may have a gamer who is gaming too much.

SPENDING:
If your child is passionate about a game and the rewards, levels or achievements it offers, they may become tempted to make in-game purchases that further their success or how they experience the game. This can add up, and very quickly! Be especially aware of loot boxes, in-game lotteries where for a fee a player can purchase items that may enhance the game experience.

“Government regulators are thinking that loot boxes look too much like gambling—gambling aimed at kids, no less. Belgium and the Netherlands have banned in-game loot boxes as a form of gambling, and Minnesota recently introduced a bill that would ban the sale of games containing loot boxes to people under the age of eighteen.”

HOW TO STAY SAFE WHEN GAMING WITH STRANGERS

If your child is a gamer, then he/she is likely already playing with other players who are avatars created by real people, people who could be a friend from school but could also be a stranger living on another continent or in the same town. Though you may have intended to never let your child play with a stranger, the very nature of multi-player games where 100 players could be in a single game, makes it nearly impossible to enforce that rule when permit your child to game. And once you open the path to online gaming to your child, their passion for it may seem unstoppable. So, now the question is no longer, should I let my child game with strangers? Instead, the relevant question all digital parents need to have answers for is: How do I ensure my child is gaming safely with strangers?

SET STRONG & UNIQUE PASSWORDS:
Everyone—even kids—needs to assign strong passwords—long, unpredictable passwords that contain numbers and symbols, and use unique passwords for every website, app and gaming or social platform used. With kids, the trick is to have passwords that are easy to remember. Parents you may need to help your kids with passwords strategies. It’s as simple as combining uppercase letters, lowercase letters and some numbers (your favorite food, animal or character with a few uppercase letters and a date of birth and you’ve got a strong password). You may also want to consider using a password manager[sg1].
USE VIRUS PROTECTION:
It’s time to put aside myths that macs don’t get viruses, that mobile is always safe or that viruses only happen on weird web pages or unusual software. Viruses are lurking EVERYWHERE. And you kid is curious and will follow an internet trail with abandon—even to weird web pages and via unusual software. Get virus protection and make sure you regularly update with the latest version, which often times protects your from hackers latest exploits. Do this and you child won’t be taking unnecessary risks when playing, their identity and all their data will be safe. Need an AV program, we can help[B2].

GAMING-RELATED PURCHASES:
If your child is a fan of a particular game, they will be exposed to an onslaught of gaming-themed merchandise as they immerse themselves into gaming worlds, think commercials on YouTube gaming channels or advertisements directly from gamers that your child follows. From here, your child will explore websites where purchases can be made. Be careful—not all of these sites are secure. Shop with caution! Every family should have well-articulated rules about in-game and online purchases.

KEEP YOUR PRIVATE INFORMATION JUST THAT—PRIVATE!:
Teach your child to always be skeptical when a website asks for any personal information. Make sure that they understand what phishing is, a common tactic by cyber criminals where they imitate a familiar looking website or use low prices on popular items or offer a gaming-related prize to lure in potential victims and steal personal data. If a site is asking for a security code, date of birth or uncommon details beyond the usual username and password, don’t trust that web page. Kids who fall victim to fake gaming sites can lose content in the game or even the entire account. To be safe, make sure your child gets an adult’s help before entering any private information.

DEFINE APPROPRIATE SOCIAL INTERACTION WITH GAMING STRANGERS:
Many of the online games are designed for group playing environments have built-in voice/chat functions, from typing messages that can be seen by all players, to sending private messages to just one player and broadcasting audio and video of the players via headset as they game. Depending on the game, all, some or none of these functionalities can be disabled. As digital parent you need to be sure that you fully understand the social interaction on every internet-enabled device and game that your child plays with and make rules that work for you and your child. Your younger child should implicitly understand that they should never accept an invitation to communicate with another gamer they do not know on a different platform. Older kids may get invitations from gamer friends to play on other gaming platforms, like from a PC game to Xbox or Discord. As a digital parent, you need to understand the way your child games and make decisions about what is safe for your child.

Beyond all of these cautionary steps, as a digital parent, you need to be having ongoing conversations with your child about what he or she experiences in their gaming worlds and let them know that they can always seek you out for help.
IS ADDICTION TO GAMING REAL?

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently recognized a medical diagnosis called ‘gaming disorder,’ likening it to gambling and substance abuse disorders. It can be diagnosed by health professionals when the gaming behavior takes precedence over other activities, is repetitive despite consequences, and results in distress and impairment in personal, family, social, educational or occupational functioning, over a period of at least one year.

However, news reports indicate that many psychologists are skeptical that it exists at all as a stand-alone problem and are cautioning that the medical community has just begun its evaluation of this disorder. There is no accepted treatment, or necessarily, insurance coverage, so buyer beware of specialized clinics or gaming addiction solutions.

Much of the debate around the ‘gaming disorder’ diagnosis is centered on video games not being the root of the problem, that the act of gaming itself does not create obsessions but rather gaming is often used as escape from family issues, anxiety and depression. Using this lens then, compulsive gaming is a coping mechanism for anxiety or depression which, once dealt with, can result in the gaming going down significantly.

“Addiction is defined much differently than the sheer number of hours you put into a hobby. It means not being able to hit ‘log off.’ It means not much else feels good.”

Also, what the child who games too much is playing, and how he or she games, can be revealing as to how they interact in real life and the cause of this coping mechanism.

“Someone playing “Minecraft” is going to be completely different from someone playing “World of Warcraft. The first is an online social interaction, the second more of a cosmic survival mechanism. If we understand what genres each person gravitates towards, it informs who they are as a person and why they choose that. Then, we can recommend more healthy behavior.”
Your child may be playing video games that help him or her meet needs that aren’t being met in real life, including socialization, independent decision-making or being useful and making an impact.

“If you’re a kid filling out boring quizzes and papers, it may be hard to feel a sense of urgency and motivation. But band together with friends in an imaginary world, slaying monsters or shaping whole narratives, and those needs can be met in a concrete way, even in virtual reality.”

To be clear, even The World Health Organization says, “Millions of gamers around the world, even when it comes to intense gaming, would never qualify as people suffering from gaming disorder.”

Ultimately, the amount of time spent playing video games is not the marker for defining how much is too much. The child who plays video games but still spends time in real life with friends; participates in other activities off the screen; successfully manages school obligations; cultivates positive family relationships; and gets enough sleep is likely not confronting an addiction.

While there is no hard-fast rule telling parents how much gaming is too much, hours on end of play are not a great idea for anyone, of any age. The task for you as a parent is to ensure that your child has a healthy relationship with gaming. You need to be comfortable with the ratio of video gaming to real life activities in your home. Identify your limits for gaming, so that your home does not turn into a video game battlefield.

**CYBER SAFETY & CYBER ETHICS REMINDERS**

Don’t feel like you can’t remind your child about safety concerns, over and over again! Even if you have told your child that they may not voice or text chat communicate with a stranger while playing a game, it’s worth also reminding them that they should never share any personal information during a game.

**TELL YOUR CHILD:**

- Their gamer tag should not reveal their name, age or gender.
- They should never reveal where they live or what school they go to. Email addresses, phone numbers, photos and gaming account passwords are also off-limits.
- Your child should also implicitly understand that they should never accept an invitation to communicate with another gamer they do not know on a non-gaming platform.
- Remind your child that a stranger is ALWAYS a stranger, no matter that online interactions may make them seem familiar. In the online world, you never truly know who is behind the screen.
- Encourage your child to use respectful and appropriate behavior when gaming. Let him or her know that you won’t let them play with friends who they cannot play nicely with.
- Help your children understand how game developers monetize the experience and encourage critical thinking skills to recognize the influencers of gambling and addiction.
- Most importantly, your child should never, EVER agree to meet up with a stranger offline.
- Be sure that your child understands that you are available to them if someone makes them feel uncomfortable when playing a game.
AS A PARENT, BE SURE TO:

• Do due diligence and read game reviews that will alert you to potential risks of each game or gaming platform used by your child.

• For each game that your child plays, be sure that you understand all the ways that strangers could interact with your child. Make sure that you know who your child is playing with, if they are communicating with them and review the nature of the communications.

• Review what parental controls, especially the ones that further your child’s privacy while playing, are available to you for each game and gaming console that your child uses. Exercise the controls that make sense for your family.

• Understand the content of each game, before your child starts playing, and decide if it is appropriate for your child.

• For each game, review how to report inappropriate behavior.

• Model appropriate screen behaviors while playing games and when on social media.

• Be a role model to your children with human relationships. Don’t parent while staring at a screen!

When it comes to keeping your child safe while gaming, there is no one-stop shop set of rules for digitally parenting. Every family can and should make their own judgements, even from child to child, about what constitutes cyber safety and cyber ethics in the family home.

If you are looking for a parental controls for any device or gaming experience, all you need to do is to pick your favorite search engine and type ‘<product name> parental control settings’. The search engine results will give you detailed information about what kind of parental controls are available to you.

Remember, the best parental control is YOU! No hardware or software solution compares to a parent by a child’s side helping them to navigate this new world. The fact is that no device promising parental control is all-encompassing. The one hard rule we impart to EVERY digital parent is to get involved and stay involved in your children’s digital lives.
WATCHING OTHER GAMERS PLAY

If your child is a gamer, then the odds are that he/she is also watching other gamers play, enthusiastically following the most popular players, maybe even one that is closer to their age than yours. Most eSport players create monetizing content on YouTube or stream on Twitch. You may have even heard your child say, ‘I could do that!’ These vloggers film themselves playing multiplayer games like Minecraft, Roblox, Fortnite, Smite, League of Legends and Call of Duty, perhaps also reviewing products or just acting silly to gain a following. For your kids, watching personalities on Twitch or YouTube has essentially replaced television. The thing that really gets a lot of kid’s attention is that a select few have millions of viewers and make money, in some case, very, very good money.

Some players have significant social media followings, channel donations and subscriber numbers. Personal endorsement and branding deals are becoming more common and experts predict that eSports players will start earning millions per year. Pretty soon, your kid may ask to start their own YouTube channel, with the hopes of making it big. Your video gaming child could go from an everyday school kid to a superstar!

ARE GIRLS GAMERS?

You may think that video games are just for boys but the statistics say otherwise. In 2017 women accounted for 42 percent of all gamers in the United States. While 27 percent of U.S. video gamers are between the ages of 18 and 35, almost the same amount, 26 percent of those surveyed, are over 50 years old.
CONVERSATIONS TO HAVE WITH YOUR GAMER

What messages do video games feed children? The media gives countless negative examples of the misogyny, racism and homophobia depicted in video games and how girls and women are treated by other players while playing video games. Video game advocates believe that young people need to know from the adults in their real lives that they have the voice now to make games better and challenge the loudest in the gaming community who may not represent their values and core beliefs.

This is where digital parenting comes in. You can and should encourage your children to see and challenge biases, stereotypes and the negative aspects of gaming. These conversation starter questions can help:

• The media consistently portrays gamers as male, with girl players being the exception. Ask your kids, why do you think this is? Ask your kids what gender they choose for their gaming characters and see how that changes as they age. Talk about why this is.

• Ask your girl gamers if male gamers treat them badly. Is your girls’ experience of this in sync with the media portrayal as the vast majority of male gamers being sexist? Discuss why those male gamers who fall into that category seem to have the biggest voice in media discourse about gaming.

• Talk about where the assumptions about boy gamers versus girl gamers may have come from and how these assumptions about who is playing games may encourage or stop girls or boys from advocating for change in video games.

• Have they experienced or witnessed racism, homophobia or bullying? Ask your child how it made them feel, what they did or how they wanted to respond.

• Keep the conversation going and, on an ongoing basis, ask your child if anything makes them feel uncomfortable while gaming?

• Many of the games your kids play involve killing other players. Talk to your children about the difference between playing a violent game and how we treat others in real life.
RATINGS OF GAMES

Like films, video games carry age ratings. Choose games for your child that match their age and maturity. The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) ratings provide guidance about video games and apps so that you can make informed choices about the games suitable for your family.

ESRB RATINGS HAVE THREE PARTS:

• **Rating Categories** suggest age appropriateness.
• **Content Descriptors** indicate content that may have triggered a particular rating and/or may be of interest or concern.
• **Interactive Elements** highlight interactive or online features of a product, including users’ ability to interact with each other, the sharing of users’ location with other users, if purchases of digital goods or services are offered, and/or if unrestricted internet access is provided.

ERSB also offers Rating Summaries on its website ERSB.org and on its the free ESRB Rating Search App, with specific examples of material that factored into a game’s rating. Be aware that songs that are streamed or downloaded as add-ons for music-based games are not rated and that their content has not been considered in the ESRB rating assignment.

RATING CATEGORIES

CONTENT DESCRIPTORS

• **Alcohol Reference** - Reference to and/or images of alcoholic beverages
• **Animated Blood** - Discolored and/or unrealistic depictions of blood
• **Blood** - Depictions of blood
• **Blood and Gore** - Depictions of blood or the mutilation of body parts
• **Cartoon Violence** - Violent actions involving cartoon-like situations and characters. May include violence where a character is unharmed after the action has been inflicted
• **Comic Mischief** - Depictions or dialogue involving slapstick or suggestive humor
• **Crude Humor** - Depictions or dialogue involving vulgar antics, including “bathroom” humor
• **Drug Reference** - Reference to and/or images of illegal drugs
• **Fantasy Violence** - Violent actions of a fantasy nature, involving human or non-human characters in situations easily distinguishable from real life
• **Intense Violence** - Graphic and realistic-looking depictions of physical conflict. May involve extreme and/or realistic blood, gore, weapons and depictions of human injury and death
• **Language** - Mild to moderate use of profanity
• **Lyrics** - Mild references to profanity, sexuality, violence, alcohol or drug use in music
• **Mature Humor** - Depictions or dialogue involving “adult” humor, including sexual references
• **Nudity** - Graphic or prolonged depictions of nudity
• **Partial Nudity** - Brief and/or mild depictions of nudity
• **Real Gambling** - Player can gamble, including betting or wagering real cash or currency
• **Sexual Content** - Non-explicit depictions of sexual behavior, possibly including partial nudity
• **Sexual Themes** - References to sex or sexuality
• **Sexual Violence** - Depictions of rape or other violent sexual acts
• **Simulated Gambling** - Player can gamble without betting or wagering real cash or currency
• **Strong Language** - Explicit and/or frequent use of profanity
• **Strong Lyrics** - Explicit and/or frequent references to profanity, sex, violence, alcohol or drug use in music
• **Strong Sexual Content** - Explicit and/or frequent depictions of sexual behavior, possibly including nudity
• **Suggestive Themes** - Mild provocative references or materials
• **Tobacco Reference** - Reference to and/or images of tobacco products
• **Use of Alcohol** - The consumption of alcoholic beverages
• **Use of Drugs** - The consumption or use of illegal drugs
• **Use of Tobacco** - The consumption of tobacco products
• **Violence** - Scenes involving aggressive conflict. May contain bloodless dismemberment
• **Violent References** - References to violent acts

**INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS**

• **In-Game Purchases** - Contains in-game offers to purchase digital goods or premiums with real world currency, including but not limited to bonus levels, skins, surprise items (such as item packs, loot boxes, mystery awards), music, virtual coins and other forms of in-game currency, subscriptions, season passes and upgrades (e.g., to disable ads)
• **Users Interact** - Indicates possible exposure to unfiltered/uncensored user-generated content, including user-to-user communications and media sharing via social media and networks
• **Shares Location** - Includes the ability to display the user’s location to other users of the app
• **Unrestricted Internet** - Provides unrestricted access to the internet (e.g., browser, search engine)
GAMING LINGO

Here are the gaming terms every N00b should learn:

GAME TYPES:

FPS: First Person Shooter—from the perspective of the shooter.
RTS: Real Time Strategy—complete top-down unit control.
MMORPG: Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game—huge online adventure games with many players.
MOBA: Multiplayer Online Battle Arena—similar to MMORPG’s but based on arena fighting.
RPG—Role Playing Games
Sandbox: Where you get to manipulate the game world, walk around and create whatever you want.
SIM: Simulation—games that simulate life and jobs.

OTHER TERMS:

Ace: When the last player of the opposition dies.
Achievement: A completion of a difficult feat in the game, usually gives points.
Add: An additional mob joined in the attack.
AFK: Away from keyboard
AI: Artificial intelligence.
Aimbot: A cheat that locks onto a player before a shooting, usually with headshots.
AoE: Area of Effect. An attack or spell that affects anyone standing nearby.
Aggro: A form of aggressive play.
Auto Attack: An attack that consists of a button or mouse click that makes a character attack a certain target as if on autopilot.
Alt: Alternative character to be played in addition to a gamer’s main character.
AoE: Area of effect.
Attribute: Description of a character’s special and typical characteristics
Ban: When players strategically opt for accomplished players they want to ban in a tournament.
BBL: Be back later.
BIO: Biological break.
Blink: Also known as a flash, a blink is when a character disappears and reappears a short distance away.
BM: Bad manners.
BOE: Bind on equipment.
BOP: Bind on pickup.
Bots: Computer-controlled players found in FPS or battle arena games, with overpowering capabilities.
BRB: Be right back.
Brush: Areas of a map that block vision of a particular area.
Buff: Makes a champion, creature or item more powerful.
Build: Improving your character or base via upgrades and items.
Burst damage: When a lot of damage is dealt in a small amount of time.
Camper/Camping: When a player who found a strategic place on the map sits and waits to kill people.
Casual: Someone who only plays casually, or who doesn’t spend as much time playing video games as other people.
Carry: When a damaged player is protected by the rest of their stronger team.
Channel: When a character casting a spell cannot perform any other actions during the spell’s casting animation.
Caster: Commentator.
Casting: When an ability is charging up before being used.
CC: Crowd control of enemy mobs.
Cheese: Cheap, tacky game play.
Clan: This is your team or the group you associate with.
Cool down: The cool down period in which an ability can’t be used again.
CS: Creep score is the number of non-player characters players have defeated in the game.
Daily, Dailies: Repeatable quests a gamer can complete once per day to raise reputation and influence.
Damager: An avatar with high damage when attacking a mob.
DC: Disconnected from the game.
Debuff: Makes a champion, creature or item less powerful.
Dennis: A phrase for someone new to the game who doesn’t understand the fundamentals.
Denying: When you stop your enemy from performing a kill, often in the context of protecting a friendly character.
Ding: Achieving a new level
Dive: When someone willingly heads into a risky situation.
DLC: Downloadable content, where you buy the rest of the game.
DPS: Damage per second.
DoT: Damage over time.
DQ: Disqualified.
Easter Egg: A piece of hidden information in the game.
Expansion: An addition to an existing game, weapons, objects, characters and extended storylines.
Exploit: A method of cheating by identifying spots on a map with an unfair advantage.
Facepulling: When a group member accidently or intentionally pulls mob(s) to the group by getting too close.
Farm: To stay in one place for an extended period of time, killing a mob or picking up collectibles and materials in a single area.
Feeding: A player who is killed by the opposing player/team more than once through lack of skills and is ultimately helping the opposing side.
Flaming: Harassing other players.
FF: Finish fast.
Fog of war: Computer-generated fog, covering an unexplored areas.
Frag: In-play kill.
FTP: Free to play.
Gamer Tag: A gamer’s online persona or name they choose to be called while playing a game.
Gank: Ambushing a less experienced player.
Gear: Apparel, accessories, weapons and other accessories worn by a character during play, all becoming more powerful/useful as the game progresses.
GG: Good game.
Ginvite: A guild or group invite.
Glass Cannon: Someone who deals out damage despite being vulnerable.
GLHF: Good luck, have fun.
Go HAM: A way of saying go big or go home.
Griefing: Intentionally annoying other players.
Grinding: Games in which you “level up” require you to gain a certain amount of XP by completing tasks or missions.
Grouping: When players intentionally form a group to accomplish a goal.
Guild: A group of players who play the game together, often hierarchical.
Hacks/haxz/Haxz0r: A cheating term that comes up when someone is killed.
Healer: A type of character class that can heal the group and keep members alive.
HoT: Heal over Time.
INC: A group of mobs coming to a specific location.
Inting: Intentionally losing the game.
Juke: Tricking your opponent to move or attack in a direction away from your position.
**Jungler:** Someone that focuses on attacking neutral NPCs and providing support for their team.

**KDA:** Kills, deaths and assists in scoring.

**Kiting:** When a character is attacking an enemy but stays enough out of range to not be attacked back.

**Lag:** Slowing of the game due to excessive memory, low internet connection or poor working computer.

**Laning:** Moving down a lane in order to farm, push and engage with the enemy players.

**Leet or 1337:** When you turn the tide of the game and are regarded as an elite player.

**LFG:** Looking for group.

**LOS:** Line of sight.

**Loot:** Clothing, apparel, accessories and weapons which drop off of dungeon bosses, mobs or AI characters.

**Lust:** A spell used to increase specific abilities for a short period of time.

**Meta:** Metagame, a reference to winning plays.

**Main:** A gamer’s most frequently played video game character.

**Maxed:** Reaching the maximum level and attributes a character, weapon or statistic can attain.

**Minions:** Non-player characters.

**MMR or Elo:** An matchmaking rating that determines where you are ranked competitively against your peers and the kinds of players you are teamed up with and matched against in a MOBA.

**Mob:** A dangerous monster who will attack you in the game.

**Nerf:** Makes a champion, creature or item less powerful.

**Ninja’ing:** When another player ‘steals’ loot from a slain monster, treasure chest or mob.

**N00b/Newbie:** Someone who is new to a game or who plays like they’re new to it.

**NPC:** Non-player characters that are the storytellers of the game and often found in RPG quests, sometimes controlled by AI.

**OOM:** Out Of Mana. Meaning you can’t use your abilities.

**OP:** Overpowered.

**OMW:** On my way.

**Pat:** Patrolling mob.

**Patch:** An update to a game designed to fix bugs, balance characters or add content.

**PC:** Player character.

**Ping/Latency:** The measurement of time from server to player, impacting lag.

**Pleb:** Plebian or less skilled player.

**Proc:** When a subject with a random chance activates.

**Pulling:** When a group pulls a mob(s) or boss with the intention of letting everyone know to be ready to fight.

**PvE:** Player versus environment.

**PvP:** Player versus player.

**PWNED:** You just lost, badly.

**Quest:** A mission in a video game which rewards experience or gear.

**Que or Queing:** Signing up to wait in a virtual line to be placed with a random group to accomplish a goal, dungeon or raid.

**QQ:** Go quit.

**Rage-quit:** Quitting the game with rage.

**Raid:** A mission requiring multiple players in order to accomplish a goal.

**Raid Boss:** A non-player character boss that is harder to beat than the other bosses in the game.

**Reputation:** A player’s influence within a faction.

**Rekt:** Wrecked, broken, crushed, living but struggling.

**Rez:** Resurrection.

**RL:** Real life, outside of virtual worlds.

**RNG:** Random number generation.

**RTS:** Real time strategy.

**Rubberbanding:** When lag causes your character or vehicle to spring back and forth when syncing with the server.
Rush: Attacking before an opponent can defend.

Sandbox: An open-ended game where the player can go anywhere.

Salt: Anger or frustration, typically due to losing.

Scrub: A person who is not good at the game even after learning to play the game.

Shotcaller: The player who decides what tactics will be used during gameplay.

Shutout: Preventing an opposing team from scoring.

Skin: A graphic or audio file used to change the appearance of a character, mount, weapon or companion.

Skill Tree: A gaming mechanic for an avatar or character to earn a series of skills earned by leveling up in the game.

Smoke: Limit an opponent’s vision.

Smurf: A smurf is someone who has created a new account to play with lower tiered individuals.

Snowball: When player/team power is higher than the opposition can manage.

Spawn: A place where a mob, enemy, collectible or NPC appears in the game.

Splash damage: When multiple enemies are hit with a single attack.

Stat: Personal statistics of a character.

Strat: Strategy.

Streamer: Someone who streams themselves online while playing.

Stun: To render another character dazed and immobile.

Squishy: Someone soft, easy to damage, or at risk.

Talent: A, attribute or characteristic an avatar can have.

Technology Tree: A series of technologies that can be researched to make a player more powerful.

Tick: The moment when a spell heals or damages a character.

Tilt: When you play without confidence.

Trash: Mobs in dungeons and raids that are a nuisance but must be killed to get to the boss.

Troll: A person who intentionally starts arguments or purposely tries to lose in a manner that helps the other team win.

Twitch: A leading streaming platform in the gaming Esports community, where gamers go to watch other gamers play. More than 45 million gamers stream Twitch games every month.

TYT: Take your time.

Wipe: When an entire party or raid is killed in combat.

Woot: Success.

WTB: Want to buy.

WTS: Want to sell.

WTT: Want to trade.

XP: Experience

Zerg: Cheap, premature aggression.

Zone: An area in the game where a player quests or earns experience points needed to progress further.
KEEP CALM AND GAME ON

Video games are here to stay and your kids will be exposed, if not deeply involved in this world. Like the old adage says, if you can’t beat them, join them.

The best thing you can do is to engage with your child in a gaming environment. Your goal is to try to understand what makes gaming so fun to him or her. The reality is that you cannot keep them safe in online gaming unless you understand the dynamics of this world. You have to watch a game in progress to see who your child is playing with or to understand what they are being exposed to. Similarly, you cannot successfully set rules or expectations without understanding the nuances of the experience.

Multi-player games can be a positive experience for your child. Time spent alone playing a game is very different from time spent with friends online immersed in a creative and strategic game-playing world, like Minecraft, Roblox—and yes, Fortnite. If it sounds more innocuous to you, and potentially even more productive, you are right. These games can sustain and grow the friendships and relationships in your child’s life. More than that, in video games, your child is also learning how to compromise, follow rules, take turns, resolve conflicts, and solve problems.

Gaming is a social event amongst friends. It’s a challenge of skill and a competition within a larger community. Kids get positive feedback from the experience, mastering a game and accomplishing a goal. You can determine if gaming is a problem for your child by spending time in their gaming worlds. There you can have a birds-eye view of what is good, cool, challenging and meaningful to your child.

As you observe and play, you can also bring all kinds of conversation to the dinner table, including discussions about gaming skills, gaming addiction, and the violence, misogyny and other negatives sometimes found in video games. Your opinions about gaming rules may change. You may find yourself gaining acceptance to your child’s request for using birthday money for an in-game purchase or appreciating why they want to communicate with other players. You may learn to understand why they resist ending a gaming session as they are close to reaching a new level (There is no pause button in online gaming!).

By letting yourself get immersed into your child’s gaming worlds, you can better explain your concerns and your child may then understand and respect the limits that you establish. And, hopefully, you can end the power struggles with your child, leaving the battles for the game itself.

After all, today’s kids are future game enthusiasts and game developers, not to mention the tech leaders of tomorrow. What they learn now about the good and the bad about gaming will shape the games that come for the next generation. More importantly, the ways our future virtual—and IRL—personas interact with each other is being shaped right now on video consoles throughout the world.
BUILDING YOUR CHILD’S INNER VOICE

Admittedly, the power struggles around screentime balance, the reminders—ahem, nagging—that you seem to unendingly offer on repeat, will try your patience:

- **Go outside and play.**
- **You need some physical activity.**
- **Playtime with friends should not only be on a screen.**
- **No screens at the dinner table.**
- **You may not sleep with your device in your room.**
- **Two hours a day playing a video game is more than enough!**

So, pause to acknowledge this: **You are building the inner voice of your child that will become the benchmark of how he or she moderates adult life.**

While a parental controls from a game, console or other device can stop screen time or to some degree control what your child is doing or seeing on a screen, it cannot create this inner voice, this sense of personal responsibility, that your child most adamantly needs to be a healthy adult in the digital age.

Your child needs to learn from a very young age not to talk to strangers, understanding this to mean strangers at the playground AND strangers on their screens, alongside not to share private information online just because an avatar asked. As a digital parent, you should be watching what your child is doing online and regularly initiating ‘The Tech Talk’ to teach personal cyber safety and cyber ethics. Savvy Cyber Kids’ ongoing series, The Digital Parenting Guide to Technology, helps you get the talk started. It’s up to you to teach your child how to engage with the digital world.
STAY UP TO DATE WITH
SAVVY CYBER KIDS FREE RESOURCES

DIGITAL PARENTING TIPS
FOR TEACHERS & EDUCATORS,
PARENTS & STUDENTS, AND
GRANDPARENTS:

Don’t miss out on free resources on SavvyCyberKids.org including the ongoing Digital Parenting Series Parent’s Guide to Technology, monthly blog articles on current cyber safety and cyber ethics issues, lesson plans and activity sheets for educators. Sign up at: savvycyberkids.org/resources/free-resources and read our latest blogs at: savvycyberkids.org/blog.

SIGN UP FOR THE SAVVY
CYBER KIDS NEWS FEED:

We have searched the headlines for the news that matters to Savvy Cyber Kids. Seen with a cyber safety and cyber ethics lens, these clippings keep us abreast of when technology is used for bad—to inspire us to be aware and make necessary changes in our homes and at our schools. Conversely, when technology is used for good, let’s read all about it, celebrate the successes and bring these lessons home. Sign up at: savvycyberkids.org/resources/savvy-cyber-kids-news-feed

WRITE YOUR OWN
DIGITAL BILL OF RIGHTS:

Help your children develop their own personal rules for technology use, articulating boundaries that will keep them safe while still allowing them to curate a positive digital reputation as they explore, learn, share and play online. Visit: savvycyberkids.org/resources/digital-bill-of-rights

GET SAVVY CYBER KIDS
WEBCOM COVERS AND HELP
PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY!

Mark Zuckerberg and the FBI director cover their webcams, so should you! Anyone can remotely control your computer and webcam without you knowing. Purchase at Amazon.com: https://amzn.to/2h3Yr3G
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS OF GAMERS

Want to learn more about a particular game? You can find detailed information, beyond ESRB ratings, on the gaming websites listed below. If you want to see a game in action, be like the kids and go to YouTube to see countless examples of people playing games. Better yet, try it out for yourself by playing with your child!

- **GameSpot** www.gamespot.com
- **IGN** www.ign.com
- **Giant Bomb** www.giantbomb.com
- **Polygon** www.polygon.com

CITATIONS

See the links below to read more about the articles, books and studies that informed this guide:

3. Moral Combat: Why The War On Video Games Is Wrong by Partick M. Markey and Christopher Ferguson
4. https://savvycyberkids.org/resources/free-resources/
8. https://nyti.ms/2lh7nUY
11. Moral Combat: Why The War On Video Games Is Wrong by Partick M. Markey and Christopher Ferguson
Savvy Cyber Kids (SCK), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to enable youth, families and school communities to be powered by technology, recognizes that children may be Digital Natives but are also Digital Naives, who, without intervention, completely lack an understanding of the implications of their digital actions. Founded in 2007 by Internet security expert, noted speaker and author Ben Halpert, Savvy Cyber Kids provides resources for parents and teachers to educate children as they grow up in a world surrounded by technology by teaching cyber safety and cyber ethics concepts.