

Level Up: a parent's guide to choosing, protecting, and engaging with games for children



Embracing the digital playground

For our children, the online world is an extension of their life offline. From school assignments to staying connected with loved ones, the online realm offers endless possibilities, including the realm of gaming.

Through games, children embark on thrilling journeys of exploration, creativity, and skill-building, providing a window into their evolving understanding of the world. It's vital for you to understand the gaming landscape and empower your child to embark on safe and age-appropriate gaming experiences.

The gaming industry boasts a diverse array of options, catering to various interests and purposes. For instance, platforms like Roblox empower young users to craft their own mini-games for others to enjoy, fostering creativity and a sense of community. Minecraft, on the other hand, enables children to collaborate with fellow players, constructing virtual worlds and honing their problem-solving skills. Then there are social simulation games like Animal Crossing that offer immersive and interactive experiences, inviting children to explore enchanting digital environments. Educational games, such as Reading Eggs, have also garnered popularity in schools, gamifying the learning process and making it engaging for young minds.

Understanding the gaming landscape: genres and platforms

While gaming trends may ebb and flow, the styles mentioned have consistently captivated children's imaginations. It is crucial to select games that align with your children's age, interests, and values. Not all games are suitable for young players, even if their captivating visuals

may suggest otherwise. To help you decide what games are right for your child, a little bit of research can go a long way.

The [eSafety Guide](#) provides invaluable insights into the purpose of each game, while the [Australian Classifications Guide](#) offers a comprehensive rating system to ensure appropriateness.

Choosing the right games: age-appropriateness and research

Supporting your child's safety in the gaming world is paramount. Age restrictions exist for a reason, and it is essential to acknowledge their significance. Games labelled as suitable for children typically offer parental control options.

By acquainting yourself with the features in the games your child enjoys, you can create a secure gaming environment. For instance, disabling chat functions prevents unsolicited interactions with strangers and restricts in-game purchases, granting peace of mind.

Fostering empathy and respect: Nurturing positive interactions

We shouldn't overlook the significance of fostering empathy and respect within the gaming community. As we attempt to overcome the digital divide, it's easy to overlook the fact that our virtual companions and gaming rivals are real people, brimming with emotions just like our own.

Encourage your child to prioritise kind and considerate communication, both online and offline. Remind them that words hold immense power, even when typed, and prompt them to reflect on how they would feel if they were on the receiving end of hurtful words.

It is vital to emphasize that dismissing hurtful behaviour as “just a joke” does not negate the pain caused. By instilling empathy in our children, we cultivate an inclusive and compassionate gaming environment, for everyone.

Active engagement: the power of parental involvement

Actively engaging with your children’s gaming experiences reaps countless rewards. Dedicate time to inquire about the games they love, encouraging them to showcase the elements that catch their interest.

Display genuine curiosity and interest as you sit beside them. Not only does this nurture a stronger bond with your child, but it also empowers you to understand their online activities and model positive interactions with others.

By doing so, you become a guiding force, equipping your child with the knowledge to make responsible choices within the gaming sphere.

Creating meaningful connections through shared gaming experiences

Actively engaging with your children’s gaming experiences reaps countless rewards. Dedicate time to inquire about the games they love, encouraging them to showcase the elements that catch their interest.

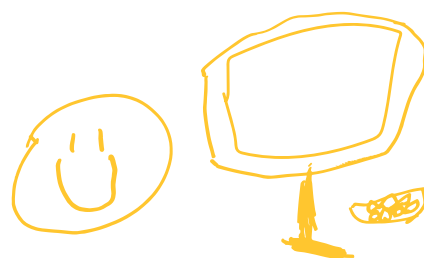
As parents, actively participating in your child’s gaming adventures can foster not only a stronger bond but also a deeper understanding of their digital world. Transform gaming sessions into quality time by expressing genuine interest in the games they love. Sit beside them, ask questions, and let them take the lead in showcasing their favourite aspects of the virtual worlds they explore.

Initiating conversations about their gaming experiences not only strengthens your connection but also provides valuable insights into their evolving interests and friendships. To encourage younger children to open up, start conversations with playful and engaging prompts like, “What’s the coolest thing you built in Minecraft today?” or “Tell me about the adventures your Roblox character had.” By actively engaging in these discussions, you create a space for your child to share their triumphs, challenges, and imaginative creations.

Beyond bonding, this shared experience promotes positive interactions and teaches essential life skills. Through gaming, children learn teamwork, problem-solving, and strategic thinking. By participating alongside them, you reinforce these skills and become a positive role model. Additionally, these shared moments lay the foundation for open communication, making it easier for you to guide your child towards responsible choices within the gaming sphere. Embracing gaming together not only strengthens your relationship but also transforms the digital playground into a shared space for connection, growth, and mutual understanding.

Key takeaways:

1. Familiarise yourself with the different gaming genres and platforms.
2. Conduct thorough research to ensure the games your child plays are age-appropriate.
3. Use parental control options and disable chat functions to create a safer gaming environment.
4. Teach your child the importance of empathy and respect in the gaming community.
5. Actively engage with your child’s gaming experiences.



Telstra tech talk

Scammers target gamers of all ages and across all platforms in a bid to steal valuable virtual items like in-game currency and character accessories. They also attempt to take over accounts and may target popular players who stream their gaming online.

Thankfully, these essential defences are free and easy:

Password managers help. These set, store, and recall passwords so you don't have to. Free managers are built into most phones including iPhone, Samsung, and Pixel, along with web browsers, and are widely-trusted by security experts. Paid options allow for family password management.

Every account needs a new password. Reusing passwords is very dangerous, so ensure your kids use their managers to set new combinations whenever they register gaming accounts or set up new consoles. If they would rather write them down, use a passphrase which is a combination of three or four words in a unique sentence. There's no need for random letters and numbers – just type a regular sentence with spaces and capitals in the usual spots.

Multi-factor authentication is a deadbolt for accounts. It's a complex name for a simple process that will send almost all hackers packing. It validates by way of a code or phone notification that your child is the person trying to log in, and not a hacker with their stolen password. Set it up for gaming and all other important accounts. Some gaming companies even reward players for doing this with free stuff!

Slow down and think is a good rule of thumb for avoid scams. Digital natives have pretty good instincts when spotting scams but make sure they take the time to ask for your help when typing in passwords into anything that isn't an official app or website. They should also be really careful when looking up cheats and game-hacks that require logging in or downloading content. Privacy matters too so ensure they keep their real names out of gamer handles and social media profiles.

