



Online Gaming Information Sheet

At Our Lady of the Angels, we understand online gaming is a hugely popular activity for our children. We want our pupils to enjoy online gaming whilst keeping safe. However, some pupils tell us they play games that are not age appropriate and are seen re-enacting inappropriate scenes on the playground. It is common for children to pressure their parents into allowing them access to games that they are not old enough to play and this can be difficult to deflect. This information is to ensure that you are informed of the highly adult content of some games so that these can be avoided.

PEGI ratings enable you to make informed choices about the games you purchase. This not only avoids unexpected negative aspects of unsuitable games, but helps connect you with games that your family will get the most from.

What the age ratings mean

PEGI 3

Games given this rating are considered suitable for all age groups. They may contain some violence in a comical context or child-friendly setting. There may be nudity if shown in a completely natural and non-sexual manner, such as breast feeding.

PEGI 7

Games may contain some possibly frightening scenes or sounds. Games can show violence as long as it's unrealistic and directed towards fantasy characters. There may be some non-realistic violence towards people or violent actions (eg: bombing of cities or non-human targets.)

PEGI 12 such as Fortnite

You could see more graphic and realistic looking violence towards fantasy characters. Violence towards humans mustn't look real unless it's showing trivial injury. Horror, including dread, strong threat and graphic injuries, is allowed. Sexual innuendo, sexual posturing, references to gambling and some bad language can also be shown, although the latter must be mild.

PEGI 16 such as Ark: Survival Evolved

The game can feature death and injury to humans, including gory and bloody violence if the game is 'arcade style' (ie: not too realistic.) Smoking, drinking alcohol, the use of illegal drugs, glamourised representation of crime and strong bad language can be shown. It can contain erotic nudity and sexual activity.

PEGI 18 such as Grand Theft Auto

These games can show 'gross' violence. This includes graphic methods of death or severe injury, including torture, decapitation and dismemberment, violence against vulnerable characters (including children), sexual violence and threat. It may also include 'criminal techniques', glamorise illegal drug taking and show sexual activity featuring visible genitals.



Remember that a PEGI rating won't cover anything individual users say in a game's chat function so although many games for younger users do have some moderation, inappropriate content can still get through. Keep an eye on this even when little ones are playing age appropriate games.

Top tips on helping your child

Gaming has been linked with lots of benefits, from better memory and problem-solving skills to improved coordination and creativity. It can be a wonderful hobby for your child, especially with your support and guidance. Here are some tips on helping your child play safe.

- About an hour a day seems like the ideal amount of time to spend gaming, but there's no evidence that anything below three hours is harmful. It's generally best to intervene if your child's gaming interferes with other things, like homework, offline friendships, or getting enough sleep or exercise.
- When trying to decide if a game is appropriate for your child, the PEGI rating is a good place to start. Have a look at the descriptors that come with the rating for more detail. If you're still not sure, it might be worth reading some reviews or having a go yourself to see what's involved.
- Lots of games involve opportunities for spending or in-app purchases. It's best to agree a policy with your child – are they allowed to spend any money? Do they need to stay under a set limit? You can also use parental controls to disable or require permission for purchases.
- Remember to mention gaming when you discuss staying safe online. Talk about things like not downloading suspicious files disguised as cheats, as well as the risks of oversharing and contact with strangers. Lots of games have moderators and tools for blocking/reporting, and it's a good idea for your child to know what they are and how to use them.
- Make sure your child knows they can talk to you if they're ever worried or upset by anything. If they do come to you with a concern, try to resist banning games completely – this can feel like a punishment and discourage asking for help.

For more information from the leading experts in providing parents with up to date advice and support, visit <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/gaming>