

Part of our Gaming & Gambling Series



What you need to know about...

GAMES CONSOLES



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What are they?

? 'Games Consoles' ?

Much like a television allows you to watch movies or a radio allows you to listen to music, a games console allows you to play video games. The most modern ones are names you might be familiar with – Sony PlayStation, Microsoft Xbox, and Nintendo Switch – and almost all of them can now connect to the internet and be enjoyed online with friends



Know the Risks

- Online Content**
While modern consoles don't strictly need to be connected to the internet, many of them also double up as an internet browser or provide the ability to stream TV shows and movies, so it's important that the appropriate filters and parental controls are in place to restrict children viewing any unsuitable content.
- Addictive nature**
Games consoles require video games, and both can ultimately contribute towards an addictive habit. Playing too much and too often can force children to become reliant on the good feelings released when playing games, making them more likely to want to play them more frequently, and for longer periods of time.
- Hacking risk**
It's almost impossible to avoid signing up to different services when using modern consoles. Keeping track of all these accounts can be confusing and in a worst-case scenario, fraudsters could gain access to personal information, addresses and bank details by hacking online profiles.
- Online Chat**
Once connected to the internet, players can talk to each other either over headsets or using text chat functions on the consoles. Without the proper protections in place, children could speak to anybody of any age and find themselves building relationships with strangers they know nothing about.

Safety Tips

- Check contacts**
Online predators and hackers often use sly tactics to build relationships with children get them to illicit personal details through gaming platforms or gaming communities. Be on the lookout for suspect communications such as intrusive personal messages or people you suspect might not be who they say they are.
- Look for behaviour changes**
Becoming withdrawn, irritable and anxious when not playing on a games console are trademark symptoms of gaming addiction. If children turn angry when asked to stop playing, that could also be a sign that an intervention is needed.
- Keep details private**
Games consoles will almost exclusively ask you to enter your details securely on the console itself, or through a trusted website tied to the console maker. If somebody claiming to be working for Sony, Microsoft or Nintendo asks you to share your passwords or account details, do not give it to them.
- Use parental controls**
Most gaming consoles will have parental controls which can be used to set up things like family management accounts. From here, parents can often set age limits on games and content, spending restrictions, limit play time and set up passwords and authentications to help keep children safe.

Further Support

- Block and report**
If someone has made your child feel uncomfortable, make note of suspect players' usernames. Often, you'll be able to ban or block these players in a game's settings. If you have proof of their intentions, don't hesitate to contact your local police force or authority with as much information and evidence as you can gather.
- Seek Support**
If you're concerned about your child playing too much on their console and think they may have developed a gaming addiction, try and offer them support. The World Health Organisation has classified gaming disorder as a mental health condition and there may be external providers locally who can offer you more targeted help.
- Keep IDs safe**
Be sure to talk to your child about the importance of keeping their identity safe. If they ever receive messages claiming to be from companies but something doesn't feel right, tell them not to respond and inform you. Things like odd spelling and grammar, strange email addresses, or asking for personal information are tell-tale signs.

Our Expert Mark Foster



Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGbible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.

