

# Parents' guide to gaming safety

Gaming can be a positive influence on young people, from boosting creativity and busting stress to making new friends. But with so many young people spending time online, parents and caregivers can help ensure they have the tools they need to stay safe and healthy while gaming.



# Introduction



**More young people are gaming than ever – but for many parents and caregivers, gaming is unknown territory. Understanding this online world can help ensure your child is gaming safely.**

There are many positive benefits to gaming. It's social, and is often a way for young people to meet, make friends and form communities. It's a chance to escape and explore new worlds, or simply switch off and relax. For some, it might be a space they feel they can truly be themselves.

As a result, gaming can mean a lot to young people. It's important not to assume gaming is a 'bad' habit or minimize its importance, and to recognize that it might be how your child connects to their friends.





# What are the risks around gaming?

**Gaming and the online world does come with risks.** Some young people experience cyber bullying and trolling, as some games allow you to play in teams against other people that you may not know, communicating using voice, video or text chat. It's possible to limit these kinds of interactions using game settings and parental controls, though it's still important to ensure young gamers are educated on the risks of interacting with strangers online, and to be cautious when it comes to sharing personal information.

## **Review age ratings**

Parents can also worry about inappropriate content for young gamers. Games are age and content rated, but it's a good idea to check the contents of a game for yourself if you're concerned.

## **Be aware of in game purchases**

Some games can be monetized, and require in-game purchasing to progress. Games that focus on collecting resources, or gambling mechanics involving real money transactions, can lead to irresponsible purchasing behavior if the player doesn't associate the in-game play with real-life spending. Look for games where skill is the main way to progress, instead of purchases.



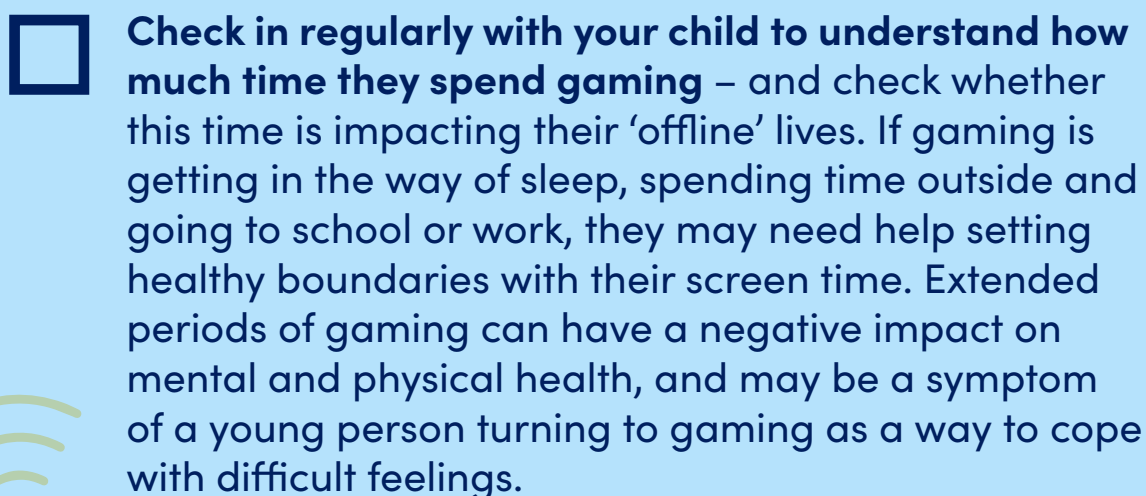
# Body image and self-esteem

**Characters in gaming often uphold unrealistic beauty standards, which can have a negative impact on self-esteem for young people and women in gaming.**

Discussing the unrealistic nature of these representations can help young people understand conflicting feelings around not seeing themselves in the characters they play on screen, and can limit the impact on their body image. It can also be helpful to find positive games about self-esteem that encourage body positivity for teens.




# How to set boundaries around gaming



☐ **Check in regularly with your child to understand how much time they spend gaming** – and check whether this time is impacting their ‘offline’ lives. If gaming is getting in the way of sleep, spending time outside and going to school or work, they may need help setting healthy boundaries with their screen time. Extended periods of gaming can have a negative impact on mental and physical health, and may be a symptom of a young person turning to gaming as a way to cope with difficult feelings.

☐ **Establish set times for gaming and schedule breaks** – this could look like agreeing on gaming ‘windows’ in their free time, to minimize screen time right before bed or in the mornings, or even switching off WiFi at an agreed time.

☐ **Take an interest in their ‘digital life’** – and stay up-to-date with the games and friends they interact with. This will help you to keep track of the content they enjoy and encourage boundaries with other gamers. You could agree that your child does not use voice chat with strangers, or make in-app purchases without permission.



# Practical tips for parents

- **Come up with some offline activities** – discuss activities you and your child can do outside of gaming, and schedule in time to enjoy these regularly.
- **Understand parental controls** – explore the settings on the game or console. Some games allow you to switch off voice chat, block contact with unknown players and report inappropriate behavior. You can also set time limits on play.
- **Learn about the game** – find out which games your child plays, and check the content and age rating. Games are rated for mature content such as sex, violence, gambling and drugs, as well as use of in-app purchases.
- **Choose games about self-esteem** – research some games with positive messages to encourage your child to play. Look for positive female representation in video games, and games that promote body positivity for teens.
- **Be aware of deceptive design techniques and ‘dark patterns’** – these are design tricks used to nudge players into taking an action, like spending money, encouraging long periods of play or even triggering certain emotions. They can also disguise advertising as game content, so young players may not realize they are being advertised to.

To find out more how Dove is transforming gaming into a positive space for young people, discover our first-of-its kind educational game on Roblox, [Super U Story](#).