Online Safety Newsletter Dec 2026

Power Up Parents

Do your kids play video games? Ofcom are behind a new campaign which includes a free family challenge - Power Up Your Play. It is designed to help you start conversations about video games and online safety. Find out more here:

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety/protecting-children/parents-power-up-how-you-can-help-your-child-stay-safe-while-gaming-online

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Virtual Private Networks (VPNs)

A VPN creates an encrypted connection and hides your IP address. They can protect privacy, however there are risks if your child is using one. Wayne Denner has published an article discussing this further:

https://www.waynedenner.com/children-using-vpns-guide-for-parents/

Would you like to read this newsletter in a different language? You can use the translate tool on our web version: https://www.knowsleyclcs.org.uk/december-2026/

Grand Theft Auto VI



GTA VI is the latest game in the Grand Theft auto series. It is an open-world action-adventure game.

What is the age rating?

This game has received a PEGI 18 rating, which means it is only suitable for ADULTS. Nobody under the age of 18 should be playing this game. PEGI state that "this rating has been given because it features strong graphic violence, strong sexual themes and use of illegal drugs." *[Source: https://pegi.info/search-pegi?id=112953]*

Should my child be playing this?

No. The game is intended for adults only and you should take this age rating seriously. The game includes adult themes, for example, drugs can be carried around and taken by the player.

What does the game involve?

The game contains adult themes such as:

- Violence and crime - shootings and physical assaults.
- Inappropriate language.
- Sexual content.
- Drugs and alcohol.

What should parents do?

- Say no - peer pressure can make this difficult, but it is important to set clear boundaries and explain that the game is not suitable for them because it has been designed for adults.
- Use parental controls to restrict access to age-inappropriate games.
- It is important to be aware that even if your child does not have GTA VI, they may watch it being played via live streams on other platforms such as YouTube and TikTok. This may expose them to the same inappropriate material.

There is also a GTA+ subscription available, providing players with access to further features. This is available with a monthly subscription fee.

Further information

https://www.internetmatters.org/advice/apps-and-platforms/online-gaming/grand-theft-auto/

New Technology

Many children may receive new technology such as gaming devices or new games/apps at Christmas. As excitement builds, it is important to take a few moments to set up parental controls to help ensure your child has a safe and positive online experience.



Games/Consoles

- Check the age rating of any new games. Remember that PEGI ratings relate to game content, so it is also important to check whether the game includes in game purchases and communication features such as voice or text chat and restrict access as required.
- If a game allows communication with other players, review the settings and disable or restrict these features where appropriate.
- On the device itself, set up applicable controls such as restricting spending limits. Follow the links below to find out how to set up Parental Controls for popular devices:

Xbox: https://www.xbox.com/en-GB/family-hub
PS5: https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/support/account/ps5-parental-controls-spending-limits/
Nintendo Switch: https://www.nintendo.com/en-gb/Hardware/Nintendo-Switch-Parental-Controls/Nintendo-Switch-2-Nintendo-Switch-Parental-Controls-2873385.html

Tablets/Smart phones

Parental controls can help prevent unauthorised purchases, restrict access to age-inappropriate content and improve privacy settings. It is also important to review any apps your child wishes to download to ensure they are suitable for their age. Find out more below:
iPhones/iPad: https://support.apple.com/en-gb/105121
Android Device: https://support.google.com/googleplay/answer/1075738

AI Toys

Remember, some AI toys can listen, respond and learn from interactions. Check what information the toy collects, how this data is stored and apply any privacy settings available. Ensure your child knows not to share personal information.

Why is it important?

Parental controls are important to help create a safer environment for your child by reducing access to inappropriate content, communication with strangers or making purchases without your permission.

Further information

For additional advice and guidance on parental controls and online safety, visit: https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/parental-controls/

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Fake Accounts

Did you know that on many social media and gaming platforms, users can create multiple accounts? Sometimes these accounts are set up in order to pretend to be another person or they are created anonymously to then send unkind or hurtful messages. This is a form of bullying and can cause distress to the victims involved.

It is important that you regularly chat to your child about their online life. Ask them about the apps they use and who they communicate with. Check devices together so you can see what platforms your child is using and to check if your child has multiple profiles on any of them.

If you find that your child has created an account to impersonate or harass somebody else, try to remain calm. Ask your child why they have set up the account. Explain to your child the impact their actions will have on others and how would they feel if somebody did this to them? Explain to them that this is a form of bullying. Ensure they remove the account, apologise where appropriate and set ground rules for how they use social media in the future.

If your child is the subject of online bullying, then take screenshots as evidence, report and block the account, and inform your child's school if other pupils are involved. Most social media platforms will have policies against impersonation and fake profiles.

Further Support

https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/cyberbullying.html