

# Online Safety Newsletter



## Spring Term 2023

### Safer Internet Day

**Want to talk about it?**

Making space for conversations about life online



Established by the UK Safer Internet Centre (UKSIC), Safer Internet Day is celebrated around the world. This year, on Tuesday 7th February 2023, it was celebrated with the theme: *'Want to talk about it? Making space for conversations about life online'*

Safer Internet Day provides us with a great opportunity to have a conversation with our children about their online lives as well as provide us with an opportunity to brush up on our own knowledge of all things online with lots of resources and online activities available. See below for some links to websites with more information on how you can get involved:



#### UK Safer Internet Centre

The UK Safer Internet Centre (UKSIC) Resources

As usual, the UKSIC have created some fantastic resources, which includes top tips, quizzes, how to talk about difficult topics and what to do if something goes wrong. Find out more here: [Parents and carers - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

Internet matters.org

#### Internet Matters

Lots of top tips to support your child and interactive tools to support conversation. You can find out more here: [Safer Internet Day 2023 - Conversation resources | Internet Matters](#)

**NSPCC**

The NSPCC provide fantastic advice on how to start conversations about Online Safety with your child, including how to tackle difficult conversations. You can find out more here: [Teaching Your Child about Internet & Online Safety | NSPCC](#)

### Broadband Set Up

Have you set up appropriate settings on your broadband/Wi-Fi? Most broadband providers include parental controls for free as part of their broadband package, which means that any device that connects to your Wi-Fi will be protected by any controls you set up. Find out how to set yours up here:

Sky:

[Sky Broadband Buddy | Sky Help | Sky.com](#)

BT:

[How to keep your family safe online with BT Parental Controls and the different blocking categories | BT Help](#)

Talk Talk:

[Keeping your Family Safe - TalkTalk Help & Support](#)

Virgin:

[Parental Controls and Web Safety for Children | Virgin Media](#)

*Remember, children may have devices that use mobile data, so they won't always be connected to your wifi. Ensure you set up parental controls on these devices too.*

Further information:

[Parental controls offered by your home internet provider - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)



# SMART RULES

We use the SMART rules to teach about online safety. How well does your child know the SMART rules?



The internet is a brilliant place to learn and explore, just remember to always be SMART!



## IS FOR SAFE

Never give out personal information to strangers on the internet. Personal information includes things like your home address and your birthday.



## IS FOR MEET

Never ever meet up with a stranger you have met online unless a parent or guardian has said it is ok and is present. Never, never, never, never, never.



## IS FOR ACCEPTING

Don't open emails from people you don't know, they could contain viruses. If you get a strange email from a friend and you think they might have a virus make sure you let them know!



## IS FOR RELIABLE

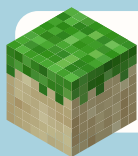
Don't believe everything you read online, check your facts! Did you read it on a reliable website like the BBC? Are other websites saying the same thing? Does it tell you where they got the information from?



## IS FOR TELL

If you have an online safety problem, make sure you tell someone. Tell a parent, guardian, or teacher as soon you can.





# What parents need to know about: MINECRAFT



**Check the age ratings: Minecraft is rated by PEGI as 7+ or 12+ depending on which game version you are playing. The App store rate it as 9+ and the Google Play store rate it as 10+.**



\* It is important to remember that when rating games, PEGI do not take into consideration the communication features of a game. Minecraft does include a chat facility, which adds further risks of seeing inappropriate language/content. This can be switched off.

Minecraft remains ever popular and can be a great learning tool that is often used in schools to teach planning skills, recreate famous buildings in 3D and coding. Players use building blocks (a bit like Lego) to create their own worlds.

## Which mode?

You can choose between Creative or Survival mode - creative mode removes the survival elements of the game (no mobs appearing at night) so may be a more appropriate mode for your child to play.

## What else do I need to be aware of?

- Multiplayer - children can interact with others (including strangers), you can switch this option off within settings or choose to play offline.
- Block and report players - if your child is playing with others, make sure they know how to block and report players within the game.
- Additional purchases - be aware of in app purchases and the purchase of additional items (skin packs) to support (although not needed) game play.

**In addition, protect your child's privacy by using a nickname (don't include their age/birth year) rather than their real name for their profile and chat to your child to make sure that when playing online they know not to share personal information. Also, make sure they know they can talk to you or a trusted adult if anybody or anything is making them feel uncomfortable.**



For more information, read the article on the NSPCC Online Safety blog:  
['Is Minecraft safe for children?'](#)



# What Parents & Carers Need to Know about MINECRAFT

AGE RATING

7+

Minecraft is a beloved classic of modern gaming. First released in 2011, this open-ended 'sandbox' game of building and exploration still has over 140 million players who happily return to play it at least once every month. Minecraft has also been utilised for much more than just entertainment: it's sometimes used in schools to teach children coding, and it's also employed as a tool for computer-aided design, which is another valuable skill. Encouraging creativity and problem solving, Minecraft has plenty to offer gamers of all ages, and it's available on almost all video game platforms.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### PUBLIC SERVERS

Joining a public network (called a server) lets your child potentially interact with strangers through text chat. Some servers focus on building, while others are dedicated to role-playing – encouraging direct player interaction. Anyone can join public servers and connecting to one is relatively simple. Public server IP addresses (and therefore someone's location) are easy to find with search engines.

### GRIEFING

Some people in Minecraft delight in purposefully damaging or destroying another player's creation. This is called 'griefing' and is a form of bullying: it intentionally spoils someone else's experience in the game by deleting hours of their work and forcing them to start from scratch. Many public servers treat griefing as a severe offence and frequently ban offenders.

### ADDICTIVENESS

Minecraft's gameplay is relatively simple, and the outcome (when a child has built something new, for instance) can be extremely gratifying. This can make the game highly addictive. It's easy to lose track of time while playing Minecraft, causing committed young players to forget about other activities like homework or enjoying family time.

### SCARY ELEMENTS

The visual design and gameplay of Minecraft is purposefully child friendly, so there's nothing too untoward in the game. However, some of the 'baddies' that can be encountered might prove a little too scary for very young players. In the game, certain enemies come out at night and are accompanied by audio – such as zombie moans and skeleton bone rattles – that may unnervingly young ones.

### ADDITIONAL PURCHASES

After initially buying the game, players can make optional extra purchases for cosmetic items and other bonuses. Minecraft Realms is an optional online subscription (requiring regular payments) that lets users run a multiplayer server to play with their friends. Most games consoles also need an active subscription to enable online play – so online gaming can quickly become an expensive hobby.

## Advice for Parents & Carers

### RESEARCH CONTENT CREATORS

There are a lots of Minecraft content creators who release helpful videos about the game on YouTube and Twitch. Not all of these, however, are suitable for children. Watching these content creators' channels yourself first is a safe way to find appropriate Minecraft videos to share with your children. This also helps you learn more about the game itself, and how your child plays it.

### CHOOSE THE RIGHT MODE

Selecting 'Creative' or 'Peaceful' mode allows children to play Minecraft without having to contend with enemies. It's also a great way for you to get used to playing the game with them, since the difficulty level is lower. This allows you to work together on a long-term project, creating something special without the threat of moaning zombies or creepers damaging your build.

### HOST A PRIVATE SERVER

The easiest way to find a safe server for your child to play on is to make one yourself. Hosting a server prevents strangers from finding it, unless they've been given the necessary joining details. A private server also lets you control who's allowed to enter and – if necessary – to ban someone who shouldn't be there. This is the closest equivalent to parental controls in Minecraft.

### ENCOURAGE BREAKS

It's easy for the hours to fly by while your child is playing Minecraft, so reminding them to take regular breaks is essential. This is a useful way for them to learn good time management, which they'll benefit from as they get older. It will also teach them to play their favourite games in moderation – limiting addictive behaviour and allowing them to manage their day better.

### TALK ABOUT STRANGERS

At some point in their lives, almost everyone needs to have contact with a stranger online. Talking to your child about online safety, therefore, is essential – as is having a plan in place for dealing with any hostile or difficult strangers. Ensure that your child knows never to tell a stranger about themselves online, and that they should come to you straight away if they do encounter a problem.

## Meet Our Expert

Clare Godwin (a.k.a. Lunawolf) has worked as an editor and journalist in the gaming industry since 2015, providing websites with event coverage, reviews and gaming guides. She is the owner of Lunawolf Gaming and is currently working on various gaming-related projects including game development and writing non-fiction books.



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