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# Online Gaming

## What is Online Gaming, and is it safe?

Many computer games are played online against other players over the internet, whether on a console, computer, mobile device or via social networking sites. Most play using an assumed identity, so you are generally already unaware of who they really are. There can also be hidden financial risks in downloading and playing web and app-based games.



...To add an extra dimension to the multiplayer element, players often communicate via voice chat or integrated chat or verbally with microphones or a headset. Many games – from simple chess and cards to first-person shooting and adventure games where thousands of players participate at the same time – include these features. Increasingly, online games involve spending real money to purchase in-game property.

## The risks

In Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPGs or MMOs), the presence of such a large online community of anonymous strangers and the unfiltered, unmoderated discussions, can pose a variety of potential risks such as:

- Inadvertently or recklessly giving away personal information, including password, email or home address or age.

- All the dangers associated with online chatrooms.

- Downloading ‘cheats’ which claim to help you but which, in fact, may contain viruses/spyware (<https://www.getsafeonline.org/personal/articles/viruses-and-spyware/>).

- Downloading or obtaining in another way, pirated copies of games, which can lead to penalties including account suspension, blocking of consoles from accessing the manufacturer’s server or prosecution.

- Being wary of criminals when buying or selling virtual, in-game property – for example high-level characters – if there is real money involved.

- ‘Griefing’ – when players single you out specifically to make your gaming experience less enjoyable.

- Disposing of game consoles, PCs and mobile devices without having deleted your

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personal information and account details.

Downloading 'free' web and app-based games in which you have to pay to access the full content.

Playing games for many hours at a time with the danger of becoming addicted.

## Safe gaming

Play online games only when you have effective and updated antivirus/antispyware software and firewall running.

Play only with authorised versions of games which you have purchased from the correct sources and for which you have a licence.

Verify the authenticity and security of downloaded files and new software by buying from reputable sources.

Choose a user name that does not reveal any personal information. Similarly, if your game includes the ability to create a personal **profile** , make sure you don't give away any personal information.

Use strong passwords (<https://www.getsafeonline.org/personal/articles/protecting-passwords/>).

Don't reveal any personal information to other players.

Make sure you keep the game software up to date. Most multiplayer games automatically update themselves before letting you connect. Be very wary about downloading any unauthorised program relating to the game.

Watch out for scams and cons when buying or selling 'property' that exists inside a computer game, in the real world.

Read the manufacturer or hosting company's terms and conditions to make sure there will not be any immediate or future hidden charges.

When disposing of your gaming device either by selling, scrapping, giving away or donating, ensure all of your personal information has been deleted. The method of doing this varies from device to device. Do not forget to delete your account details, and backup or transfer your games to your new device if appropriate.

Set guidelines and ground rules for your children when playing online.

## More information



The Family Video Game Database features comprehensive but easy-to-use information to help you research the online games your child does and could play – including content, features, benefits, negatives and age ratings. Visit [www.taminggaming.com](http://www.taminggaming.com) (<http://www.taminggaming.com>).

Taming Gaming is a reference book by gaming expert Andy Robertson, who has been helping families get more from video games for 15 years. Andy is a journalist for national newspapers and broadcast. He also runs the Family Video Game Database.

If you've experienced cybercrime, you can contact the charity [Victim Support](https://www.victimsupport.org.uk) (<https://www.victimsupport.org.uk>) for free and confidential support and information.

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Choosing and using passwords correctly is vital.

## Gaming

## Get switched on about gaming

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### **Roblox – what is it, and how safe is it?**

(<https://www.getsafeonline.org/personal/blog-item/roblox-what-is-it-and-how-safe-is-it/>).

My son asked me once if he could play Roblox. It's not a game I play, but I've certainly heard of it – I seem to recall a couple of his...

**4 June 2019**

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