

# ONLINE GAMING 101

*a quick guide for parents and educators*



Online gaming can be a fun way to interact and compete with others, as well as socialize online. However, these games can also invite interaction with a large online community comprised of anonymous strangers engaging in unmoderated chats. Additionally, gaming implements free use of video and audio chat and voice-masking technology which increases new channels of access by a sexual predator to a child.

## Online Gaming Dangers and Concerns

- May be age-inappropriate
- Violence often depicted in games (shooting, bombing, fighting)
- Sexual content: pornography is embedded in some games (i.e., Grand Theft Auto); Virtual sex games (users can act out fantasies and engage in voyeurism)
- Cyberbullies can target players directly with hurtful messages. Players also take advantage of their anonymity to "grief" others including "kill stealing" (capturing opponents quest targets, or "chaining" (blocking progress of low-level players, causing them to die)
- Privacy issues resulting from player sharing personal information
- Webcams/microphones can be controlled remotely by attackers and used to exploit your children
- Voice-masking technology used by predators to disguise their voice; Chat, text, video, audio messaging features can put users in direct contact with predators/ traffickers
- Predators use online games to groom and prey upon youth
- Gaming addiction

## Teach Your Child To:

- Use voice chat wisely.
- Be aware of voice masking technology - while masking can be a safety feature, predators can use it to pretend to be someone they are not.
- Beware of strangers. Gamers under 15 are advised to only play with parent-approved individuals.
- Use suitable screen names (gamertags) - don't use your actual name.
- Kick out any players that make child feel uncomfortable (ignore/block) and tell a trusted adult.
- Report and/or block griefers, cyberbullies, or players for breaking gaming rules, or those displaying abusive or inappropriate behavior, content or language.
- Recognize the grooming tactics of predators and traffickers, including trust and relationship building, offering love/romance, gifts, jobs, and the promise of a better life.
- Remember that the use of games and other technology is a privilege, not a right.

safety & prevention 101  
**RULES N' TOOLS**®

No child is immune to online threats: Parents are the "first line of defense."

- Know exactly what game your child is playing and who they are playing with.
- Play the game yourself. Spend time alongside your child to learn about the game.
- Teach your child to never share personally identifiable information (PII) including date of birth, address, full name, school or any image that can be used to identify or track your child down.
- Build an atmosphere of trust with your child regarding all of his/her online activities. Have regular ongoing conversations about good and bad gaming experiences.
- Recognize the addictive nature of gaming.
- Set parental controls to manage online gaming features, restrict communications, turn chat features on/off, set time limits and control spending.
- Set privacy settings which will affect who can see if your child is online, who he/she can play with and whether others can see what games are being played.
- Review games and ratings by the independent Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) before downloading or buying games.
- Keep gaming equipment in a common area where you can supervise.
- Teach your child to never give out your credit card number for free games (full-gaming features may require additional payment).
- Make sure updated antivirus/antispyware software and firewall are running.
- Turn "Auto-play" features off. Implement Safety Rules and Software tools ("Rules 'N Tools®") on all internet-enabled devices and platforms used by your child. See the **Enough Is Enough® "Rules 'N Tools®"** guide at [internetsafety101.org/safety-intro](http://internetsafety101.org/safety-intro)
- Essential software tools include setting age-appropriate filters, monitoring and time management software.
- Have your child sign the **Family Contract for Smart Phones and Digital Devices**.

**Enough Is Enough®** (EIE) Quick Guides are based on EIE's **Internet Safety 101®** Emmy Award-winning multi-media program and website designed to educate, equip and empower parents, educators and other adults with information needed to protect children from internet dangers.

For more information, visit [internetsafety101.org](http://internetsafety101.org) and [enough.org](http://enough.org).