



Fortnite - Parent's Guide

What is Fortnite

Fortnite is the latest game for teenagers. It offers a knife-edge gun battle that requires practice, skill, teamwork and fast reactions. Fortnite is an online shooter that starts with 100 players and leaves one winner standing. The entire point of the game is to kill other players, but the violence is cartoon-like. Although the game itself seems harmless, players can talk and type whatever they want to each other, and bad language is rampant.

Concerns about the game

- **Age Rating** - In the UK the Video Standards Council rate Fortnite as PEGI 12 for frequent scenes of mild violence.
- **Not Asked Age** - In order to play Fortnite you have to create an account. To create this account you need to provide an email address (which you will have to verify) and display/user name. However you are not asked your age in order to create an account.
- **Chat to Strangers** - Along with suitability, children can be talking to complete strangers. There is live, unmoderated chat possible between users. Both voice chat and on-screen text chat are options. This exposes players to random strangers and the likelihood of profanity.
- **In-App Purchases** - The game has considerable in-app purchases that parents need to be aware of. Although the game is free, players can purchase a Battle Pass. This then enables them to win new outfits, characters and clothing. Although you can access some of the benefits with a Free Pass, children will need a paid Battle Pass for the best rewards. This costs 950 V-Bucks which translates to about £8. It's also worth noting that when the next Battle Pass comes out the current one becomes obsolete.
- **Violence** - Fortnite does feature violence when players are in combat with each other, the animation of the game is very cartoonish, and the violence isn't bloody or gory. However, it is worth noting that the aim of Fortnite is to defeat other players by fighting against them and killing them.
- **Hacker Attacks** - News site Forbes stated that it had seen "dozens" of online reports from people who said their accounts had been compromised by hackers, who had gained access to user's accounts in the game and accrued hundreds of pounds in fraudulent charges.

Things that parents can do to keep their children safe

Opening an account

It is important that they do not create a username that could give away any personal details. There is also no age verification process. Therefore, be aware of the risks if your child has, or wants to, open an account.

Security Level

Fortnite offers three levels of privacy settings: Public, where anyone can enter your child's online party; Friends, where only friends can join a party; and Private, which means that no one can enter your child's party without being invited by the child themselves. Discuss the level appropriate to your child.

Prevent your child from talking to strangers

There is an option to turn off the voice chat feature, which means your child wouldn't be able to talk to anybody, including their friends. However, they would still be able to use the in-app chat and hear other people's conversations. To turn off voice chat, open the Settings menu in the top right of the main Fortnite page, then click on the cog icon. Open the Audio tab at the top of the screen. From there, you can turn off voice chat. If you don't want to cut off chat altogether, the other option is to make sure your child is playing without a headset, somewhere where you can hear the conversations going on and step in if necessary.

Set up a Password

Make sure you have set up passwords on credit cards associated with the game.

It can be addictive

Games can last around 30 minutes but this varies according to the game. Children may feel angry if they lose the game and will want to continue playing until they achieve their desired result. The competitive nature of the game may make it difficult for them to stop playing halfway through as their position in the game could be affected. It is therefore important to speak to them about what is an appropriate amount of gameplay, and when.

Have an open and honest conversation with your child

It's important to involve yourself in your child's online life and a simple and effective way to this is by talking to them about their life online. Try to maintain an open dialogue with your child and find opportunities to talk to them about what they love to do online. Parents can help children access the amazing resources the internet has to offer whilst keeping them safe online at the same time. Asking your child about how they play Fortnite and what they like about it is a great way to start a conversation.

Play with them

It may seem daunting, but one of the best things that you can do is to engage with the gaming environment and begin to understand what makes Fortnite so attractive to young people, as well as giving yourself an idea of the reporting tools available within the game.

Inappropriate contact

Speak to your child about unwanted contact and tell them what to do if someone speaks to them in a nasty or inappropriate way, or asks them for personal information. Ask them to come to you if they are unsure about unwanted contact or have been exposed to something inappropriate.

Know how to make a report

On Fortnite you can report players who are behaving inappropriately by using the in-game feedback tool located in the game Main Menu or email Epic Games, the creator of Fortnite, through their website (<https://epicgames.helpshift.com/a/fortnite/>).

Restrict it

Most consoles have parental controls that will allow you to restrict gaming time. So if you put a time limit on a Fortnite session, it stands.

To activate parental controls on Xbox One

Log into your Microsoft account at <https://account.microsoft.com/family>. If your child is already listed as part of your family, you will be able to set screen time limits from there; if not, you will have to add them to your family first.

To activate parental controls on PlayStation 4

You can access parental controls on the PS4, through a web browser or through the PS App. On the console, go to Settings >Parental Controls/Family Management >Family Management. You'll be able to set time limits here, or view your child's total playing time for the day. You can also access controls through <https://www.playstation.com/acct/family>.

To activate parental controls on Nintendo Switch

The Switch has an app for parental controls, imaginatively titled Nintendo Switch Parental Controls. You sign into the app with the same Nintendo account you use on the Switch, and once you are all set up, you can limit play length, play time and what games your children can play on the device.

To activate parental controls on iOS

If your child's iCloud account is part of your Apple family account, you can set screen time restrictions from your own iPhone. Go to Settings>Apple ID>Family Sharing and select your child's account. Then select Screen Time. You can set limits for categories of apps - in this case, it's games - and customise it for each day of the week. For example, you might allow your children more time playing at the weekend than during the week. You can also set a "downtime" period, that blocks access to all apps during that period unless you specify a select few.

Useful Websites

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/blog/parents-guide-fortnite-battle-royale>

<https://nationalonlinesafety.com/fortnite-battle-royale-parents-guide/>

<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/fortnite-everything-you-need-know-about-online-game>