



12th October 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

During the term ahead, all children will have regular computing lessons and we will be talking with them about staying safe online and we hope that these are conversations you can carry on at home.

Two games in particular often come up in conversations in the classroom and we want parents to be aware of these.

Roblox

The UK Safer Internet Centre has published information to help ensure parents and carers are aware of the functions of Roblox, and can monitor their children's usage of this game. They want people to be aware that:

- There are no age restrictions and games have a multi-player function, within which written chats can take place.
- Content is user generated. This means that some games may not be appropriate for children, for example, they may feature weapons or blood.
- There is an in-game currency called 'Roblox' which can be exchanged for real money. Children should be aware of this function so that they do not access it without permission.

The first step in ensuring a primary age child is safe using this game is to check that they are registered at the correct age so that the under-13 settings can be activated. The chat can also be disabled, further account restrictions put into place, and a Parent Pin can be used. There is also a detailed Parents Guide on the Roblox website.

Fortnite

The recommended age for Fortnite use is 12 years and above. Primary aged children using Fortnite has raised concerns from the N.S.P.C.C. because:

- Children don't know who they are communicating with.
- They can make in-app purchases.
- They may spend long hours playing the game.
- The language used within the game may be explicit and inappropriate

With this letter, you will receive a parent factsheet which outlines the main concerns about Fortnite usage and guidance which will help you, as parents, activate parental controls regarding the use of Fortnite.

We will continue to talk with our children in school about staying safe online and hope that these are conversations you can carry on at home, with a particular focus on Roblox and Fortnite, but also on other ways that the internet is accessed by children.

For further information, please access www.saferinternet.org.uk or access the websites referenced on the factsheet attached

Yours sincerely,

L E Caswell
Executive Headteacher

Child safety on Fortnite: parent factsheet

Fortnite is an online video game where players compete to be the last person standing in a post-apocalyptic world. The most popular version is Fortnite: Battle Royale, which sees up to 100 players pitted against each other to stay alive on an island. Players can build and demolish structures, and collect weapons, supplies and armour to help them along the way.

Players shoot each other using a range of lethal weapons, but the brightly-coloured, cartoon-style graphics and lack of bloodshed mean it doesn't feel too gory or graphic.

To play, the age recommendation is **12 and above** due to 'mild violence', although you don't have to provide your age when creating an account, so younger children can still log on easily.

Fortnite: Battle Royale is **free to download** on PC/Mac, Xbox, Playstation, Nintendo Switch and iOS devices (Apple phones and tablets). It's coming to Android soon.

It has about 45 million monthly users worldwide including the England football team, who reportedly played it in their World Cup downtime.

What are the concerns?

You may have seen news reports or heard concerns raised about the:

- **Communication between players:** a chat function allows players to talk to each other either over a headset and microphone, or using messaging. Children could use it to speak to strangers, or it could put them at risk of cyberbullying
- **In-app purchases:** players can build up large bills on their parents' accounts by buying cosmetic items like outfits for your character and better-looking weapons (otherwise known as 'skins')
- **Addictive nature of the game:** anecdotal stories tell of children staying up all night to play, or falling asleep in lessons after playing for too long. Some commentators attribute this to the communal feel of the game – you can play with your friends – and the game is different every time you play, keeping it fresh

What safety options are available to parents?

Use the parental controls on the gaming device

Most devices allow you to **set time limits** on game play, **set age limits** for content, and **restrict in-app purchases**.

Visit the website 'ask about games' for links to detailed instructions on the device your child uses – the site covers Playstation 3, Playstation 4, Xbox 360, Xbox One, Apple and Android phones, and Nintendo Switch.

[Ask About Games](#)

www.askaboutgames.com/advice/parental-controls

The battles in Fortnite last around 20 minutes. When trying to limit your child's screen time, make the most of this natural stopping point. Set a limit in terms of matches rather than hours and minutes, or set time limits in 20 minute increments.

Turn off the voice chat feature

Speak to your child to make sure they know this feature exists, and encourage them to use the options below if they encounter someone who is offensive or inappropriate.

You can disable the voice chat function in the game if you:

- Open the settings menu (the 3 lines on the right-hand-side of the screen), then choose the 'cog' icon
- Select the 'audio' tab
- You should be able to turn off 'voice chat' by tapping the arrows next to it

You can also 'mute' individual players in the game by:

- Pausing the game
- Hovering over the player you wish to mute
- Selecting the mute button (a loudspeaker icon)

Make sure your child knows how to report inappropriate behaviour

You or your child can report players who make them uncomfortable using the in-game feedback tool (located in the main menu).

You can also use the 'support' section of the Epic Games site (the makers of Fortnite). You're asked to select the platform you play the game on, the game mode you're playing, and then you can select 'report player'. You can provide more detail such as the player's name, and attach a screenshot.

[Support. Epic Games](https://fortnitehelp.epicgames.com/customer/portal/emails/new?b_id=9729&q=email+us)

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What else can I do?

Further tips

- Download and play the game to help you understand it
- Talk to your child about what they're doing online, and make sure they know they can talk to you about anything that has upset them
- Check your bank statements and gaming system account balance regularly to look for in-app purchases you're not happy with, and to make sure your child isn't getting around any passwords you've set up

More sources of support

- Non-profit organisation Internet Matters has put together [5 top tips to manage children's screen time](https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/guidance/5-top-tips-to-manage-childrens-screentime/).
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- The [National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children \(NSPCC\)](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/) has a range of resources for parents on internet safety.
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>
- The NSPCC has also teamed up with O2 to offer advice to parents. You can call their free helpline on 0808 800 5002, or [make an appointment](https://guru.secure.force.com/O2DeskStoreLocator) with an O2 Guru in an O2 store.
<https://guru.secure.force.com/O2DeskStoreLocator>

Sources for this factsheet

This factsheet was produced by [Safeguarding Training Centre from The Key](#).

[Fortnite, Epic Games](#)

<https://www.epicgames.com/fortnite/en-US/home>

[‘Fortnite chat raises stranger danger fears from NSPCC’, BBC News, 3 May 2018](#)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-43988210>

[Fortnite: all you need to know, Net aware, from the NSPCC and O2](#)

<https://www.net-aware.org.uk/news/fortnite-all-you-need-know/>