PARENT FACTSHEET

Child safety on Fortnite

- 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*

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- 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

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

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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/*
- The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) 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 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/

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