

Gaming Console Safety Guide

A comprehensive guide to keeping your family safe while gaming on PlayStation, Xbox, and Nintendo Switch. Learn essential parental controls and create a secure gaming environment for kids of all ages.



Why Console Safety Matters

Online Risks

Gaming consoles connect children to millions of players worldwide. Without proper safeguards, kids may encounter inappropriate content, online predators, cyberbullying, or unwanted contact from strangers.

Financial Protection

In-game purchases can add up quickly. Children may accidentally or intentionally spend hundreds of dollars on virtual items, subscriptions, or add-ons without understanding real-world costs.

Healthy Habits

Excessive gaming can impact sleep, schoolwork, physical activity, and family time. Setting boundaries helps children develop balanced relationships with technology and entertainment.

Privacy Concerns

Consoles collect data and enable sharing of personal information. Teaching children about digital privacy and using built-in protections helps safeguard their identity and location.

PlayStation Parental Controls

01

Create Family Accounts

Set up a Family Manager account (adult) and child accounts. This gives you control over each child's gaming experience based on their age and maturity level.

02

Set Spending Limits

Navigate to Settings → Family and Parental Controls → Spending Limit. Set monthly limits for PlayStation Store purchases or disable spending entirely to prevent unexpected charges.

03

Restrict Content

Control which games can be played based on age ratings. Go to Parental Controls → Age Level for Games and select appropriate ESRB ratings (E, E10+, T, M, etc.).

04

Manage Communication

Limit who can contact your child through Settings → Communication and User-Generated Content. Choose between allowing all players, friends only, or blocking all communication.

05

Set Play Time

Establish daily play schedules and total hours through the Play Time Settings. The console will automatically notify children when their time is ending and lock them out when limits are reached.



Xbox Family Settings

1

Download the Xbox Family Settings App

Available for iOS and Android, this mobile app lets you manage all controls remotely. Add family members and customize settings for each child from anywhere.

2

Screen Time Management

Set daily time limits, schedule gaming windows, and receive activity reports. You can also approve or deny additional play time requests directly from your phone.

3

Content Filters

Block games, apps, and media by age rating. Customize web filtering, prevent access to Microsoft Edge browser, and restrict mature content across the Xbox ecosystem.

4

Purchase Controls

Require approval for all purchases, set spending limits, or prevent buying entirely. Monitor purchase history and receive notifications before transactions are completed.

5

Privacy and Online Safety

Control who can see your child's online status, communicate via text or voice, view their activity feed, and join multiplayer games. Choose from Friends, Blocked, or Everyone settings.

Nintendo Switch Parental Controls

Use the Mobile App

Download the Nintendo Switch Parental Controls app to manage restrictions remotely. Link it to your console using a simple 6-digit code found in System Settings.

Key Features

- Set daily play time limits with bedtime alarms
- Restrict games by age rating (ESRB)
- Disable screenshots and video sharing
- Block Nintendo eShop purchases
- Restrict communication features
- View detailed play activity reports



 **Pro Tip:** Nintendo Switch Online has limited communication features compared to PlayStation and Xbox. Most games don't support voice chat, making it naturally safer for younger children. However, some games like Fortnite use external voice systems.

Managing Chat and Communication



Voice Chat Settings

Disable or restrict voice chat to friends only. Many predators use voice communication to build trust. For younger children, consider disabling entirely until they're mature enough to recognize manipulation.



Text Messaging

Limit text chat to pre-approved friends. Teach children never to share personal information including full name, address, school, age, or phone number with online players.



Video and Streaming

Disable video sharing and streaming features like Twitch integration. These can inadvertently expose your home, face, or personal details to strangers watching broadcasts.

Red Flags to Discuss with Your Child

- Requests for personal information
- Asks to move conversation off the platform
- Offers of gifts, game currency, or equipment
- Requests to keep conversations secret
- Inappropriate language or topics
- Attempts to share or request photos
- Pressure to meet in person
- Any communication that makes them uncomfortable

Controlling In-Game Purchases

 1

Remove Payment Methods

Delete stored credit cards from the console. This forces you to manually enter payment details for each purchase, creating a natural checkpoint.

 2

Use Gift Cards

Purchase console-specific gift cards in set amounts. Give children these prepaid cards so they learn budgeting while having spending freedom within limits.

 3

Require Approval

Enable settings that require parental password or approval for all purchases. Review what they want to buy and discuss whether it's worth the real money.



Did You Know? The average American family spends \$174 per year on in-game purchases. Games are increasingly designed with "microtransactions" that seem small but accumulate quickly. Battle passes, loot boxes, and cosmetic items can cost \$5-\$20 each.

Screen Time and Gaming Balance

Establishing Healthy Limits

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than 1-2 hours of recreational screen time daily for children. Consider these strategies:

- Set specific gaming windows (e.g., after homework, before dinner)
- Create screen-free zones (bedrooms, dining table)
- Use built-in console timers to automatically enforce limits
- Encourage breaks every 30-45 minutes for physical activity
- Establish "gaming-free" days for family activities

Signs of Problematic Gaming

- Declining school performance or skipping homework
- Loss of interest in other hobbies and activities
- Irritability when unable to play
- Lying about time spent gaming
- Neglecting personal hygiene or sleep



41%

of parents

3-4

hours

Report their child games
too much

Average daily gaming for
ages 8-18

Understanding ESRB Age Ratings



E - Everyone

Content suitable for all ages. May contain minimal cartoon or fantasy violence and mild language. Examples: Mario Kart, Animal Crossing, Minecraft.



E10+ - Everyone 10+

Content suitable for ages 10 and older. May contain more cartoon violence, mild language, or suggestive themes. Examples: Fortnite, Splatoon, Pokémon.



T - Teen

Content suitable for ages 13+. May contain violence, crude humor, blood, simulated gambling, and strong language. Examples: Rocket League, Overwatch, Apex Legends.



M - Mature 17+

Content suitable only for ages 17+. May contain intense violence, blood and gore, sexual content, and strong language. Examples: Call of Duty, Grand Theft Auto, Halo.

Visit esrb.org to search specific games and read detailed content descriptions including violence, language, and mature themes. Ratings are guidelines—you know your child best and should research games before allowing them.

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Free Resources

csnp.org/resources - Download guides, checklists, and tools for every age group

Everything is Free

All CSNP programs, workshops, and materials are provided at no cost to families and communities