



'ad omnia paratus'



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Dear Parents/ Carers,

We have become aware of an increasing number of children across KS2 playing the popular online battle arena game Fortnite. We have received a number of messages from parents who are concerned about this latest trend and as a result, wanted to share advice from leading internet and child safety organisations and gaming experts.

What is Fortnite:

Fortnite is an online game, which includes Battle Royale, where players do not have to pay to play (although in game purchases are available and encouraged by the game). In Battle Royale, 100 players compete against each other to be the last person standing in player vs player (PVP) combat. Users play against people of different ages from across the world, and can talk and interact with each other as they play through the in-game chat feature (both verbal and written).

What age rating is Fortnite ?

Fortnite has a PEGI rating of 12, **PEGI** have said this is due to the: *'frequent scenes of mild violence. It is not suitable for persons under 12 years of age'*. Ratings highlight that *"players use guns, swords and grenades to kill in ranged and melee-style combat. Players can also defeat enemies by using various traps (e.g., electric, spikes, poisonous gas). Battles are highlighted by frequent gunfire, explosions and cries of pain."*

However, this PEGI rating only takes into account the **content** in the game and not the **contact** element, where children may be exposed to swearing, racism and offensive language from strangers, either through audio or on-screen text chat.

What are the dangers of Fortnite?

Spending money:

In-game purchases, such as emote animations and outfits, require an exclusive virtual currency that players can buy with real money via a credit card. These items aren't necessary to win, but they allow players to better express their personality within the game. Players are also currently encouraged to purchase special editions of the game that provide access to the 'Save the World' campaign mode, which can be played solo or cooperatively.

Anger/ frustration:

No parent likes to see their child upset, much less scream and throw their controller across the room. It's important to understand why Fortnite is reported to cause such behaviour in youngsters rather than jumping to reflex responses.



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Like games such as FIFA or Rocket League, playing Fortnite Battle Royale is a fiercely competitive challenge for children. Not only are they fighting against all manner of other players -- who may be more skilled or older than them -- but other factors can trip them up.

If the internet connection slows down their character can lag-behind other people. If they don't have a good pair of headphones on, they won't hear footsteps behind them. Or, if they are called for dinner at just the wrong moment, the distraction can mean they get killed.

This is made more intense in Fortnite because it's an instant kill and game-over. Unlike FIFA or Rocket League where you can fight your way back, in Fortnite you can be riding high winning the round one minute and dead the next.

Open-chatting nature from people all around the world:

As with any online game, parents need to take care they understand who children are interacting with and what specific information can be exchanged. This area of the game's content is created by other players and therefore falls outside of the game ratings.

While playing the game, players can hear profanity/ racist name-calling from others as well as exchange voice chat messages with strangers. Because Battle Royale is played by hundreds of people at once, the range of people they encounter will be wide. In addition, there have been many reports on line of grooming behaviour and sexually suggestive themes aimed at children playing the game.

How do you turn off voice chat in *Fortnite: Battle Royale*?

Open the Settings menu in the top right of the main *Fortnite* page by selecting the three bars, then the cog icon. Choose the Audio tab at the top of the screen. From there, you can adjust several audio features, including voice chat. Turn the setting from on to off by tapping the arrows.

If you choose to let your children play Fortnite, the following advice from Childnet may be useful:

- **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 do 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. Our **conversation starters** can help you to have this 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.
- **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, **you can also make a report by emailing the creators of Fortnite.**
- **See what other people think of Fortnite**
Common Sense Media allow parents and young people to give their reviews of games that they have played. They have created a **very useful video guide to Fortnite with footage of the gameplay involved.**

Many thanks for you support,

Mrs Cook

This message was created with content from the below articles:

<https://www.pocket-lint.com/games/news/144125-what-parents-need-to-know-about-fortnite>

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

<https://www.todayparent.com/kids/tween-and-teen/what-parents-need-to-know-about-the-video-game-fortnite>

<https://www.common sense media.org/game-reviews/fortnite>