

Gaming Safety Guide

# ON WATCH



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Combating Trafficking Through Education.  
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# THOUGHTS FROM "DAN THE DAD"



## **SETUP**

You're the admin so set up any system or game accordingly where you have the ability to see everything that is happening on the system. Your child's account is "linked" to the device through the administrative function. Often online accounts require unique emails: e.g. Microsoft uses an email for me, and my kids – I have access to all those accounts.

## **MONITOR**

You can download apps for your phone to monitor screen time (see parent resource guide here for a full list) and even limit it for all these gaming devices. If my daughter is over two hours on the Nintendo I get a notice. Monitor regularly, check email accounts for notices (friends requests, friend suggestions, chats, recommendations, etc.). Ask your child what's going on in the game? Be curious, learn – and don't do it while they are playing it's too hard for them to do two things at once.

## **PROVIDE AIR COVERAGE**

Give your child excuses. Let them use you as the bad guy – "my dad won't let me, my dad see everything, my dad shut that down" – in other words – my dad's protective, you get it, right? Now the child has an excuse. Also, it helps to have an open door policy. I tell my kids, "you get to ask me anything you want and I can't get mad, you get to make mistakes and I can't get mad, you are learning so I can't get mad." If you're not ready to be the bad guy – you need to get out of the game.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Set clear ground rules. If they are broken there are clear consequences. In my house, you get a 5 minute warning – if the device is still on – you lose it. If I say now, I mean now. You have to know what's going on outside of the game at all times. (awareness piece) Also, because it's my house, my internet, my device, my energy, I have a right to see everything anytime I want to and you need to know I will check. What gets lost a lot is to celebrate/reward good behavior! Negativity is fleeting. Gaming is addictive because of the dopamine levels it produces in the brain. When that flow is interrupted, there is a brief panic/fear/disappointment in the child. For all the reasons gaming is good, it can be hard on parents dealing with the outcry – set the precedent that the outcry does not impact you (even though it might) don't get mad or sad just continue on.

## **STAY UP TO DATE.**

All of these devices have parent resources. Check them once a month for every system you have in the house (including cell phones). Just google: Parent Resources for X and read.



# THE CONSOLE TIPS

- 1. Create a user ID and password for the system so only the parent can access it.**
  - a. Make sure you give your child a user account instead of letting them use yours.
  - b. Create a password that is different from the others and not easily guessed.
  - c. Change the password frequently.
- 2. Prevent new user creation and guest login.**
  - a. This prevents your child from signing up for their own account.
- 3. Don't assume that there are default controls on your console.**
  - a. Set up and test all of the parental controls prior to allowing your child play.
  - b. Realize that parental controls can be set up per player or the entire console.
- 4. Restrict game content based on your child's age.**
  - a. This keeps your child from playing games that are inappropriate for their age.
- 5. Restrict the use of the internet browser.**
  - a. This prevents kids from searching online; google, youtube, and other websites.
  - b. Even with web filtering in place your child still is in danger of being solicited to, or being able to access an unsecured website.
- 6. Restrict or turn off all communication with other players.**
  - a. The safest is NO communication between players (receiving, or giving).
  - b. If you want your child to communicate, set up groups of players that you as a parent personally know. Make sure you safeguard that group by preventing other players joining the group without your consent. Otherwise anyone can add a player, that you and your child may not know.
- 7. Restrict viewing content created by other players.**
  - a. This blocks videos, images, and text created by other users.
  - b. It's best to have no content being received or going out.
- 8. Keep usernames completely different and separate from social media accounts.**
  - a. This can help to prevent your child from being contacted through social media and also protect your information from being stolen.
  - b. Do not use real names, addresses or any other personal information as usernames or game tags.
  - c. Do not share any personal information online.



# THE CONSOLE TIPS CONT.

**1. Parents should be present while gaming is taking place.**

a. This keeps you aware of what your child is doing.

**2. Research and know the gaming system prior to buying and playing.**

a. Nintendo is the safest console at this point. Safe guards are already in place.

b. Always test a gaming system before you allow your child to play.

**3. Go to the websites for details of how to change and set parental settings.**

a. Microsoft Support (XBOX) <https://support.xbox.com/help/family-online-safety/online-safety/manage-app-privacy-settings-xbox-one>

b. Sony Support (PS4) ([https://support.playstation.com/s/article/PS4-Parental-Controls?language=en\\_US](https://support.playstation.com/s/article/PS4-Parental-Controls?language=en_US))

c. Nintendo Support <https://play.nintendo.com/parents/crash-courses/parental-controls/>

**4. Be aware that soliciting happens.**

a. Be aware of the websites your child is searching; youtube, Instagram, and other social media platforms. Traffickers can set up accounts as “professional gamers” and solicit information from your child including personal information and nude photographs of your child.

**5. Be aware of where and what your child is doing online and while gaming**

a. The difference is you.

b. Build a relationship with your child that has open communication.

c. Set up rules prior to gaming and talk about what you expect from your child when they play video games and use other devices.

**6. Talk about the dangers of gaming and the internet.**

a. Including what solicitation looks like, what trafficking looks like, and “cat fishing”.

b. Continue the conversation with your child and remind them of the dangers of the internet and video games.



# ONLINE GAMING TIPS

1. Set up clear rules when it comes to gaming. Rules will help to set boundaries and expectations for both you and your child.
2. Play and test your child's game before you allow them to play.
3. Do not use; names, phone numbers, social media names, or personal information for game tags. Try to use different game tags or profile names for different games.
4. Do not give out any personal information to other players.
5. If your child is younger have them play with you. Younger children love to show others how to play the games they enjoy.
6. Know who your child is playing with. Only allow your child to play with people that both you, and your child know.
7. Check and set parental controls on your child's game. Don't assume that the game will already have controls active and in place. You will need to do this with all the games they play.
8. Make sure you have the safest options set in place when it comes to privacy settings. Every game will have different privacy settings, these settings allow what information other players can see about you and your child's contacts.
9. Some games allow access to a webcam, location services, and a microphone when playing the game.
10. Make sure the access is only allowed when the game is being played. Make sure you only download and play authorized editions of the game. Sometimes unauthorized versions are also available online.
11. The safest option when it comes to chat, is to restrict chat altogether within the game.
12. If you allow your child to use the chat option be sure that it's only with friends that both you and your child know. Also coach your child about what to do if any inappropriate language, bullying, or any inappropriate behavior happens.
13. Don't allow your child to accept player requests from anyone, unless you and your child know them personally. Just like facebook people will try to "friend" your child.
14. Be present while your child is playing. Only allow your child to play in a community area of the house, where you are present.



# ONLINE GAMING TIPS CONT.

1. If you want to be notified if there is a possible threat, download an app to help you. Some apps will notify you right away. For example the Bark App will block and notify you as a threat arises.
2. Continually conduct random safety checks on your child's computer to make sure that he or she isn't playing a game that's inappropriate. Some games can be downloaded for free.
3. Follow the age ratings on games. If you want to know more about the ratings visit <https://www.esrb.org>
4. Prepare and talk to your child about the dangers of online gaming and the tactics of predators. Keep open communication between you and your child and look for signs of trafficking.
5. Do not allow your child to click on outside websites such as; loot boxes, and unofficial gaming websites. Also do not allow them to click on links taking them to youtube, and other websites. Oftentimes predators are trying to solicit your child for information, or nude photographs of your child.
6. Limit the amount of time your child plays. Make sure they're engaging with their friends and family outside of their game.
7. Keep open communication between you and your child. Make them feel safe and able to come to you.

## HELPFUL SAFETY APPS

- Bark: Windows, macOS, Android, IOS, Apple, Amazon Fire, Chrome Browser
- Net Nanny: Windows, macOS, Android, Apple, Kindle Fire
- Family Time: Android & IOS
- Qustodio :Windows, macOS, Android, IOS, Kindle
- Kaspersky Safe Kids: Windows, mac, Android, Apple