



Minecraft is played by millions of children around the world, who can use their imagination to build three-dimensional worlds with virtual building blocks in a digital, pixelated landscape. It is classed as a 'sandbox game' which means players have the freedom to build their own creations with 'blocks' they collect and also have the opportunity to explore other people's creations with their characters. Players can choose from thousands of different 'servers' to join, which are created by other players, making every experience of Minecraft unique.

Minecraft has approximately **74m** users each month



What parents need to know about **MINECRAFT**



GROOMING
The majority of users who play Minecraft are children, making it an 'appealing' gateway for groomers. It has been reported that some users have created worlds in Minecraft to lure young people into a conversation to ask for explicit photos. There have even been more serious cases in which children have been persuaded to meet these people in real life.

CYBERBULLYING & GRIEFING
In multiplayer mode, there is a live chat feature which allows players to talk to other players through text. The chat functionality includes basic filtering to block out external links and offensive language being shared, but this varies between each server. Griefing is when someone purposely upsets another player during the game. This can be done by ruining somebody's creation or generally doing something to spoil gameplay for another. Essentially, 'Griefing' is a form of cyberbullying and can be extremely frustrating for players.

COMMUNICATING WITH STRANGERS
There are thousands of servers to choose from in Minecraft which are a single world or place created by the public, allowing users to play the game online or via a local area network with others. No two servers are the same and each server has its own individual plug-ins which are controlled by the creator. This means that some servers will allow communication with strangers.

VRUSES & MALWARE FROM MODS
There are several websites that offer downloadable 'mods' which modify gameplay in a number of different ways. Most of the mods will be safe to use, but as they have been created by the public, they will often contain viruses that can infect your child's device and potentially try and find personal information from you or your child.

AGE RESTRICTION & FANTASY VIOLENCE
According to the ESRB 'Entertaining Software Rating Board', Minecraft is suitable for users aged 10+. Due to its 'Fantasy Violence', the ESRB states that the rating has been given as 'players can engage in violent acts such as lighting animals on fire and harming animals with weapons. Mild explosions are occasionally heard as players use dynamite to fend off creatures and mine the environment.'

CHILDREN MAY BECOME ADDICTED
As with other games, Minecraft is a game where players can keep returning, with constant challenges and personal goals to achieve. Children may find it difficult to know when to stop playing, becoming absorbed in the game and losing track of time.



National Online Safety Top Tips for Parents



DISABLE OR MODERATE CHAT
To avoid potentially inappropriate comments in a live chat, you can follow these steps to turn live chat off: 1. Select 'Options' 2. Toggle the Chat button to 'Hidden' or 'Commands Only'. Bear in mind that the chat feature is also where your child can enter commands during the game, so this may limit their game play.

SCAN 'MODS' FOR MALWARE
Minecraft 'mods' add content to games to give more options to interact and change the way the game looks and feels. But while 'mods' can bring fun for a child, it's important to consider that downloading and installing 'mods' could potentially infect their device with a virus or malware. In 2017, security company Symantec said that between 600,000 and 2.5 million Minecraft players had installed dodgy apps, which hijacked player's devices and used them to power an advertising botnet. Install a malware scanner on every device that your child plays Minecraft on, and make sure it's up-to-date.

SET TIME LIMITS
With 'Gaming Disorder' becoming an official health condition, we suggest setting a reasonable time limit when playing Minecraft. Parents can use parental controls on devices to limit the time a child is playing games. It is worth having a conversation with your child to understand what 'mode' they are playing on the game. This may help you decide on how much time you would like them to spend playing on it. For example, a mini game will have an 'end', but this will depend on how long the game creator has made the game last. In 'survival mode', the game has no end as there is no goal to be achieved other than the child's own e.g. after they have built something.

MONITOR YOUTUBE TUTORIALS
Many Minecraft users turn to YouTube for video tips on improving their gameplay and discovering new techniques. Although many videos are age-appropriate, some include sexual references and bad language. We suggest watching Minecraft tutorial videos together with your child. If your child is under the age of 13, we suggest installing 'YouTube Kids' which provides a safer platform for children to find the content they want, safely.



PLAY IN 'CREATIVE' OR 'PEACEFUL' MODE
Even though the age limit is 10+, Minecraft can be quite overwhelming at times, especially for younger players or SEND children. We suggest limiting your child to play in 'creative mode' or 'peaceful mode' which takes away the survival element and removes the 'scarier' monster/zombie characters.

CHOOSE SERVERS CAREFULLY
Advise your child to only enter servers with people they know and trust to protect them from engaging in conversation with strangers. Your child can also create their own multi-player server and share this with their friends to join in which is safer and more controlled than joining a stranger's server.

Sources:
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