

Online Gaming

Feel free to share your **Gooseberry Alert** content with students, staff and parents.

All that we ask in return (in the spirit of modelling positive digital citizenship) is that you acknowledge **Gooseberry Planet Limited** as the source of your advice.

Online games are very popular with children of all ages. They range from individual or small groups of players to Massive Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs) which involve a large online community of players participating in a game at the same time. Many of these types of games have chatrooms and real-time messaging capabilities. They can be played on smartphones, through web browsers or on consoles.



Gooseberry **Student** 'Information' of the week



Initiate a conversation with the class to establish their knowledge and use of online games, the types of games they play, what they like about them and whether they have played with people they don't know in real life. Explore their knowledge of what games consoles allow them to do, focusing on communicating and connecting. Talk about the ways people connect when gaming online. (*Online games, particularly those for older age groups, often involve multiple players who collaborate using chat and messaging to form gaming teams/parties*). Online gaming is a social experience.

Debate the pros and cons of online gaming and agree some simple rules for staying

safe: These might include:

- Follow age (PEGI) ratings
- Only play with real life friends
- Use a nickname and avatar to avoid revealing personal information
- Turn off the game if you receive unwanted contact.
- Report unacceptable gaming conduct.



Gooseberry **Teacher** 'Opportunity' of the week



Online games raise issues in three main areas of risk: **Content** – exposure to inappropriate material, both visual and audio (violence, swearing or sexual), **Contact** – online interaction with other users, including groomers, and **Conduct** – players (griefers) who intentionally bully or harass other players, unfair game play (cheats), pressure to make in-app purchases, risk of revealing personal information, risk of addiction or excessive play time.

Be positive about technology but make children aware of the risks inherent in playing some online games, help them to identify games which are suitable for their age, and teach them strategies for reducing risk and responding to any issues that might arise when online gaming.

Key Message: We need to ensure that young people know how to protect themselves whilst gaming. BE POSITIVE, get the class talking about gaming

Gooseberry Parent 'Message' of the week



Online gaming can be sociable and fun. Discuss and agree some rules about gaming with your child. This should include the types of game that you approve, the people they may play with and the time limits for playing. It's much easier to agree in advance than to try to restrain bad habits later! Discuss how it is important to protect personal information when gaming. Work together to create a safe gamer tag and image. Encourage your child not to over share and ask them to consult you before playing any new game or connecting with any new player.

Check online reviews. These can help you choose appropriate games and to be aware of any particular risks connected with them. Check and secure the privacy settings and Friends Lists on your child's devices. Check again from time to time. Remind them to play fairly and not to

download free 'cheats'. This may be illegal and can download viruses. Remind them you are always available to help if they are worried about anything online. Help them report any inappropriate contact or conversations.

Key Message: Be part of your child's gaming, in the same way you would watch them play football.

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App Alert: Fortnite – Battle Royale (PEGI Rating 12, App store 12+)

Fortnite is a multiplayer online game currently very popular with young gamers. Although it is free to download, players can earn or buy the game's own currency called V-Bucks which is used to make in-game purchases of various accessories such as skins, weapons and emotes (eg. dance moves). The value of such items can mount up (and some items are rare and therefore valuable to players in the real world) leading to attempts to hack accounts. To avoid this, encourage your child to use a strong and unique password for their gaming account and turn on two-factor authentication using either a mobile phone or email account to receive authentications. Make sure the email account uses a different password from the gaming account. Remind them not to click on any links offering "cheats" as these are both immoral and likely to contain malware.