PARENT FACTSHEET – MARCH 2021

Keep your child safe on Fortnite

- Fortnite is an online video game where players compete to be the last person standing in a post-apocalyptic world. The most popular version is Fortnite: Battle Royale, which sees up to 100 players pitted against each other to stay alive on an island. Players can build and demolish structures, and collect weapons, supplies and armour to help them along the way
- Players shoot each other using a range of lethal weapons, but the brightly-coloured, cartoon-style graphics and lack of bloodshed mean it doesn't feel too gory or graphic
- To play, the age recommendation is **12 and above** – although you don't have to provide your age when creating an account, so younger children can still use it easily
- Fortnite: Battle Royale **is free to download** on PC/Mac, Xbox, PlayStation, Nintendo Switch, Android and iOS devices (Apple phones and tablets)
- It has about 350 million players in total, and in December 2020 had over 15 million players online at once

What are the concerns?

You may have seen news reports or heard concerns raised about:

- **Communication between players:** they can talk to each other via messaging or a headset and microphone. Children could speak to strangers or be at risk of cyber-bullying
- **In-app purchases:** children can build up large bills on their parents' accounts by buying cosmetic items, like outfits for their character, and better-looking weapons ('skins')
- **The game's addictive nature:** there have been stories of children staying up all night to play, and falling asleep in lessons. Some people say this is down to the communal feel of the game – you can play with your friends – and because it's different every time you play

3 steps to take to keep your child safe

1. Use the parental controls on your gaming device

- Most devices allow you to **set time limits** on game play, **set age limits** for content, and **restrict in-app purchases.** Go to the website below for links to detailed instructions on your child's device – it covers PlayStation 3 and 4, Xbox 360, Xbox One, Apple and Android phones, and Nintendo Switch:
  - Ask About Games - *www.askaboutgames.com/advice/parental-controls*
- Battles in Fortnite last around 20 minutes, so make use of this natural stopping point when limiting your child's screen time. Set a limit in terms of matches rather than hours and minutes, or set time limits in 20-minute increments

2. Turn off the voice chat feature

Speak to your child to make sure they understand how to use this feature safely. Encourage them to follow the steps below if they meet someone who is offensive or inappropriate in the game.

To **disable the in-game voice chat function**:

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- Select the menu icon, then ‘Settings’
- Select the ‘audio’ tab (it’s represented by a speaker icon)
- Tap the arrows next to ‘voice chat’

To **‘mute’ individual players**:

- Pause the game
- Hover over the player you wish to mute and select the mute button (a loudspeaker icon)

3. Make sure your child knows how to report inappropriate behaviour

To **report** players who make your child feel uncomfortable:

- Select the menu icon, then ‘Report player’
- On the ‘Reason’ tab, select your reason from the available options
- On the ‘Player name’ tab, select the player you want to report, then – if you want to – add any extra information on the ‘Additional info’ tab
- Select ‘Send report’

What else can I do?

- Download and play the game to help you understand it
- Take a look at the other parental controls explained on the Epic Games website: https://bit.ly/2o3YnaC
- Talk to your child about what they’re doing online, and make sure they know they can talk to you about anything that has upset them. See more guidance from the NSPCC on how to do this here: https://bit.ly/1HpjYgO
- Check your bank statements and gaming system account balance regularly for in-app purchases you’re not happy with, and to make sure your child isn’t getting around any passwords you’ve set up

Sources

This factsheet was produced by Safeguarding Training Centre from The Key.

- Fortnite, Epic Games
  https://www.epicgames.com/fortnite/en-US/home
- Fortnite: Battle Royale, Net Aware
  https://www.net-aware.org.uk/networks/fortnite-battle-royale/
- ‘Fortnite chat raises stranger danger fears from NSPCC, BBC News, 3 May 2018
  https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-43988210

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