

Children enjoy gaming and playing online. Like all things there are many positive and negative aspects. It is important to create a healthy balance, just as important is having conversations with your child around gaming, as you would discuss alcohol, safe sex, online safety. Keep chats short and sweet, you want them to feel you are interested in their opinions not giving them a lecture. Use opportunities to create awareness and discussions so that it doesn't feel one sided for the child.

Here are some conversation starters to choose from, depending on the issues you want to bring up with your child.

## Chat to your child about gaming

### *Why does your child enjoy gaming? What do they get from it?*

Chat to your child about their choices, why have they chosen that game? What does the game entail? How does it make them feel? Take the time to show an interest in your child's activity and the conversation can open up opportunities to chat about how they can stay safe whilst playing, ask them if they think there are any negatives around the game.

Why not even get involved and play with them, ask them to show you how to play. Use opportunities to spend time with your child playing.

## Speak openly about the issues

### *Should loot boxes be banned? Is China right to impose an online play limit?*

Use a news story about the game as an opportunity to discuss your concerns or ask your child their opinion on the article. Talk about your concerns and explain why you would like to set some boundaries to keep them safe.

## Observing behaviours in others

### *Can your child identify positive and negative behaviours whilst engaging in play?*

Use a third party to help children to identify positive and negative behaviours in others when playing online. See if they can identify positive and negative behaviours they see in themselves and others when playing online. Can they identify the different behaviours?

What do they think about their friends behaviours - is it a good thing or bad thing. Sometimes using others or a third party can encourage people to talk without feeling attacked which can make them feel defensive.

## In-app purchases

### *Do they buy in-app purchase? Why? How does it benefit them? How does it makes them feel?*

Ask your child why they need the additional purchases, get them thinking about the benefits this will bring and if the benefits are worth the money. Find out why your child enjoys in-app purchases, is the thrill or anticipation of what they might get, is it to progress in the game or because their friends are doing it and they feel they need to keep up?

Does your child understand the value of money? Do they appreciate that this is real money they are spending? What could they spend that money on instead? Use opportunities to discuss money, saving for something bigger or working to a budget.

## Peer pressure

Be mindful of the need for your child to 'keep up with the Jones'. Some young people feel under pressure to buy in-app purchases because the other players in the game do, or they need to buy them in order to stay competitive. Online friends can be just as mean as off-line friends with young people reporting they get comments because they can't afford or participate in in-app purchases.

Check in with your children to see how they feel and if this is an issue for them. Helping them to make clear choices and decisions without feeling pressures or techniques for when this happens can really help.

## Odds of winning

### *Does your child know how likely they are to purchase what they really want?*

Along with the cost of in-app purchases, does your child know or understand the chances of them actually getting the prize they want? Chatting to your child about the probability of winning the top prizes in loot boxes or FUT packs and relating it to other probabilities so they can see the bigger picture.

For example the chance of getting Ronaldo or Messi is less than 1%

Odds of being struck by lightning 5%

Odds of flying to space 4%

You could look at different winning odds for them to be able to put in-app purchases into perspective.

## Addiction

### *Would your child recognise if they were addicted to online play?*

Ask your child what behaviours someone who is addicted to online gaming would show? Again, this might be a conversation where you talk in the third person so your child does not feel it is a personal attack.

Can they identify if they play too much? Use this to look at ways of identifying their own behaviour and implementing some actions they can do, for example if they notice they forget to drink as they are too engrossed in play, look at putting in reminder alarms to remind them to take a break and have a drink. If they recognise they may play too long, ask them what they feel is a healthy amount and decide on a time. Young people like having boundaries and by including them in setting boundaries they can feel in control of their own actions.