

4. Internet – For everyone

”Creativity requires the courage to let go of certainties”
Erich Fromm, psychologist

CHECKLIST FACT SHEET 14 – VIDEOS, MUSIC AND IMAGES ON THE INTERNET

Check the licence of any content that you would like to reuse.

Use the Creative Commons classification on the content you create and post online.

Support fair online business models which enable you to pay for content from your favourite artist, musician or content creators.

CHECKLIST FACT SHEET 15 – CREATIVITY

One image can speak a thousand words, especially if we are not careful about our private information and that of others.

Do you understand how to ensure that your ownership of creative output is respected by others?

Plagiarism shows non-respect of creative ownership and can weigh heavily on multiple aspects of society. Are you aware of the multiple ways in which plagiarism can impact on society?

CHECKLIST FACT SHEET 16 – GAMES

Life balance is important: is the time you are spending online on games infringing on outdoor and face-to-face activities?

When the games you play online lead you to meet and communicate with strangers, remember that not everyone is who they say they are. Choose “human-moderated” games or games with “safe chat” through pre-selected phrases for very young children.

In-app purchases can be a trap for the unwary in certain games. Have you checked the tips in Fact sheet 13?

CHECKLIST FACT SHEET 17 – DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

Do you know your online rights and responsibilities?

Have you checked your digital footprint lately? Put your name into a search engine and see what comes up.

What are the digital skills required to become a fully-fledged digital citizen?

CHECKLIST FACT SHEET 18 – DIGITAL PARENTING: POSITIVE AND PROACTIVE

Be positive when parenting in this new digital age and do your best to communicate with your child about what they are doing online, where they are going online and who they are talking to online.

Realise that even though technology has advanced in leaps and bounds, parenting remains much the same: staying active in your children’s life, encouraging them to be good (digital) citizens and emphasising kindness and empathy.

Whether you are the parent of a toddler or a teen, be aware of the challenges of your child’s development with respect to technology. Use technology in ways that help, not hinder, your child’s development.

Games



Video games can be described as entertainment that involves human interaction with a user interface to generate visual feedback on a video device such as a television screen, computer, tablet or smartphone. The term comprises a huge array of genres from arcade and role-playing to strategy games and fantasy worlds. eSports is the term for game competitions where participants (often semi-professional gamers) compete for money prizes in front of a rapidly growing live and online audience – this can be any sort of game, not just sports. Games can be played alone, with partners in closed circles or can involve thousands, or sometimes millions, of strangers playing together. Such massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) include “World of Warcraft” and “Game of Thrones”. Video games are now the third biggest sector in the entertainment market worldwide behind broadcast and cable television, generating sales of USD 74 billion as of 2015, after doubling income between 2013 and 2014¹.

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Video_game

Smart phones and tablets and the presence of ever younger and older users on the Internet have had a considerable impact on gaming trends; 2015 research² shows that approximately 1 in 3 children under the age of 18 play online games but the average age of online gamers is 31 years. Previously more a male-dominated domain, today women account for 50% of all purchases, 48% of electronic game players worldwide and 52% in the UK. The use of dedicated game consoles has evolved too, with owners now spending more than half their time on consoles viewing television, streaming video, watching Blu-ray discs and exploring the Internet³.

Games have forged a broader path as both a family and a classroom activity too. Of K-8 teachers, 74% say they include online games in classroom activities, with 4 out of 5 being “educational” games. Also, 56% of parents say that games positively affect their children. Given the increasing popularity of games and the impact they can have on human rights, the Council of Europe has published a set of guidelines for games providers, developed in collaboration with games providers and experts from child protection, education and human rights sectors⁴.

This shows that online gaming is indeed big business, with a very broad variety of games being enjoyed by millions of users through the Internet and on mobile phones every day.



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATIONAL VALUE

- Game playing is more than entertainment; it is an enriching collaborative activity enjoyed by children and adults of all ages. It fosters creativity and interaction and plays an important role in social and intellectual development.
- Games represent one of the rare occasions when adults and children can exchange ideas on an equal footing (intergenerational communication).
- Children learn about democracy by playing within different social structures, in an environment bordered by rules and parameters.
- Games often involve sharing and respecting the rights and property of others, sometimes even bringing players into contact with other cultures and intercultural practices. Children can practise social skills without fear of failure and with a sense of control. Because games require children to obey rules and follow directions, they increase their capacity for self-discipline and autonomy.
- Puzzles, board games, adventures and quests offer opportunities for players to develop strategic thinking and problem-solving skills. Certain games can be used to increase fine motor and spatial skills in younger children and for therapeutic purposes with the physically disabled.
- Some studies imply that game playing can be useful in autism, and games such as Minecraft have been especially noted.
- Online games are useful for introducing newcomers to technology and coding, and generally fostering interest in and understanding of ICT⁵.
- Games can be integrated into almost any area of the curriculum, from mathematics to social studies and languages.

2. <http://web.archive.org/web/20160420163852/http://www.bigfishgames.com/blog/2015-global-video-game-stats-whos-playing-what-and-why/>

3. <http://web.archive.org/web/20151023082205/http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2015/game-consoles-in-2015-one-stop-shop-for-games-and-entertainment.html>

4. <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/guidelines-for-providers>

5. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_technology



ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RISKS

- Links between video games and addiction, aggression, violence, poor social development, and a variety of stereotyping and sexual morality issues have been under debate for several decades, with no conclusive evidence yet that these aspects in games are any more influential than through other media⁶.
- Age appropriateness of games is important, even more so for very young children.
- Addiction is often cited as a risk. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) concluded in 2013 that there is insufficient evidence to include game addiction as an official mental disorder, but proposed the term “Internet gaming disorder” and urged for further studies to define criteria for this. While Internet gaming disorder is proposed as a disorder, it is still debated how much this disorder is caused by the gaming activity itself, or whether it is to some extent an effect of other disorders⁷.
- Life balance is an important aspect when looking at gaming, as with all activities on the Internet. Time spent on gaming should not infringe on outdoor and face-to-face activities.
- Some online games allow the possibility to meet and communicate with strangers. Ensure that games encouraging user interaction, especially those intended for very young children, are supervised through human moderation or provide a “safe chat” with pre-selected phrases.
- Through in-app purchases, there is the potential in some games for children to inadvertently spend a large amount of their parents’ money on collectibles and tools.



GOOD PRACTICE

- Labelling and rating systems encourage games industry actors to act responsibly by requiring them to define and describe their products. This also helps game buyers judge the content and age suitability of games, and to navigate the game market more safely. PEGI (Pan European Game Information) is the only pan-European classification system that provides detailed recommendations regarding age suitability of game content. The ratings of approximately 20 000 games can be found on its website <www.pegi.info>. PEGI is also part of IARC (International Age Rating Coalition), which provides a global rating and age classification system for digitally delivered games and apps⁸. As a result, PEGI ratings are now also available for all products in the Google Play Store and the Mozilla Firefox Marketplace. Microsoft Windows Mobile and Windows 10 app stores will follow very soon.
- Monitor the number of hours spent playing. Take action if other social activities are avoided or children and young people skip school in order to spend time gaming.
- Gaming communities can foster a sense of belonging and can lead children to trust too readily. Remind them that online friends may not always be who they say they are. It is important not to give out personal information to anyone online.
- Online gaming is becoming a popular family activity and provides a valuable opener to family conversations about responsible Internet usage. If parents or teachers are concerned that their children are spending too much of their time on electronic games, check out the many “gaming addiction tests” you can find through a search engine – these are also ideal conversation openers.
- The Council of Europe has produced an attractive, interactive online game⁹ with the aim of promoting children’s rights and protecting them from violence of any form.

6. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Video_game_controversies#Crime_and_violence

7. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Video_game_addiction

8. <http://www.globalratings.com>

9. <http://www.wildwebwoods.org>

- Choose a role-playing game for your class or family on a topical issue at <http://www.playdecide.eu>. You can also create your own game following the Play-Decide model and share it with others by uploading it to this website.
- In-game purchases, that is new content, game functionality, features and/or upgrades for a particular game or app, but also sometimes separate items in online stores outside of a game, are a growing area of concern especially to parents. Parental control filters can often prevent this.



FURTHER INFORMATION

- Look at “Ask about games” <http://www.askaboutgames.com/> to help make sense of video games.
- Read about ongoing game studies in the International Journal of Computer Game Research: <http://www.gamestudies.org/>.
- Legislation on video games is a vast subject that can involve criminal, regulatory, constitutional, administrative, company, contract and, in some jurisdictions, competition law. The public policy section of the ISFE (Interactive Software Federation of Europe – <http://www.isfe.eu/objectives/public-policy>) provides useful insight into relevant EU and global legislation.
- The Pan European Games Information (PEGI) website contains rating and labelling information: <http://www.pegi.info/pegi/index>. PEGI Online, an addendum to this system, aims to ensure a safer online gaming environment. Game providers licenced with a PEGI Online label meet the PEGI Online Safety Code www.pegionline.eu standards which include, amongst other things, obligations to try to keep websites free of illegal and offensive user-created content and undesirable links, to protect privacy and which have an independent complaints mechanism.
- Age verification is challenging in the games industry, as in other online sectors that appeal to young children. Pilot projects are underway in Europe to see if it would be possible to set up an “attribute exchange” whereby companies that sell or provide access to age-restricted goods and services could pool and exchange information to make age verification more effective.
- News stories are published every week about online games, as this is the fastest growing entertainment market. Consult several sites to get a balanced view of top-selling games, games news, descriptions, research reports and statistics. Useful starting points are Bigfishgames, IFSE, PEGI and Nielsen websites. You could also subscribe to the newsfeeds/newsletter these sites offer or set up a clearly defined Google alert to stay informed.