

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about MINECRAFT

AGE RATING
7+

Minecraft is a beloved classic of modern gaming, still boasting over 160 million players who happily return to it at least once every month. The game has also been used in schools to teach coding, science and other skills. Encouraging creativity, Minecraft has plenty to offer, and it's available on almost all video game platforms.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

PUBLIC SERVERS

Joining a public Minecraft server lets children potentially interact with strangers through text chat. Some servers focus on building, while others are dedicated to playing mini-games or competitive modes that pit players against each other. Anyone can join a public server and connecting to one is relatively simple. A public server's IP address is easy to find with search engines and can potentially be used to determine the host's location.

GRIEFING

Some people in Minecraft delight in purposefully damaging or destroying another player's creations. This is called 'griefing' and is a form of bullying: it intentionally spoils someone else's experience in the game by deleting hours of their work and forcing them to start from scratch. Many public servers treat griefing as a severe offence and frequently ban offenders.

ADDICTIVENESS

Minecraft's gameplay is relatively simple, and seeing the result of hours of resource gathering and building can be extremely gratifying. This can make the game highly addictive. It's easy to lose track of time while playing Minecraft, causing committed young players to forget about other activities like homework or enjoying family time.

SCARY ELEMENTS

The visual design and gameplay of Minecraft is purposefully child friendly, so there's no mature content in the game. However, some enemies might prove scary for younger players. In the game, certain creatures come out at night and are accompanied by spooky audio – such as zombie moans and skeleton bone rattles – that may be unnerving. There are also enemies called 'creepers' which sneak up silently and explode, which could startle and upset young users.

ADDITIONAL PURCHASES

After initially buying the game, players can make optional purchases for cosmetic items and other bonuses. Additionally, Minecraft Realms is an optional online subscription service that lets users run their own private server to play with their friends. Some games consoles also need a separate active subscription – such as PlayStation Plus – to enable online play, so multiplayer Minecraft can quickly become an expensive hobby.

Advice for Parents & Educators

RESEARCH CONTENT CREATORS

There are a lot of Minecraft content creators who release helpful videos about the game on YouTube and Twitch. Not all of these, however, are suitable for children. Watching these content creators' channels yourself first is a safe way to find appropriate videos to share with children. This also helps you learn more about the game itself.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT MODE

Selecting 'Creative' or 'Peaceful' mode allows children to play Minecraft without having to contend with enemies. It's also a great way for you to get used to playing the game with them, since the difficulty level is far lower. This allows you to work together on a long-term project, creating something special without the threat of zombies attacking you, or creepers exploding and damaging your build.

HOST A PRIVATE SERVER

The easiest way to find a safe server for children to play on is to make one yourself. Hosting a server prevents strangers from finding it, unless they've been given its address and password. A private server also lets you control who's allowed to enter and – if necessary – ban anyone who shouldn't be there. This is the closest equivalent to parental controls in Minecraft. However, hosting a private server will cost a monthly fee.

ENCOURAGE BREAKS

It's easy for the hours to fly by while a child is playing Minecraft, so remind them to take regular breaks. This is a useful way for them to learn good time management, which they'll benefit from as they get older. It will also teach them to play their favourite games in moderation – limiting addictive behaviour and allowing them to manage their day better.

TALK ABOUT STRANGERS

At some point in their lives, almost everyone will make contact with a stranger online. Talking to children about online safety, therefore, is essential – as is having a plan for dealing with any hostile or difficult people. Ensure that a child knows to never tell a stranger about themselves online, and that they should come to you straight away if they do encounter a problem.

Meet Our Expert

Daniel Lipscombe is a writer specialising in technology, video gaming, virtual reality and Web3. He has also written 15 guidebooks for children, covering games such as Fortnite, Apex Legends, Valorant, Roblox and Minecraft. With work published by the likes of PC Gamer, Kotaku, Pocket Gamer and VG247, he has reviewed more than 50 games and products over the past year.



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