

Parent Tips

The following list of tips covers most of the major issues associated with video games. But remember the most important tip of all: watch what your kids watch! Staying involved in your kids' lives is the most important way to help them make healthy choices.

1. **LIMIT** playing time. MediaWise recommends no more than one hour a day.
2. **USE** other content sources and reviews to help you understand the game. A lot of the major online games do have ESRB ratings. Other games do not. Check out online reviews for a sense of the game.
3. **AVOID** first-person shooter, killing games. There are plenty of great online games with age-appropriate content from which to choose. Try fantasy problem solving games instead of shoot-em-ups.
4. **WATCH** for warning signs of video game addiction. Stop obsessive playing before it gets out of control. Find the MediaWise addiction survey at mediawise.org for more information.
5. **DO NOT PUT** video games or computers in kids' bedrooms. Putting consoles and computers in family areas make it easier to monitor playing time and content.
6. **PLAY** and **ENJOY** games with your kids. Online games are constantly evolving. Be sure to watch or play with your kids as they advance in any game, so you can monitor content and connect with your kids.
7. **TALK** with your kids about griefers (players who give other players a hard time online) and cyberbullying. Come up with house rules of "netiquette" and follow through with consequences if these are broken. Encourage your kids to talk to you if they see inappropriate behavior online.
8. **MEETING** online gaming friends requires adult supervision. Your kids may feel quite close to other gamers they meet online. Remind them that these people are still strangers and that it isn't safe to meet them alone.
9. **SET** clear house rules around Internet/game use and time. Require that homework and chores be done before playing.
10. **DISCUSS** teamwork and good sportsmanship with your child. Kids can learn great lessons in collaboration and teamwork in online games. Discuss the value of being a respectful and positive team player. Ask about what they've learned from the other players on their team or in their guild.
11. **ENCOURAGE** your child to play with friends "off line," away from the computer.