

Kids and gaming

Guide to parents

Telia Company, Save the Children Finland

Support and be present

Telia and Save the Children Finland have collected ideas from thousands of children and young people about how the internet would be a better and safer environment for them. Children's most important wish for their parents is that they could understand their online lives and interests better and would support them in internet safety and online privacy.

Telia together with World Childhood Foundation is annually conducting a [Children's Advisory Panel \(CAP\)](#) in Nordic and Baltic countries to better understand children's own perspectives of online life. Read more about CAP 2019 study on what 600 15-year old kids wanted adults to know about their experiences in online gaming: <https://www.teliacompany.com/en/sustainability/children-online/childrens-voices/>

Ask questions and show interest

A genuine and unprejudiced interest in the digital gaming world will make it a lot easier for you to speak with your child about digital gaming, age limits and being a good teamplayer. When you explore and play together with your child, you will get a better understanding of your child's online gaming experience. You may even get excited and find a new hobby for yourself.

You may start the conversation for example when the child is playing at home. Try asking:

- what kind of a game is he/she playing
- what one needs to do in the game
- why does he/she think it is fun

Try out the game yourself. Ask your child to teach you and tell you about gaming.

Why are children so excited about digital gaming?

Almost every child and young person plays some kind of a digital game. Digital gaming means playing any kind of online video game with a gaming console, computer or mobile device. Games are a big part of children and young people's culture and they are playing for different reasons. For some kids, games are an important hobby, for some it means spending time with friends and for some it is entertainment.

When a parent or guardian understands why the child is playing digital games, it is easier for them to support the child in gaming responsibly.

What can you learn from online gaming?

Playing online games can teach teamwork and decision making skills as well as improve critical thinking, strategic and logical thinking. Many online gamers make new friends around the world, and playing with them has a positive impact on language skills. Some people continue gaming throughout their lives. The video games industry is a considerable business (\$135 billion in 2018), with a need for different people and diverse skill sets. Many gamers have made their hobbies into a career in the gaming industry.

How to have a good digital gaming experience?

There is no undisputed scientific proof about the negative effects of gaming. Challenges which are often attributed to gaming, for example excessive playing of games, may be an indication of other problems in the child's life, such as missing social relationships, life management difficulties or mental health challenges. It is useful to ask a child what is the attraction in for example violent games and what does playing them make the child feel.

If you are worried about a child, contact child helpline or social services.

Take care of the balance.

As a parent, it's your job to find a balance between different areas of your child's life. Physical exercise, healthy nutrition, family and social relationships, commitment to schoolwork and other duties, meaningful hobbies and – especially importantly - adequate rest are all parts of the equation.

Regular digital gaming is not harmful when the everyday life is otherwise in order. Open conversations and clear rules, preferably made together with the child, reduce possibly risky situations.

Age ratings are not just recommendations

Age limits in digital games must be taken seriously, because the rating is always a warning about content, which is not suitable for younger children. Scary games can create disturbing memories especially for younger children. It is important to be informed about the games your child is playing and check their age rating.

What if something happens?

In the online gaming world you may come in contact with negative things, such as bullying, harassment, identity thefts, threats and grooming for sexual purposes. The best way to protect a child online is to cherish an open and trustful dialogue, in which possible harmful situations can be discussed with the child.

If something happens, stay calm, listen to the child's description of the situation and never accuse the child. Save possible evidence (such as screenshots) and check the terms of use of the game to see if the disturbing messages can be blocked or reported. If you suspect a crime, contact the police.

Career from gaming.

Esports and traditional sports share similar elements such as teamwork, the importance of individual performance, reaction speed, training, and professionalism. Because of the similarities, esports is also considered a form of sport, even if it does not necessarily fit into the traditional sport definition.

If you want to be a star player

It is important to take care of your physical wellbeing. For example, injuries related to hands and wrists are common among competitive players. If you do not take care of your physical health, competitive gaming can cause different medical problems that will shorten competitive playing careers considerably. Taking care of the physical health increases wellbeing and at the same time improves performance results and adds to a longer success in the competitive gaming area.

Take care of your mind

Competitive gaming requires good ability to cope with pressure. To counter that different relaxing, mindfulness and mind focusing exercises are useful.

Support fair gaming

Telia supports a gaming culture that is free from hate speech and all kinds of discrimination. Support your child on creating an inclusive and supportive online gaming culture.

„It is most important that adults are interested about what their children are doing. Even in the beginning, when it is only about gaming for fun, parents should get to know the games and if possible, play together. If playing online games becomes a hobby and the child shows talent, it is important that playing and training are systematic. Not just adding time to play, as that alone will not lead anywhere.“

Markku Sotala, Father of Joona Sotala, most successful esports player in Finland, Starcraft 2 world champion.

„ I was thinking about playing professionally from the early start and luckily my parents have always supported me and trusted me in my professional career. The hours I play when training are not important, but the purpose and concentration. You have to concentrate perfectly on playing and training.“

Joona „Serral“ Sotala, World champion of Starcraft 2-game, ENCE

Telia guiding principles for responsible digital gaming

We promote

- **Integrity, fair play and inclusion**

We support a gaming culture, where all players are respected and we have zero tolerance for harassment, bullying and discrimination. We want everyone to have equal opportunities and feel safe in the gaming communities.

- **Adherence to age limits**

In order to protect minors from inappropriate content, we always make sure that age ratings of games are respected in our operations.

- **Child rights in digital media and well-being**

We promote child rights and safety in digital media and the balance between online gaming, family and social relationships, school work, rest and physical well-being in everyday life.

- **Equal opportunities**

We want to provide equal opportunities for online gaming to everyone.

Let's together create a gaming culture that welcomes everyone to take part and have fun!

In cooperation: Telia Company, Save the Children Finland.