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When we consider that the internet is unhindered by physical or geographical boundaries, the reality is that we can be gaming online with anyone, from a close friend to strangers from any part of the world.

The level and types of communication online games offer, has also evolved over recent years. Initially online gaming was separate to social media, they now greatly overlap with online gaming social sharing sites.

In fact, most children's first interaction with someone they do not know, will be through online gaming.

In these games, players do not necessarily know who they are associating with, as anyone can be who they want to be online.

Online player profiles may look to be like other children, but it is difficult to be sure if this is the case.

We would encourage parents and carers to ask their children do they really know who they are associating with when gaming online? Have they shared personal information within chats or even struck up a relationship away from the gaming platform having only met online?

Whilst being online is an enjoyable experience, especially in terms of the global interaction gaming brings, it is safer when we know who we are gaming with.

There is no doubt that online criminals use gaming platforms to coerce and manipulate genuine gamers and will turn any situation to their advantage.

Because of this, parents and carers need to understand the games their children are playing and how to set them up, so their children are safe.

This festive period there will be many children and young people new to online gaming whether this is on a PC, games console, phone etc. The following link to the NCSC (National Cyber Security Centre) will support you, as a Parent, Carer, and gamer, to enjoy online gaming more securely and by following a few tips, can help prevent you falling victim to an online gaming criminal.

[Online gaming for families and individuals - NCSC.GOV.UK](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk)



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Online gaming can also be an added stress for those with younger family members to think about. Concerns such as cyberbullying, excessive time spent playing online games, to unscrupulous games which encourage children to pay for improved avatars or other content are issues that must be considered.

If you have younger family members who are gaming, the following links to our trusted partners, will provide you with support and guidance from what parents and carers need to know, i.e. gaming safety tips, choosing the right console, and understanding online games.

[Gaming: what parents and carers need to know \(thinkuknow.co.uk\)](#)

[Gaming consoles and platforms - Internet Matters](#)

[Games console for your child: What you need to know | Internet Matters](#)

[Online gaming top tips for parents - Internet Matters](#)

[How to Ensure Your Children Stay Safe While Playing Online Games | NSPCC](#)

[Gaming | Childnet](#)

[Gaming - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

This Cyber Byte sent out for your information by

Police Scotland Cybercrime Harm Prevention Team

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