Today's video games can be a great way to bring the family together for endless hours of harmless fun.

The remarkable value of games for children has never been in much doubt. They can do everything from teach tots valuable motor skills using a mouse to helping youngsters understand such relatively complex issues as the history of mankind through games like Civilization.

The very best gaming is always safe gaming – which means games should be played responsibly. The ideal way to ensure that your children and teenagers are playing the right games – and playing sensibly – is to take an active interest in what they are playing.

But more than that, as parents or guardians you can also take direct control of just what games your children play at home – and even how they play them and for how long. Over the next few pages we detail sound advice and parental controls.

Whether your children play on a PC or one of the latest consoles — Microsoft’s Xbox 360, Nintendo’s Wii or Sony’s PlayStation 3 — their gaming choices can be safely steered by you and in this leaflet we tell you how.

The UK’s game industry also funds Ask About Games — a website offering advice, insight and further reading. Feel free to check it out at www.askaboutgames.com

Play Safe Gaming Tips

- **Engage.** Find out what your children are playing and take an interest. Better still, join in the fun and play alongside them yourself!
- **Lighten up.** Games should be played in well-lit rooms. Darkened rooms, where games are played on old CRT (cathode ray tube) tv sets, have been known to trigger epilepsy issues amongst some children.
- **Take breaks.** Some games can be especially intense, so regular breaks are vital for healthy gameplay. Encourage your children to take regular breaks — at least five minutes every 45-60 minutes as a rule of thumb.
Windows Vista not only allows you to restrict access to games depending on age classifications but also by PEGI content descriptor.

To restrict access by age classifications:
1. Click on the Windows Vista Start button at the bottom left corner of the screen.
2. Click on the "Instant Search" field and enter "par" to search for Parental Controls.
3. Click on Parental Controls.
4. Select the user account for which you wish to set Parental Controls.
5. Click on, "enforce current settings," and then click OK.
6. Under Windows Settings, click Games and then click on Set game ratings. Select the age rating you wish to apply. Users will be able to play games of this rating and below.
7. To select the types of game, as defined by PEGI descriptors, you wish your children to play:
   Repeat steps 1 – 6, then select the content you wish to block under the Block these types of content heading.

The XBOX 360 allows you to restrict access to games depending on a game's age classification. You can also add a timer, restricting just how long each day or week your children can play.

To limit games played by age rating:
1. From the main Menu scroll across to the System tab on the right using blue arrows and then, on the next screen, Settings and then to Security Settings. Press to Select.
2. Scroll down to Parental Control and press .
3. Enter your PIN Number then press (The default PIN Number if you have not previously changed it is 0000).
5. The following settings provide a guide corresponding with PEGI ratings:
   - PEGI 3+
   - PEGI 7+
   - PEGI 12+

The Wii allows you to restrict access to games depending on age classifications. But this console also allows parents the chance to limit online communication with others.

To restrict games played by classification:
1. Use the Wii Remote to move the cursor over the Wii button in the bottom-left corner of the screen and press the button.
2. Click on Wii Settings.
3. Press the blue arrow to reach the Wii System Settings 2 menu options.
4. Select Parental Controls and confirm.
5. Enter your 4-digit PIN in the white box. (If you have not already set a PIN you will be prompted to do so now). Click OK. And again to confirm.
6. Click on Game Settings and PIN.
7. Now adjust the Highest Game Rating Allowed by clicking on this option. On the menu that appears next, use the blue arrows to scroll to the desired setting. Once you have made your selection, hit OK. Click Confirm and then, on the next screen, Settings Complete.

PEGI RATINGS

The Pan-European Game Information (PEGI) age rating system was established in 2003 to help parents and guardians can be found at www.askaboutgames.com

If you are having difficulty with these instructions, please email us at help@askaboutgames.com

For more information about PEGI and PEGI Online, head to www.pegi.info. More general games advice for parents and guardians can be found at www.askaboutgames.com

Under the current rating system in the UK, some games for older players are rated by the BBFC (British Board of Film Classification) at potentially 12, 15 and 18. It is an offence for a retailer to sell BBFC rated games to anyone younger than 12, 15 or 18 respectively.

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