

Develop a contract **together** about how much time they can play games each week.

They have some **missing assignments** at school.

Your tween **regularly finishes homework** before gaming.

Take a family walk together after dinner **without your devices**.

*Warp to level 3*

Your tween is **really upset about mean comments** someone made about them online that many of their classmates saw.

Discuss guidelines on what **content is parental approved** and what they need to ask to play.

They told you how **they blocked someone** because they didn't like how they were talking to people.

Schedule a **family gaming night**. Order pizza and have fun!

Set parental controls about **spending money on games**.

#### LEGEND

- P Parent
- C Child
- ☆ Start level
- > Level up (+1)
- Beat boss (+2)
- || Pause
- ↺ Reset (-1)

C

P

LEVEL 2



# READY, SET, GAME

Tweens

## LEVEL 2

## Focus on Critical Thinking and Communication for Tweens

Online gaming is a journey. There are exciting adventures to be had, but there may also be bumps along the way. Ready to play?

As a parent or caregiver of a tween 10-14 years old, you know that this age is crucial for developing critical thinking skills and having ongoing conversations around online activities. At this age, gaming often transitions from being a solitary activity to a primary way of socializing and connecting with peers.

We've created this resource so that you can have an easy way to set your family guidelines around online socializing with peers.

Side-by-side with your tween, follow the level's map, listen and discuss each stage according to your family values and expectations:

**STAGE 01**

Use **parental controls** and shift your approach from rules based to **dialogue based**. Establish yourself as a **trusted** adult by demonstrating **respect** for their interests in gaming.

**STAGE 02**

**Talk openly** with your tween about the games they are playing, with whom they are playing and the importance of staying on the platform of the game for any chat or communications.

**STAGE 03**

**Adjust household guidelines** as your child shows more **maturity** and **responsibility**.

**STAGE 04**

**Teach them** how to mute, block, or report players and the importance of not sharing personal information.

## Additional Information for Parents on Online Safety, Wellbeing, and Media Literacy in Gaming

### Key Definitions

Individuals today need a broad set of skills to navigate the technology saturated world. Here are some key definitions to help you guide your children.

**Online safety** is the ability to identify and avoid potentially harmful experiences online. (SOURCE: Internet Society)

**Digital wellness** is a positive state of mental, physical, and social-emotional health pursued through intentional, authentic, and balanced engagement with technology and interactive media. (SOURCE: Digital Wellness Lab)

**Media literacy** is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create and act using all forms of media. (SOURCE: National Association for Media Literacy Education)

**Gaming literacy** is the ability to understand game rules, icons, symbols, commands and how to communicate (text, orally, pictures, gestures) (SOURCE: Notre Dame Center for Literacy Education)

### The Positives of Gaming

Gaming can offer a range of positive experiences for children when approached mindfully and in moderation. Gaming can foster connection and socializing, allowing kids to collaborate with friends and peers, often working together to achieve shared goals. These interactive environments help develop social skills, reduce feelings of loneliness, and can even ease social anxiety by providing low-pressure ways to engage with others. Many games encourage problem-solving and creativity. Additionally, gaming can improve motor functioning and hand-eye coordination. Certain games also promote prosocial behaviors like helping, sharing, and cooperating. With a wide variety of game types available, children can explore different interests and strengths, building both confidence and essential life skills in an engaging, meaningful way.



## Creating a Healthy Relationship With Gaming in the Home

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### Talk With Them

Whether your child is 6 or 16, the best way to create a healthy relationship with gaming is to talk with them. Be clear about what parental controls you use and why. Discuss the games they can play and any expectations you have about time limits and behavior. Talk to them about the rules and guidelines so that they understand why you have them in place and what the consequences are if they don't stick to them. Find out more about what their interests are and why they choose the games they play. Asking questions about what they like about gaming is a great way to stay engaged and learn about your child and how they like to spend their time.



### Check In With Them

It's natural to be concerned about your child's well-being and the impact media and technology are having on them. Oftentimes parents wonder, "how much is too much gaming?" or "how do I know if gaming is having a negative impact on my child?" A good first step is to do an inventory of their week. What do you notice? Are they getting enough sleep? Are they eating healthy foods and getting physical activity? Are they socializing with friends? What do you notice about their mood? Make sure their gaming is not interfering with a balanced schedule and their ability to get their responsibilities done and stay healthy.

Also take notice of when and why your child likes to game. Is it to socialize? Release stress? Avoid homework? Have fun? Paying attention to when they game is a good way to understand their moods and coping mechanisms.



### Build Media Literacy Skills

In today's digital world, media literacy is an essential skill for both children and adults. When it comes to gaming, parents can support their children by encouraging curiosity and critical thinking. Play and engage with them directly with the games they love. Consider organizing a family game night to make it a shared experience. It's important to teach kids how to recognize harms like phishing scams and what to think about before making in-app purchases. If your child shows a strong interest in gaming, support that passion by exploring opportunities like video game design courses. As they get older, help kids ask questions about the games they play including what creative choices were made around music, characters, and storylines, and whether they notice any biases or stereotypes. The skills they develop could help them in the future.



### Build Safety Skills

It's vital that your child knows how to stay safe when gaming. When they are young, setting up parental controls, limiting access to inappropriate content, and ensuring they are only interacting with people they know is key. Teach them the habit of exploring privacy and safety features on gaming platforms before they dive in. Make sure they keep personal information to themselves, and be clear about what they should do if they come across anyone online that makes them uncomfortable. [Roblox's safety guide for teens](#) is a great resource for your child as they get older.

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Additional Sources:

<https://digitalwellnesslab.org/family-guides/family-guide-to-video-gaming/>  
<https://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/guides/video-games-guide.pdf>