At National Online Safety we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information they need to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one platform of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

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'Call of Duty: Black Ops 4' (COD) is an online first-person shooter game. It's available on PC, Playstation 4 and Xbox One. COD allows players to choose different game modes, including a multiplayer mode, 'Zombies' mode and a 'Blackout' mode. In the game, players can customise their character and weapons.

AGE RESTRICTION 18+

What parents need to know about CALL OF DUTY BLACK OPS 4

GRAPHIC VIOLENCE & LANGUAGE

Inspired by war and undercover agents, COD has extremely violent themes. Players must harm and kill in violent and graphic ways. There's also a horror element in 'Zombies' mode, where players must kill monsters. The language used is not suitable for anyone under eighteen.

NO OFFLINE PLAY

Unlike other COD games, COD: Black Ops 4 doesn't have an offline single-player mode. For this reason, much of the game requires an internet connection in order to battle against others online. Normal multiplayer games can last up to fifteen minutes, or twenty-five in 'Blackout' mode. Due to the repetitive nature of the game, it can be difficult for children to stop playing and know their limits.

CHATTING TO STRANGERS

During a multiplayer game, if there is a microphone built into the PC or console your child is using, it is possible for them to talk to any other player of the game around the world. As it's an adult game, the language used may often be inappropriate for young children. Due to the competitive nature of gaming and the fact conversations are not moderated, your child could be at risk of cyberbullying.

IN-GAME PAYMENTS

Players can gain an advantage over other players by spending money on new characters and attributes. The currency within the game is known as 'COD points', which can't be earned by playing the game, only purchased in the online store. COD point packs range from £1.79 to £84.99.

USER GENERATED CONTENT

Players can personalise certain elements of their character and profile in the game, creating emblems or decorating weapons. Some players use this as an opportunity to show inappropriate imagery. It's possible to report users for this, but it will not prevent your child being exposed to inappropriate content.

Meet the expert

Eammon Jacobs has been a pop culture and entertainment journalist for the last 6 years covering TV, film and gaming. He's been published on sites like Macworld and Tech Advisor offering other how-to guides on apps and technology as well as writing for Wikia previewing new games.

National Online Safety®

Top Tips for Parents

DISCUSS TIME LIMITS

It's not possible to pause a match of COD, so it's a good idea to suggest to your child a limit of matches they can play in one session. In 2018 the World Health Organisation made 'gaming disorder' a recognised health disorder, so it's important to monitor how often your child spends on the game.

REMOVE GRAPHIC VIOLENCE & LANGUAGE

At the very beginning of the game an option appears giving players the chance to disable the graphic content. You also have the option to disable graphic content in the game's settings. You can change the profanity setting in the content filters tab, so that the harsh language doesn't appear in the game. In addition to this, players also have the option to change the zombies mode to a cartoon setting, making the overall theme less frightening.

DISABLE COMMUNICATION FEATURES

It's important to talk to your child regularly about who they're interacting with online. If you have serious concerns, you can disable the voice chat function in the Audio tab of the game or disable the text chat function in the content filters section too.

MONITOR & LIMIT SPENDING

To prevent your child incurring unwanted COD point costs, it's recommended you remove your bank account details. Alternatively, you can set up parental controls on your child's console to limit access. To keep a limit on spending, it's a good idea to use a gift voucher, or a Paysafe card (if you're using an Xbox or PlayStation).

BLOCK USER-GENERATED CONTENT

You can prevent your child from viewing any user-generated content by changing the settings in the content filter tab. Choose 'hide from the menu' so any offensive content won't show up on screen when your child is playing a match.

ENCOURAGE ALTERNATE ACTIVITIES

Players are given incentives during the game the more time they spend playing it. This presents the potential risk that your child could become addicted to the game. It's why you should make sure you talk to your child regularly about the importance of alternative activities away from the game, such as playing sports, playing a musical instrument or pursuing other creative interests such as arts and crafts.

SOURCES:
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