Google Stadia marks the tech giant's first proper foray into the world of video games. Not strictly competing directly with the already established household names of PlayStation, Xbox and Nintendo Switch, Stadia has something else to offer; online streaming. In a nutshell, Stadia beams its catalogue of video games directly into your house via wi-fi, allowing you to play on compatible mobiles, tablets, computers and televisions with console quality. The technology opens up a whole new world of accessibility for those who don't want to commit to the console cycle, but the risks of online gaming remain ever present.

13+

Content is generally suitable for ages 13 & up.

What parents need to know about GOOGLE STADIA

ACCOUNT SHARING & HACKERS

As with any other device that uses accounts and passwords that you carry in your pocket, Google Stadia is only as safe as your child is. If somebody has access to their mobile and their apps, they have access to personal accounts and could use that to obtain sensitive information or undertake fraudulent activity.

ABILITY TO DISABLE 'PURCHASE APPROVAL REQUESTS'

Every time your child wants to purchase a new game on Stadia.com, Chromecast Ultra or iOS, a 'purchase approval request' will be sent directly to you as the master account holder or family manager. However for requests made on an Android device, purchase approval settings can be disabled, which means children could easy spend £100s on games without you knowing.

CONTROL OF THE MASTER ACCOUNT

Stadia requires owners to download a mobile app which serves as a hub for any active accounts, of which you can have many for different family members. You may also need to download the Google Home app to facilitate the setup process too. Children with access to a smartphone could in theory control the 'master' account without a parent or guardian knowing, making purchases and applying their own privacy settings.

ONLINE CHAT

Any games that are multiplayer means that they will also be multiplayer on Stadia. This means there's always the chance that children could be approached by people they don't know. Some games allow players to have open contact with each other, while others may be much stricter on who is contacting who.

GAMING WITH STREAMERS

One of the big selling points of Google Stadia is that it allows fans to play alongside their favourite YouTubers and streamers at the press of a button. For example, if you're watching a streamer play on YouTube you can jump into their game live and play with them. However, there's a risk your child could join a stream which contains inappropriate content in the game or, worse still, has been set-up as a grooming tactic. Keep an eye on who your children are following and playing with online to make sure they're safe.

National Online Safety®

#WakeUpWednesday

Safety Tips for Parents & Carers

GO THROUGH THE SET-UP PROCESS TOGETHER

In order to set up a Stadia account for your child, you must be registered as the Head of Household or Family Manager in your Google family group. From here you'll be able to manage their privacy and security settings, as well as their subscriptions. It's a good idea to do this set up together so you can talk through things as you do them, making it clear what they can and can't do whilst online.

SET GAMEPLAY LIMITS

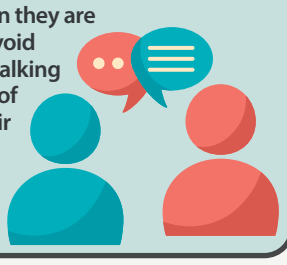
Google allows parents to set up various gameplay limits to help make sure their child is playing games safely and in a healthy manner. This includes the ability to set limits on the game content they can access, as well as their ability to connect with other players. Content restrictions can be based on game ratings so that your child can only access games at the rating you choose and below. Those rated higher will not be visible. You can also choose if you want your child to be able to play multiplayer games or voice chat with other players online.

CHANGE FRIENDS & PRIVACY CONTROLS

Parents can also control who can search for and send their child a friend request on Stadia based on their username. This can be done from the 'Friends and Privacy' setting. From here you can choose the options 'No one', 'Friends and their friends' or 'All players.'

HAVE OPEN DISCUSSIONS WITH YOUR CHILD

It's always important to try and discuss online safety with your child. Try to talk about boundaries on what is and isn't acceptable when they are playing with others online and to avoid talking to strangers. It's also worth talking to your children about the dangers of account sharing and protecting their personal details and online privacy, especially if they're encouraged to share anything with friends they've made through gaming online.



FAMILIARISE YOURSELF WITH HOW GOOGLE STADIA WORKS

Video game streaming is a relatively new technology, and can be a little daunting to understand, especially with all the apps involved. The best way to understand it though, as always, is to give it a try yourself. The more you understand, the more you're going to be able to guide your children through the technology, ensuring you both get the best out of it while remaining safe.

USE THE FAMILY LINK APP

As well as the safety settings on the Stadia app and the website, you can add additional security and quality of life features via Google Family Link. The app (as recommended by Google) lets you protect your child's mobile device by locking it after a certain amount of time, blocking unwanted apps and managing in-app purchases. Setting these foundations allows you much more control over your child's screen time, including how long they're playing games for, especially on Stadia.

BLOCK INAPPROPRIATE GAMES

Once you have your account up and connected to a smartphone, you can access the "Family" option through the settings located on the top right of the app. This allows parents and carers to monitor and control which games are being purchased on any given connected account, making sure their children aren't experiencing any inappropriate content from a gameplay perspective. If you think a game might be unsuitable, simply don't allow it to be bought.

Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGbible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.

SOURCES: https://support.google.com/stadia/ | https://families.google.com/familylink/ | https://home.bt.com/tech-gadgets/computing/gaming/a-parents-guide-to-game-streaming-services-what-are-they-and-are-they-safe-11364315572830

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