Top tips for PlayStation PS4 and PS Vita

This guide provides some specific advice about setting up parental controls on your PlayStation 4 and PlayStation Vita. To learn more about safe and responsible gaming, read our **How to Stay Safe Guide**.[1]

The Basics

Gaming devices like the PS4 and handheld devices like PS Vita provide a wide range of exciting activities for young people. These devices have in-built wireless so they can connect to your home internet or other wifi hotspots if you sign up to the PlayStation Network. By signing up to the Playstation Network (PSN), it enables many online functions such as playing with people online, viewing films and TV, purchasing games online, browsing the web and chatting to friends via text, voice and video chat. Signing up to the PSN is free, however the PS4 requires a **subscription to Playstation Plus** before being able to play multiplayer games online.[2] The PS4 and the PS Vita have a range of free parental controls. These can be found on the PlayStation Network account for online functions and another layer of parental controls can be put on the devices themselves for offline functions. You need to activate the console parental control settings, for example, to prevent your child playing age-restricted games from a disc or to restrict how long they can play the device for.

PlayStation Network parental controls work best by registering with your child's correct age for their PlayStation Network account as by doing this, automatic safety settings will be set in place for them. To filter inappropriate content while your children are browsing the web on the PS4 or PS Vita, you can also speak to your home internet service provider to look at options. For more information, look at our **guide for installing filters**.[3] PlayStation devices have their own filtering service but it comes at a cost.

What is the PlayStation Network? The PSN is a free, online network which allows you to use your device to access online music, films and TV, and to browse the web. PS Vita players can use the PSN to play games online with others, however PS4 players need to subscribe to a Playstation Plus account before being able to play multiplayer games online.

Three steps for parents

1. Understand the capabilities of gaming devices and how you as a parent can support your child to be smart and safe in their gaming. To help, read our **How to Stay Safe Guide**.[4]

2. Find out about the parental controls available – it helps if you are the one to set up the gaming device so you are in control of these. Gaming devices have parental controls to help parents manage their children's gaming; see the advice below for the PS4 and the PS Vita. Remember never to share your PIN with your children; you don't want them to cancel the parental control settings you have put in place! Find out about **PEGI age ratings**[5] as well as understanding **Sony's parent levels**[6] to help you decide which games are appropriate for your child's age.

3. **Talk with your child about safe and responsible gaming and agree a set of family rules**. Perhaps you could agree rules with your child about how long they are allowed to play for, how they should behave towards other gamers and agree rules about not meeting up with people they have only met online. See **Childnet's Family Agreement** for more ideas.[7] Remember that all Playstation gaming devices connect to the internet, so internet safety rules like the **SMART rules** apply as well.[8]

Understanding parental controls on the PS4 and PS Vita

The PS4 and the PS Vita have a range of free parental controls.

1. Registering with the PlayStation Network sets up automatic parental controls

Parental control options allow you to manage how your child uses their device when they go online. See the Playstation advice about **how to set up the PSN from a PS4**[9] or from a **PS Vita**[10].

1   UK Safer Internet Centre: http://tinyurl.com/p26f6nd
2   Playstation Plus: http://tinyurl.com/k43v8qw
3   How to install filters: http://tinyurl.com/d6z6y74

4   UK Safer Internet Centre: http://tinyurl.com/p26f6nd
5   PEGI ratings: http://tinyurl.com/da3s8g
6   Sony's parent control levels: http://tinyurl.com/ntgaoxx
7   Childnet's family agreement: http://tinyurl.com/q3tpkm9
8   SMART rules: http://tinyurl.com/ku7jm7
9   PSN support: http://tinyurl.com/jwpu2k6
10 PSN for PS Vita account: http://tinyurl.com/ok4d5kg

Set up the PlayStation Network:

As an adult, you need to set up your own PlayStation Network 'Master Account' and register your children with a 'Sub Account'. **Make sure you register each of your children with their correct age so that automatic parental control settings are in place**. You are then in control of your children's Sub Accounts and you can change or put in place additional parental controls on them. You can put in place different parental controls depending on your children's ages. If you have recently bought a PS4 but you have already set up a PSN account for another PlayStation device, you can use the same account. To check if you need to set up a new account or not, read this **helpful guide from PSN**.[11]

How to find parental control options on the PSN:

By registering your child's Sub Account with their correct age, parental control settings will automatically be in place. For example, communication by text, voice or video is blocked for children and content restriction settings will prevent your child accessing any games, film, music and TV online which are not appropriate for their age.

If you would like to adjust any of the parental controls available on your child's Sub Account, you need to:

» Sign into your **Master Account**.

» Go to **Settings** in the **Function Area**.

» Choose **Parental Controls**.

» **Restrict use**.

» Click on **Sub Management** to amend the parental controls appropriate for your child**.**

You need to set a pass code to ensure your parental controls can't be changed. By default it is 0000 but it is recommended that you change it. Do not share this pass code with your children or they will be able to turn off the parental controls.

While looking at other parental controls available for the PSN, consider whether these options would be helpful for your family:

Prevent online chat and user-generated media: You can restrict your child from sharing or viewing user-generated content (photos, videos, drawing and other content) with other users. These controls don't prevent the use of PlayStation Network group messaging to send and receive friend requests and game invites but they prevent all text, voice and video chat and the ability to send and receive photos and content from other users.

Spending limit: Automatic parental control settings for children will prevent purchases being made. If you would like to put a limit on your child's spending, make sure you are logged onto the Master Account. Go to **Settings**, **Parental Controls**, **Sub Account Management**. Choose which account to restrict and then click parental controls, under monthly spending limit, choose the maximum dollar amount you'd like the Sub Account holder to be able to use. This doesn't fund the account, it sets a limit on how much they can spend.

2. Select parental controls on the console (eg. PS4 or PS Vita)

You can put in place settings on the console to control which games and films can be accessed and also to restrict internet access. The parental control settings on the console are not set up automatically, so you will need to change the settings as appropriate for your child.

How to find the parental controls on PS4

» Switch on PS4 and click on **Settings** from the **Function Area**.

» Select **Parental Controls**.

» Choose '**restrict use of PS4 features**' and select those you think are necessary.

» Change passcode (and do not share it with your children!)

You can also read **PS4 parental control FAQs**.[12]

How to find parental controls on the PS Vita

» Go to **Settings**, click on **Security** and then **Parental Controls** and find the **Live Area screen for the Parental Control Application**.[13]

» Click on **Features** and restrict what you think is necessary.

These parental controls on both the PS4 and PS Vita are especially helpful:

Restrict access to games based on age rating: To prevent your child from accessing age-restricted games, you need to select the appropriate rating in the parental controls settings. If you have young children, you may want to change the default which is set at level 9 which equates to content that is suitable for adults.

18 – Parental control level 9   **16** – Parental control level 7

12 – Parental control level 5   **7** – Parental control level 3

3 – Parental control level 2

If your child was 12, you would only want them to play games that had a PEGI rating of 12 or under, therefore you would select parental control level 5 on the PlayStation. More information about **Sony's parental controls levels and age ratings** can be found on the FAQ section of the PSN parental control page.[14]

» **Restrict access to films based on age rating**: To prevent your child from accessing age-restricted films, you need to select the appropriate age rating for DVDs (under DVD parental control) and Blu-ray Discs (under Blue-ray discs parental control). It is a good idea to select your country under BD/DVD Parental Control Region code, as different countries have different age rating systems.

This is the relationship between the BBFC age rating for films and the Playstation parental control levels:

18 – Parental control level 9   **15** – Parental control level 7

12 – Parental control level 5   **PG** – Parental control level 3

U – Parental control level 1

If your child was 15, you would only want them to watch films that had a BBFC rating of 15 or under, therefore you would select Parental Control level 6 on the Playstation.

11 PSN guide: http://tinyurl.com/kr6p9kr

12 PS4 FAQs: http://tinyurl.com/k2vjygd
13 PS Vita parental controls: http://tinyurl.com/n4toqq2
14 Sony's parental controls levels: http://tinyurl.com/lhdmt5r

Restrict internet access: To restrict internet access on PS4 devices so that your child can't browse the web, go to **Settings**, **Parental Controls**, **Restrict use of PS4 features**, **Internet Browser** and then select "**Do not allow**". To restrict internet access on the PS Vita, go to **Settings**, **Parental Controls**, **Features** and then **block Browser**. If you would like to browse the internet together with your child, you can just enter the parental control passcode to enable internet browsing. If you would prefer to allow internet browsing, but have filters in place to reduce the likelihood of coming across inappropriate content, you could speak to your home internet service provider to see how their filtering service works. For more information, look at our **guide to installing filters**.[15] You could also pay to use **PlayStation's filtering service on the PS4**[16] and **PS Vita**.[17]

Additional parental controls on PS Vita

Geolocation: You can allow or disallow the use of location data on PS Vita so that your children won't be able to pinpoint their exact location on social apps like Facebook or Instagram or also find out who is playing games in their near vicinity.

3. Know what to do with inappropriate contact

PlayStation devices can be used to communicate by text, voice or video. Speak to your child about what is acceptable behaviour when communicating via their console. Ensure that your child knows how to prevent someone from communicating with them and encourage them to tell you if something has happened. There are two steps you can take if someone has behaved inappropriately towards your child:

» **Block the player**: Your child can add a person to their block list if they no longer want to receive messages from that person: On the PS4 or PS Vita, go to **Function** menu and press **Friends**. Find the person you wish to block and press the X button. Then select Options and press block to add to 'Players Blocked List'.

» **Report the player**: If it is getting more serious and your child is being harassed or bullied by someone (which is often called 'griefing' in the gaming world) you can report it using the **PlayStation Grief Reporting form**.[18] Often there are in-game Grief Reporting functions in the games menu, which may be called something like **Report Abuse, Report to a Moderator or Grief Reporting**.[19] If you suspect that your child is or has been the subject of an inappropriate sexual contact or approach by another person you should report this to Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre at **www.ceop.police.uk** in the UK, or internationally at **www.virtualglobaltaskforce.com**.

✦ Further Information

Childnet's gaming leaflet, **www.childnet.com/ufiles/Online-gaming.pdf**, offers advice about gaming, covering consoles and web games and apps.
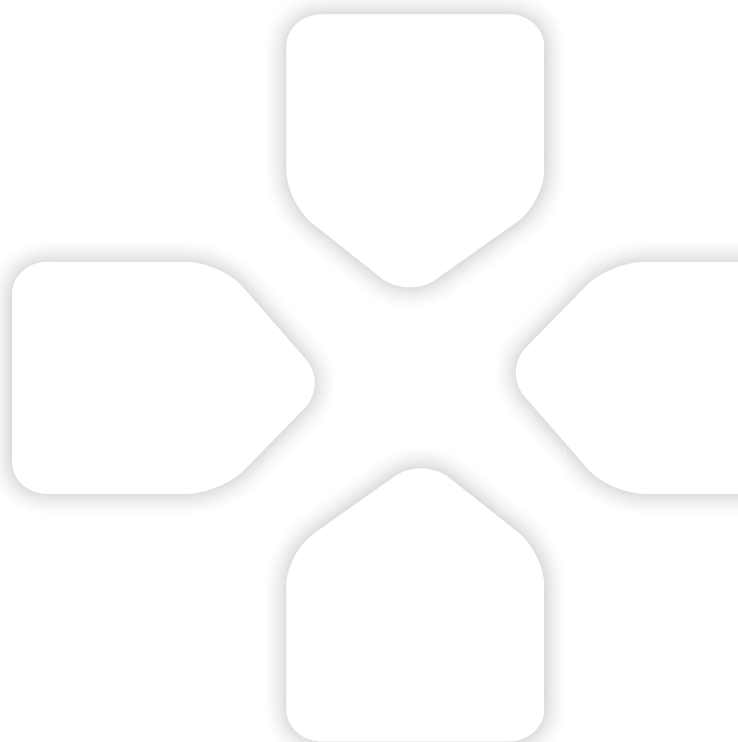
Video games trade body UKIE offers advice about how to play games safely and sensibly **www.askaboutgames.com**

Visit the Pan European Game Information website: **www.pegi.info/en/index** to find out more about age ratings.

Check out PlayStation's parent support page **http://us.PlayStation.com/support/parents/index.htm**.

To find out more about how to keep your child safe online, visit the hot topics section of the Childnet website: **www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/hot-topics**

For more resources on how to keep your children safe online, look at the resources section of the Childnet website: **www.childnet.com/resources**

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15 How to install filters: http://tinyurl.com/d6z6y74
16 PS4 filtering: http://tinyurl.com/pqkvu6s
17 PS Vita filtering: http://tinyurl.com/pf9gvlh
18 Playstation Grief Reporting form: http://tinyurl.com/mm4zukz
19 Playstation reporting: http://tinyurl.com/o6kwqbb