

Gaming

This discussion guide will help you facilitate a conversation with parents about gaming and its impact on kids. Use the following questions and stories to get parents thinking and talking about this issue. You may also want to show the Gaming parent tip video and hand out the Gaming parent tip sheet to help spark the discussion.

What's going on with your kids?

Questions to encourage parents to share experiences, concerns, and solutions

1. Why do kids love playing video games? Which ones do your kids like to play?
2. What are some of the positive — and negative — effects video games could have on your child?
3. Can video games be educational? If so, how? What can kids learn?
4. How do you set and manage time limits for gaming in your home? How do you try to ensure that your kids play games that are age-appropriate?
5. How can parents steer kids toward games that are fun and positive learning experiences?
6. What challenges or concerns have you experienced with your own child around gaming? How have you handled the situation? What worked? What didn't?

What would you do?

Stories to discuss, role play, and deepen conversation

Elementary school child

Lily, a fourth-grader, got a Nintendo DS two weeks ago. She was instantly addicted to it. Since then, Lily's dad has found her awake past her bedtime playing games. Another time, a friend invited her to go rollerblading and she declined because she wanted to finish a level. She even forgot a promise she made to her little brother to help him with homework because she was so engrossed in her DS. Should Lily's dad be worried, or is Lily's gaming only excessive now because her DS is new?

- » How can Lily's game playing be monitored if it's on a wireless device that can be played anytime, anywhere?
- » How can Lily's dad establish some healthy time limits for her gaming?

Middle school tween

Thirteen-year-old Daryl and his dad like to play video games together. Although Daryl's mom is glad that father and son are spending time together, she was shocked by the amount of violence and sexism in their new favorite game: Grand Theft Auto IV. Other games they've played have had some offensive content, but this game was particularly upsetting to Daryl's mom. Later, when voicing her concern to her husband about the influence of this game on Daryl, he said, "It's just a game. Besides, I've talked with him about the difference between that stuff and real life. He's mature enough to handle it."

- » What is appropriate — and inappropriate — content for kids this age?
- » Are you bothered by violence in video games? If so, what kind of violence bothers you (realistic, cartoon, shoot-'em-up, gore, etc.)?
- » What other content have you seen in games that bothers you?
- » What kind of content do you like to see in games?
- » How should Daryl's parents go about seeking out — and agreeing upon — games that are acceptable for their kids that they both can live with?

High school teen

Joe spends a lot of his free time with his friends on the weekends playing online World of Warcraft and other MMORPGs (massive multi-player online role-playing games). All the guys bring their computers over to one person's house, connect them up online, and play as a team. Although his parents are okay with Joe playing MMORPGs with his friends, they're concerned because he spends almost every waking moment of his weekends gaming. Although he's doing great in school, they want him to spend his weekends getting out more, doing different things, and pursuing some of his interests.

- » Is this just a way for Joe to hang out with his friends? Is this kind of gaming just another form of social interaction?
- » What are the benefits of Joe playing MMORPGs with his friends? What are the drawbacks?
- » How can Joe's interest in MMORPGs be expanded into other areas?