

Child's Play

Top Tips for consumers on online games



The OFT has introduced Principles for online games, which sets out what businesses should do to ensure they treat consumers fairly. We've developed these tips for consumers to help you make sure that playing games online is child's play.

1. Check your settings

Before handing over your device to your child, double-check the payment option settings. If you enter your password to authorise a single payment, you could be opening a payment 'window' in which your password won't be needed for any further payments. One option is to change that setting to require your password for every purchase. And don't share your password with anyone in case they inadvertently make a purchase.

2. Read the game description

The description of a game, either in an app store or on the game's own website, should tell you whether it's possible to make purchases in the game, what its main characteristics are and any other information that's important to you before you download it for your child or allow them to create an account. Read that information to check you're happy for your child to play the game.

3. Check whether the game contains a social element

Many games allow players to connect with each other, either through the game or via social media platforms. If a game provides that facility, it should be clear to you from its up-front description. Considering the age of your child, think about whether you want them to be contactable by people they might not know and whether there are any restrictions or safety features in the game that should stop that from happening.

4. Play the game yourself

The best way for you to understand what your child will see when playing the game is for you to have a go first. You can check whether you think its content will be suitable for your child and make sure there is nothing that will mislead or place undue pressure on them to make a purchase. Ask your child about the games they play and whether there is anything in them that they're unhappy about. Be aware that game content could change via updates, so check regularly that you are still happy the game is suitable for your child.

5. Check your bills

If you discover money has been taken from your account without your knowledge or consent, get in touch with the relevant platform operator, or game provider, first. That will give them the opportunity to investigate what happened and put right any problem attributable to them. If you're not satisfied by their answer, contact Citizens Advice for further information and advice on your legal rights.

6. Get advice or complain

Advice on consumer issues is available from **Citizens Advice** in Great Britain - www.adviceguide.org.uk/consumer or 08454 04 05 06 and from **Consumerline** in Northern Ireland - www.consumerline.org or 0300 123 6262.

The OFT, and the CMA after it, will have access to information about complaints and may use them in deciding whether to take enforcement action.