Apex Legends is a multiplayer battle royale video game which is free to play. In this game, twenty squads consisting of three players each are dropped over an island from a drosophila, where they compete against each other to be the last team standing. Each player on the squad gets to choose a ‘Legend’ to play with; one of eight unique characters with a specialised skillset in either ‘Offense’, ‘Defense’, ‘Support’ or ‘Recon’. The players begin with no weapons or equipment and have to come through an ever-shrinking play area and kill all the while killing enemies to emerge as the victorious trio. The game is currently available on PC, PlayStation 4 and Xbox One.

What parents need to know about APEX LEGENDS

VIOLENCE
Realistic versions of modern day firearms and gunfire, coupled with intense firefights, blood spatter effects on screen and large explosions make the game more violent than the less graphic Fortnite, a game similar to Apex Legends. Players use a variety of modern military weapons such as sniper rifles, machine guns, pistols, knives and frag grenades. Besides frantic gun battles, players also get to perform finishing moves on weakened enemies. These include decapitation, stabbing them with knives, beating them with fists, and using chemical gas attacks on enemies. If players do not finish them off, these attacks are often shown up close and from the victim’s perspective. In light of this, PEGI has rated this game suitable for children 16 and older in the UK and Europe, while in the US it is rated 13+. Overexposure to such violence can cause distress to younger children.

IT CAN BE ADDICTIVE
Children love to play battle royal games, due to their computer-based and mobile accessibility, coupled with friends against 57 other players might put undue pressure on you to play as well when their friends are online. This might also mean that quitting half-way through the game could prove detrimental to your child’s team mates. Children might therefore feel compelled to play the game until they achieve their desired results. Even though a typical game might last around 25 minutes, children may feel the need to keep hold and decide to play another round.

ABUSIVE PLAYERS & CHEATERS
As with any online game, there is a risk of players using intimidation and abusive language. This risk is increased when children play games with strangers. Another potential threat are the hackers who might encourage children to cheat in the game and make money off them.

IN-GAME PURCHASES
Although anyone with an EA account can download and play the game for free, the game encourages players to use a variety of in-game purchases with real money. Ranging from ‘Crafting Materials’ and ‘Legend Tokens’ can also be used to unlock new weapons. In order to better understand and improve their game, children might be enticed to use apps such as YouTube and search for Apex Legends gameplay videos. This might introduce them to obscene language used by gamers in these videos. Many videos on YouTube do not have age restrictions, nor do they display warnings for age restricted content. These videos can cause distress to younger children. Parents should make their children aware of how to report abusive players and block them while playing Apex Legends. They can also check EA’s Terms of Service (TOS) and Privacy Policy (P&L) for guidelines on how to report abusive players and cheaters.

GAMEPLAY VIDEOS
In order to prevent your children from falling prey to obscene online content, it is important to monitor social media and search engine usage. Parents can restrict access to inappropriate content by blocking certain websites. With the help of activity logs, parents can ensure that their children are not using any app or browsing any websites unsuitable for their age. Parents can also look up safe search engines and browsers for children that have age appropriate filters and pre-screened child friendly content. When your child plays games online, it’s important to have open and honest discussions with them about their activities and encourage positive behaviour towards others, as you would in real life.

JUDGE FOR YOURSELF
Before exposing your child to any game involving violence, it may be a good idea to judge the appropriateness and impact of that game by previewing online clips of it first, or by playing the game yourself. If you deem it suitable, only then allow your child to play the game. Moreover, you can take steps to ensure that the age restriction set by the particular game is met and that your child is not playing with strangers online. This might also mean that quitting half-way through the game could prove detrimental to your child’s team mates. Children might therefore feel compelled to play the game until they achieve their desired results. Even though a typical game might last around 25 minutes, children may feel the need to keep hold and decide to play another round.

TOP TIPS FOR PARENTS

PREVENT YOUR CHILD FROM COMMUNICATING WITH STRANGERS
Communicating with teammates is an essential and enjoyable part of the game. Parents should encourage children to play the game with friends they know and trust. However, if it is not possible and your child is playing with strangers in the team, you can always monitor their behaviour from the in-game chat settings of the game. They should always be aware of who they are playing with, especially in-located (with locations within the game), objects and items.

RESTRICT PAYMENT METHODS
If you do not want your child to make any in-game purchases or microtransactions, you must ensure that none of your debit/credit cards are linked to their platform of choice. If your child goes on a PlayStation or Xbox One, you have the option of using an email address to log in, which helps prevent them from registering a new account. Further to this, if you have your own profile with your child, you can personally protect your account from them by making sure they have to log in every time. If you don’t password protect your account and your child makes any in-game purchases from an account, it’s unlikely that you’ll be able to claim refunds.

LIMIT GAME TIME
With any new game that becomes an overnight success, it is important for parents to keep an eye on their child’s online behaviour. Even if you feel your child is becoming addicted to playing the game, you can always keep a control on it by limiting the time they play the game. For this particular game, since it would be difficult to leave players out through the game, you can find it more worthwhile to impose a limit on the number of matches your child plays. However, the time you play the game for. As always, open and honest conversations with your children are critical; talk to them about the negative consequences of too much screen time.

Monitor and manage children’s digital access and online content with National Online Safety. Click here for further guides, hints and tips for adults.