What Parents & Carers Need to Know about ...
COUNTER-STRIKE: GLOBAL OFFENSIVE

AGE RATING PEGI 18

Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (CS:GO) is a free-to-play multiplayer first-person shooter game developed by Valve and Hidden Path Entertainment. It's the fourth game in the popular Counter-Strike series and was first released for Windows, macOS, Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 in 2012. It has enjoyed consistent popularity with online gamers since then and is now also available as a mobile game on Android and iOS devices.

Violent Content

CS:GO is a violent warfare game that features firearms, bombs and blood as part of its core appeal. While most consider it to be less gory and lifelike than many other first-person shooter games on the market, extreme violence is still a staple of CS:GO matches. Players use a variety of realistic weapons, such as guns and knives, to eliminate opposing teams.

Pornographic Images

While there's no pornography in the original game, a function called 'spray stickers' has created a problem. Users can choose from several stock logos which their character can spray paint on walls – but players have learned to hack this feature, enabling them to insert custom pictures instead. Some players have chosen to spray paint pornographic images onto backgrounds throughout the game.

Competitive Community

CS:GO has an active community of players that has garnered a reputation as one of the most antagonistic and unsympathetic in the online gaming world. As the game is built on multiplayer collaboration, there's a heavy reliance on online communication – which can expose children to offensive behaviour, hurtful comments and profanity from other (usually older) players.

Addictive Nature

CS:GO requires substantial dedication to progress in the game and get the most out of the experience. If a player fully commits to improving their standing in the game, that would add up to a significant amount of time spent playing it – which could come at the expense of other activities such as homework, sleeping and face-to-face social contact.

Loot Boxes

CS:GO includes loot boxes to help players improve their character. These loot boxes require payment (with real money) to be opened; they cannot be earned simply through playing. Many experts have warned that paying for the chance of big rewards from a loot box could encourage gambling-style behaviour among children, potentially leading them into addiction in later life.

Safety Tips for Parents & Carers

Encourage Time Limits

Given the addictive nature of CS:GO, along with the fact that it can require gamers to dedicate a lot of time to it in order to progress, it's important to keep track of how long your child is playing the game for. Each match lasts between 30 and 60 minutes; many psychologists recommend that young people should spend an average of no more than two to three hours gaming per day.

Filter out Profanity

One of the biggest potential harms in CS:GO is its extremely combative community. Due to the multiplayer nature of the game, there is unfortunately no way to disable its chat functionality completely. Last year, however, a profanity filter was added (it can be turned on in the settings) which should help to prevent your child from exposure to bad language and bullying behaviour.

Highlight the Risks

Another possible source of harm associated with CS:GO is its very violent nature. It's important that, if your child is determined to play the game, you make them aware of the content and imagery they will be exposed to. If you don't feel that your child is old enough to be viewing such content yet, talk to them about your reasons and try suggesting a different, more age-appropriate game.

Stay Aware of Spending

As CS:GO lets players spend real money to purchase add-on items and power up their characters, it's prudent to keep a watchful eye on your child's in-game spending. If you're uneasy about this, the best course of action is to remove any links to possible payment methods on whatever device they are using to play the game.

Meet Our Expert

Carly Page is a technology journalist, editor and consultant with more than 10 years' experience in the industry. Previously the editor of tech tabloid The Inquirer and news editor for Computer Shopper, she is now freelance news editor at IT Pro and writes regularly for publications including Forbes, TechRadar, Tes, Metro, uSwitch and Wired.

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