THE XBOX GAMING SAFETY TOOLKIT

Empowering parents, educators and caregivers to support young people to adopt safe gaming habits in Singapore

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Foreword by Dave McCarthy, CVP Xbox Player Services

At Xbox, our mission is to bring the joy and community of gaming to everyone on the planet. We've seen the positive impact that gaming can have to people of all ages – helping to develop new problem-solving skills, forging new friendships, being a shared activity for families and helping people gain confidence using technology.

But like any online activity, these positive experiences are had when communities are safe, accessible and everyone can play within the boundaries they set, free from fear and intimidation. We recognise that navigating these safety challenges can be hard work for busy parents and caregivers.

We take our responsibility to society and the gaming community very seriously. We understand that putting players at the centre of everything we do means creating experiences and communities that welcome all to play. We all play a role in creating the Xbox community – whether a player is new to gaming or has been playing for decades, each person acts as a steward of the community, protecting others and reinforcing the Xbox Community Standards that detail what is and is not acceptable.

INTRODUCTION

Continued

We provide tools and resources that empower players with choice and control to support balanced gaming. And that is why we set about to create a comprehensive resource to support parents and caregivers to better understand gaming safety.

We designed this toolkit with the advice and support of trusted bodies including the **Media Literacy Council, TOUCH Community Services, Cyberlite Books,** and **SG Her Empowerment (SHE)**. You will find many safety resources and links provided by these organisations throughout this toolkit.

This toolkit is part of our multifaceted approach to safety, as outlined in our Xbox Transparency Report which shares more information about how we protect our community. Our approach includes a range of proactive and reactive tools and measures, such as our parental controls so children can engage in safe and age-appropriate experiences; and privacy tools to keep players informed about what data is collected and how it used. The Microsoft privacy dashboard and the Xbox Data Collection for Kids website explain data privacy and collection in simple language for kids.

Just like any technology or online activity, children benefit from parents and caregivers being actively involved. We encourage families to learn, play and discuss their gaming activities together, and this toolkit is designed to support this.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit is divided into two parts. **Part 1** sets out general tips to support your children to game safely and responsibly. **Part 2** is organised by age group to help you get familiar with common safety risks and tools to respond with three steps:

1

Learn

Understand which parental and user controls are appropriate for this age group.

2

Explore

Work with your child to guide them towards resilient habits.

3

Support

Behaviour patterns to look out for and where to go for additional help.

PART 1: GENERAL GAMING SAFETY GUIDANCE FOR ALL AGES

Open discussions, building mutual trust, and supervision are all crucial aspects of keeping children safe online. However, it is also important to be aware of the tools you can use on our services.
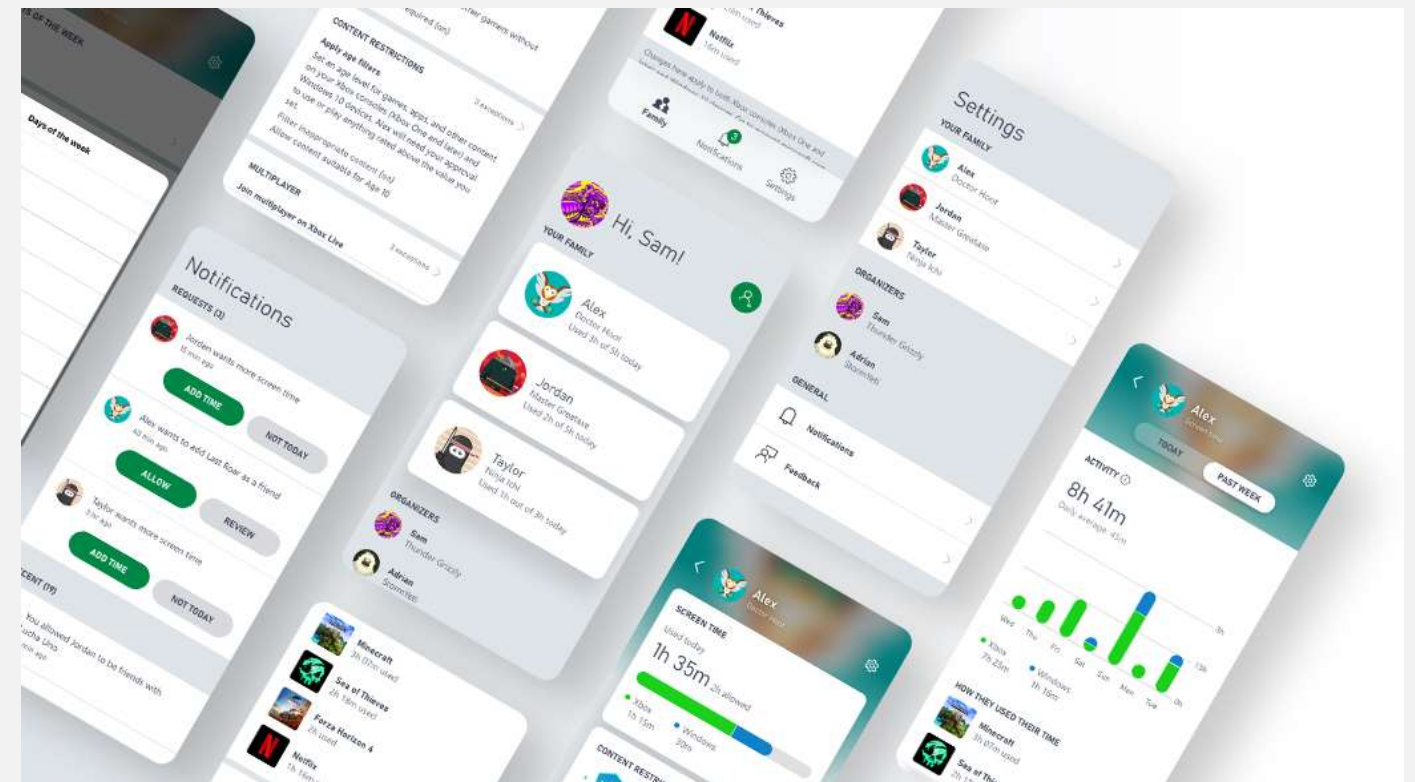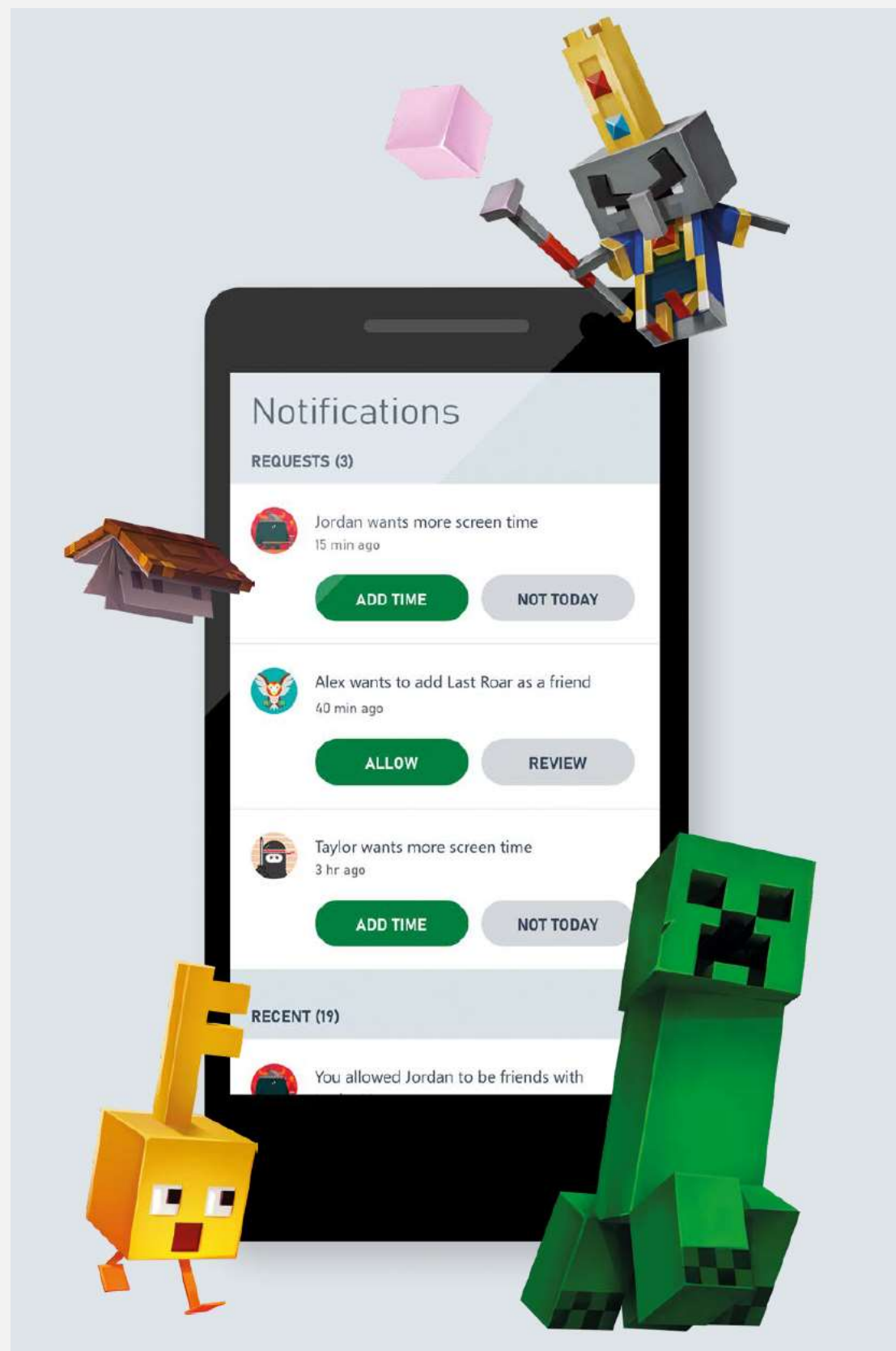
WHAT ARE PARENTAL CONTROLS?

Parental controls are features within a platform, such as Xbox consoles and apps, that enable parents and caregivers to set limits on content, activity, and interactions on a platform. The player and the parent will usually have separate accounts which allow the adult to set up features on the child account. Parental controls are different from user controls which allow a player to control their own experience.

Parental controls should not just be set and forget. Instead, they are most effective when integrated into a family-wide approach to safety. Appropriate use of parental controls depends on your family's situation and values.

We encourage open conversations with your child about the use of parental controls. Being transparent about these tools is important for building trust and showing young people that you respect their privacy. We also recommend talking to them about the user controls they can implement on their own account, and why these are important for keeping them safe and creating a happy gaming experience.

These days, being a gamer often includes more than playing on a console. Games can be played on secondary devices like phones, laptops, and desktop computers and using other apps including gaming-adjacent platforms for communicating. It's important to think about safety settings across all the devices and platforms that children use to participate in the gaming community and to connect with others.

WITH PARENTAL CONTROLS YOU CAN...

- Support the rules and boundaries you set for kids

- Leverage technology to create additional barriers between kids and harmful content and activities

- Use content filters to set age-appropriate limits for games and content

- Through activity reports, confirm kids are only doing what you expect

- Manage interactions with other players for younger users to ensure they only connect with real-world/trusted friends

- Set up screen time limits to enforce boundaries suitable to your family

- Manage spending so all purchases require your approval or only allocating small $$ amounts

SETTING XBOX ACCOUNTS UP FOR SUCCESS

Across the Xbox gaming ecosystem, the Xbox Family Settings tools allow you to manage a variety of settings in your child's gaming. The Xbox Family Settings app is the easiest way to manage everything in one place, and access useful reports.

Children should be set up with child accounts, with you as the family "organiser." As an organiser, you can set screen time limits; establish website, search and game filters; view activity reports and more.

There are multiple ways to set up and use family settings across our gaming ecosystem, including on a browser, using an Xbox console and in our apps. With these options you can manage your child's gaming, without needing to use the Xbox controller.

In addition to providing parental controls, as a platform we also have a responsibility to create a safe environment for our players. For years, we've been using a set of content moderation tools to proactively help us deal with policy-violating text, images, and video shared by players on Xbox. Our proactive moderation allows us to catch negative content and conduct before it reaches players. We continue to invest and improve our tech so players can have safe, positive, and inviting experiences.
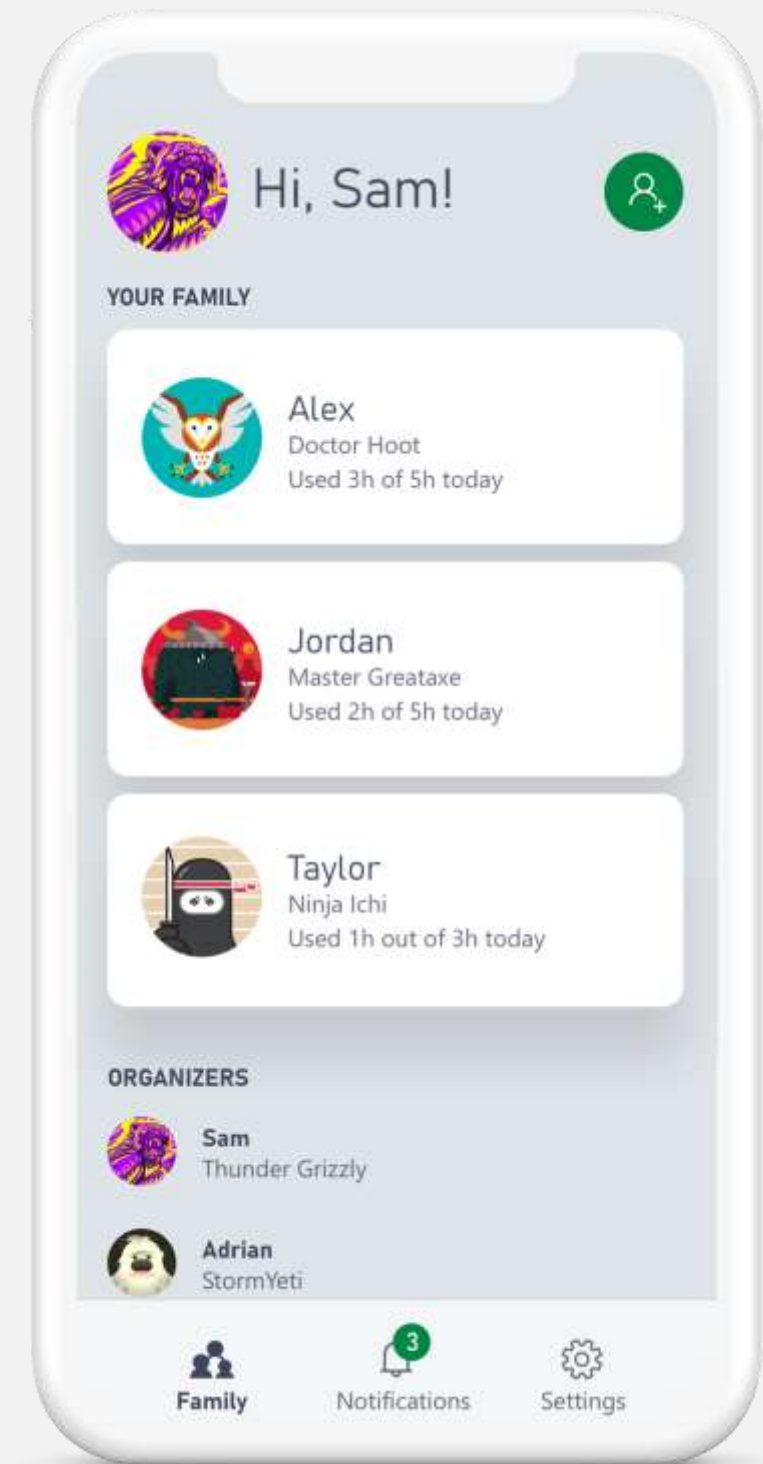
Xbox Family Settings app

GENERAL GAMING SAFETY GUIDANCE FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES

1 **Become familiar with different game genres**

There are so many different types of games, and we recommend learning about these so you can speak the same language as your kids! Popular game types in Singapore include puzzle games, action/adventure games, and shooter games. IMDA classifies video games meant for physical distribution in Singapore, and you can refer to its Video Game Classification Database for the associated classification decisions of such games.

2 **Be involved and co-create boundaries with your child**

Take an interest in young people's digital lives. Discuss and agree upon new rules together so they feel empowered and part of the decision-making process. Explore gaming activities together and make sure you have an idea of the games they're playing and players they're interacting with.

See if you can listen-in on voice channels with your child so you can experience the discussion and understand who they interact with and how they communicate.

3 **Champion the importance of privacy and good cyber habits**

Talk about and model good cyber hygiene including using strong passwords, thinking twice about what is posted online, keeping accounts private or friends-only, ensuring devices are up-to-date and using multi-factor authentication.

Check out Minecraft's Home Sweet Hmm and Privacy Prodigy games for fun ways to learn about privacy and safety. Encourage young people to learn about how their data is used, starting with this Xbox Data Collection for Kids resource.

GENERAL GAMING SAFETY GUIDANCE FOR KIDS OF ALL AGES

4 **Encourage respectful and empathetic communication**

Remind young people that if it is not OK to say or do something face to face, it is not OK online. Recognise that everyone has different backgrounds and perspectives. The Xbox Community Standards outline what is tolerated on the platform and our Digital Civility Challenge describes four online civility ideals. Singapore's Media Literacy Council has a useful guide on positive online behaviours and ways to use the internet positively.

5 **Stay calm and open and talk about how the online world makes them feel**

Try to avoid judgment when talking to young people, so they feel comfortable coming to you when they need support. Get your child in the habit of discussing how they feel when they go online and engage in gaming. This can help them develop the skills to express when something doesn't feel right.

6 **For young children**

While gaming can begin below the age of 5, we recommend caregivers accompany young children at all times with parental controls set at the highest safety levels. Be sure to check the age ratings on all games to ensure they are appropriate.

COMMON GAMING SAFETY RISKS

The first step to safety is understanding and recognising risk. Microsoft research found that 77% of respondents in Singapore reported experiencing an online risk in 2023. This section provides a high-level overview of common gaming risks and provides links to trusted advice from partner organisations in Singapore.

Reporting harmful content or behaviour is important for helping to keep platforms safe, and Xbox is constantly updating our systems and processes to empower players to respectfully interact with one another. For example, the launch of the enforcement strike system in August 2023 is a way for players to understand enforcement more clearly.

- How to report a player | Xbox Support

- Player Reporting in Minecraft
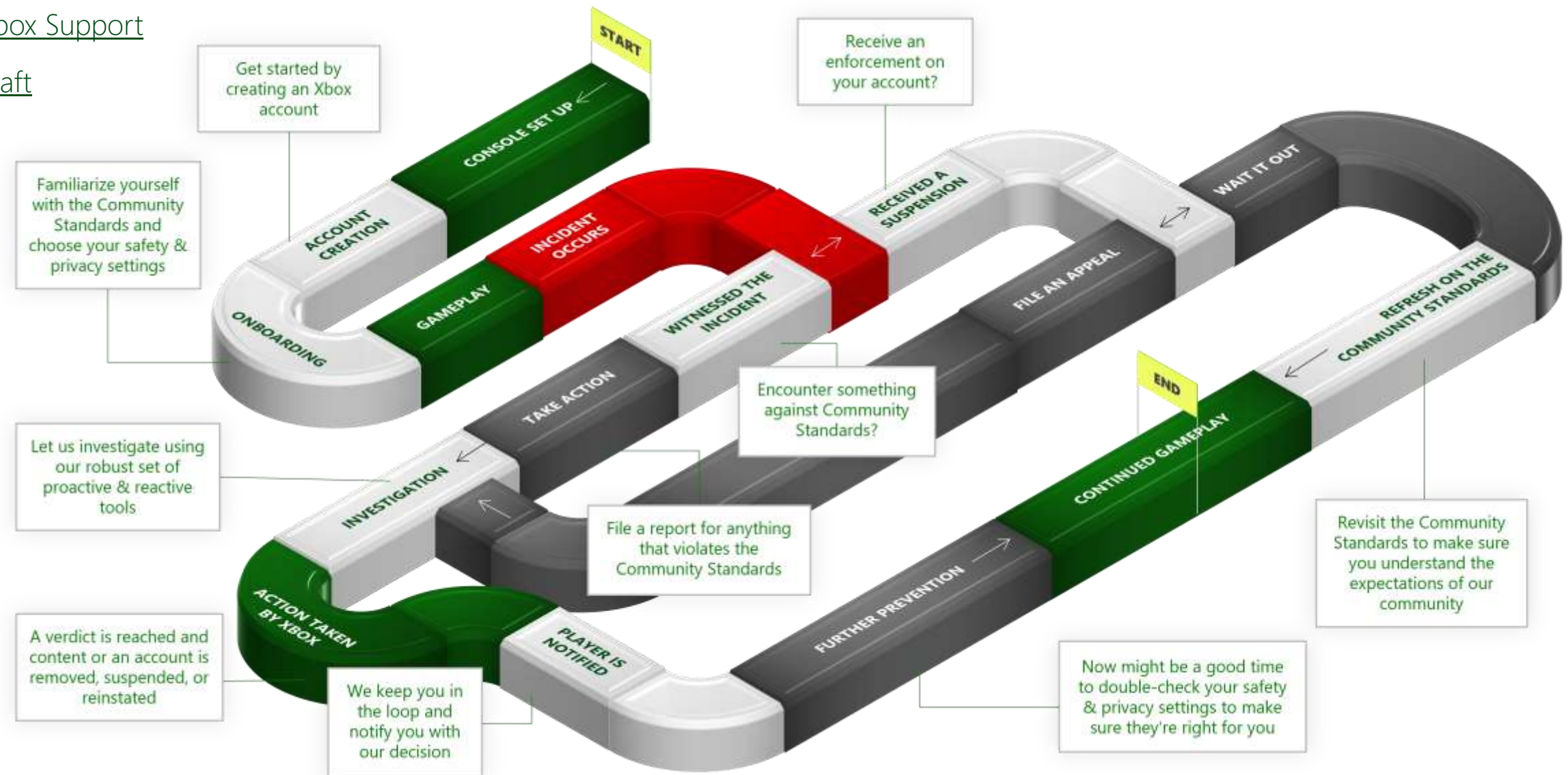
This player journey infographic illustrates some of the features and capabilities we have, to make the player experience safer.

1. HARMFUL AND AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

In any online or connected space there is a risk that young people may be exposed to content that they're not ready for. In a gaming scenario this could be content that is within the game or that is shared by other players via in-game chat functions, voice channels, clubs or in other people's activity feeds. Images, videos, text or even audio can contain content that young people may find upsetting.

We recognise that everyone has a different tolerance for content, however, on our gaming services we have strict rules about the type of content that can be shared. We encourage you to read our Xbox Community Standards and Minecraft Community Standards, and to get familiar with what is and isn't acceptable.

These standards build on the Code of Conduct Section in the Microsoft Services Agreement which is also helpful to read. If you or your child sees inappropriate content or behaviour on our services (even if it is not directed at them), please report it so we can take suitable action to protect users.

For families using Xbox Game Pass, age-limits for content still apply to titles offered as part of the subscription service. A child will need to request parental consent to download a game rated above the relevant age-limit.

Learn more

- Protect your children from inappropriate content | Digital for Life

- Safeguard yourself and your child against inappropriate content | Media Literacy Council

- Helping your teen to handle inappropriate content | Help123

2. BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Multi-player games, communications functions, and the ability for users to upload content on some games means that these can be forums where bullying and harassment occurs. Harassment can take many forms and may be perpetrated by someone they know. Hate speech is a severe form of harassment which may include attacks on personal characteristics, especially things like race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and religion.

People of any age can be harassed through taunting messages, name-calling, threats, vicious comments or the sharing of personal information such as a home address. Bullying might be perpetrated by an individual or multiple players.

If you can't find a resolution to the issue on a platform, then it may be necessary to escalate this through the school.

If you are concerned your child is bullying others, then try to talk about this with them to understand why they are doing this in a non-judgemental way. It is important to normalise that people make mistakes and focus on connecting with your child to understand what might be contributing to this behaviour, as well as co-developing strategies to prevent it happening again.

We have made clear what we think constitutes bullying behaviour in our Xbox Community Standards. If someone is breaching those standards, you can report them, as well as blocking and muting them. Player settings, including message filters, can also be customised to the level a player feels comfortable.

Learn more

- Cyberbullying Resources | Media Literacy Council

- Articles on Cyberbullying | Help123

- Cyber Bullying | Digital for Life

3. GROOMING AND UNWANTED CONTACT

Unwanted contact can be any online communication that a young person finds uncomfortable and could lead them into a situation where they feel unsafe. It can come from strangers, online friends or even someone they know in real life.

Grooming is when predators target individuals for exploitation, which may be sexual in nature. The grooming process typically involves an older person befriending a young person and winning trust by giving them personal attention. This may involve being highly responsive and flattering or offering material or virtual gifts.

If someone threatens to share a nude image or video of someone, that is a type of image-based abuse (sometimes referred to as "revenge porn") and it can be reported to SHECARES@SCWO.

If someone is blackmailing a young person by threatening to share their nude image or video unless they pay or send more, this serious crime (sometimes referred to as "sextortion") should be reported directly to the National Anti-Violence Helpline or you may call the National Anti-Violence and Sexual Harassment hotline at 1800-777-0000.

A similar process may also be used by violent extremist recruiters to enlist young people to hate-based causes. Recruiters look for vulnerable people, including individuals who appear isolated, express loneliness or have low self-esteem.

Extremist recruiters look for people searching for meaning or purpose to their life, and appeal to their need for community. A common strategy is to suggest a conversation is taken off the gaming platform to a different space such as an encrypted messaging app.

Microsoft and Xbox have a zero-tolerance approach to grooming behaviours across all our services and any discovered behaviour should be reported to the platform. If you think a young person's safety is at risk, call the police and for less-immediate harm you can seek advice from the National Anti-Violence Helpline or apply for a Personal Protection Order (PPO) under the Protection from Harassment Act.

Learn more

- Grooming and unwanted contact | Media Literacy Council

- Say no to online harassment | Digital for Life

4. SCREENTIME

There is no magic number of hours in front of screens or gaming. What is appropriate for your child depends on your family's context and other activities, and these factors may change over time. When balanced with enough sleep and other activities, including physical activity, spending time gaming with screens is often not a problem.

Games can be educational, encourage teamwork, and help develop problem solving and critical thinking skills. However, if your child's gaming starts to have a negative impact on them or their relationships, it may be time to consider ways to manage this.

Screentime can be managed through the Xbox Family Settings tools.

Learn more

- Guidance on Screen Use | Ministry of Health

- Screentime management | Help123

- Avoid Digital Burnout | Digital for Life

- How much time should my child spend on screens? | Media Literacy Council
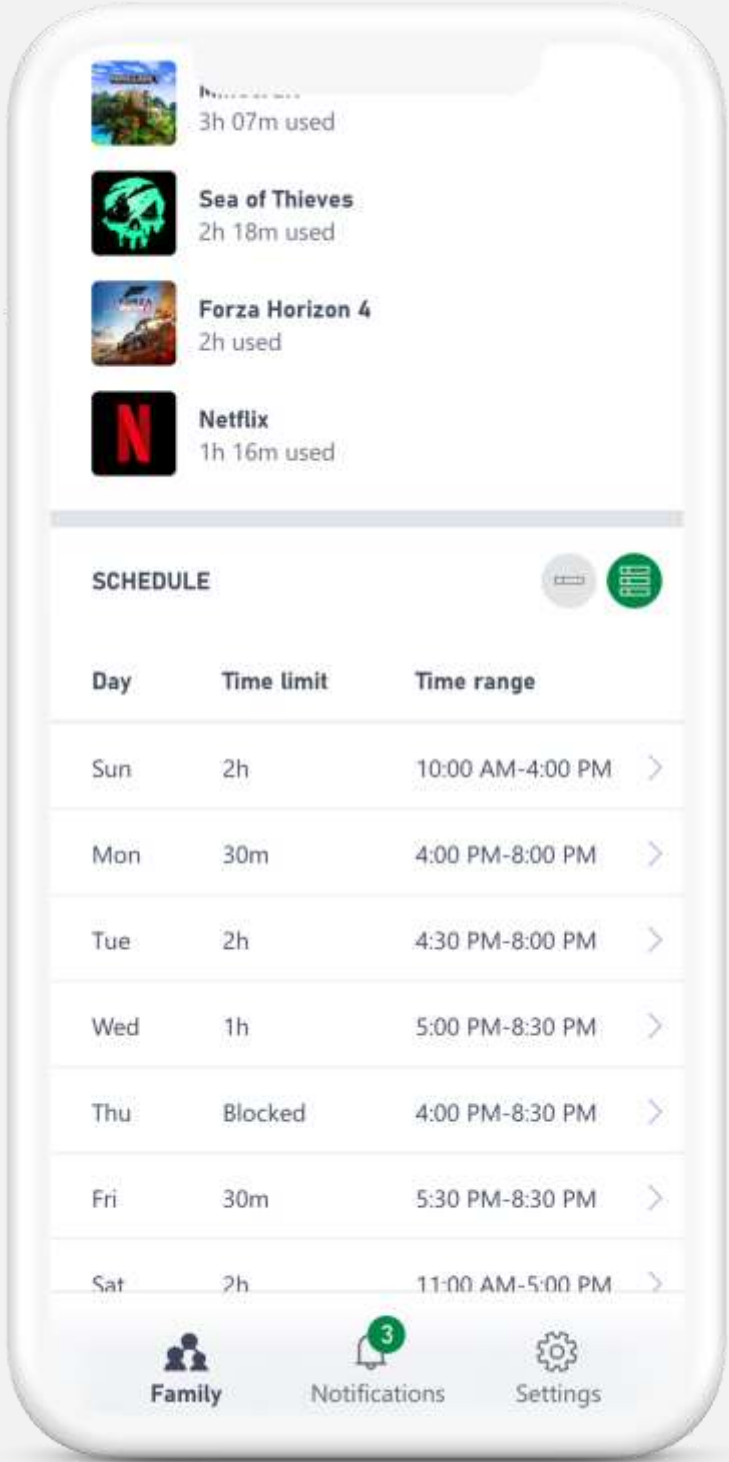
Xbox Family Settings app

5. IN-GAME PURCHASES

Some games are free to download but require payment for other things like additional content. Young people may not be aware of the real cost and could incur costs.

Spending limits can be added to your child's account through the Xbox Family Settings tools. You can also add settings to require approval for all purchases on the account.

We recognise concerns around gambling-type behaviours on some games. Loot boxes are one of the many items that games offer for sale as many players like the element of chance. We provide a clear policy around how Xbox Game Studios offers loot boxes in our games, including always offering fair value, content probability disclosure and no pay to play in premium games.

Encouraging young people to be wary of scam activity relating to their accounts is also helpful across their digital lives.

Learn more

- My First Experience with a Gacha Game | Comeback
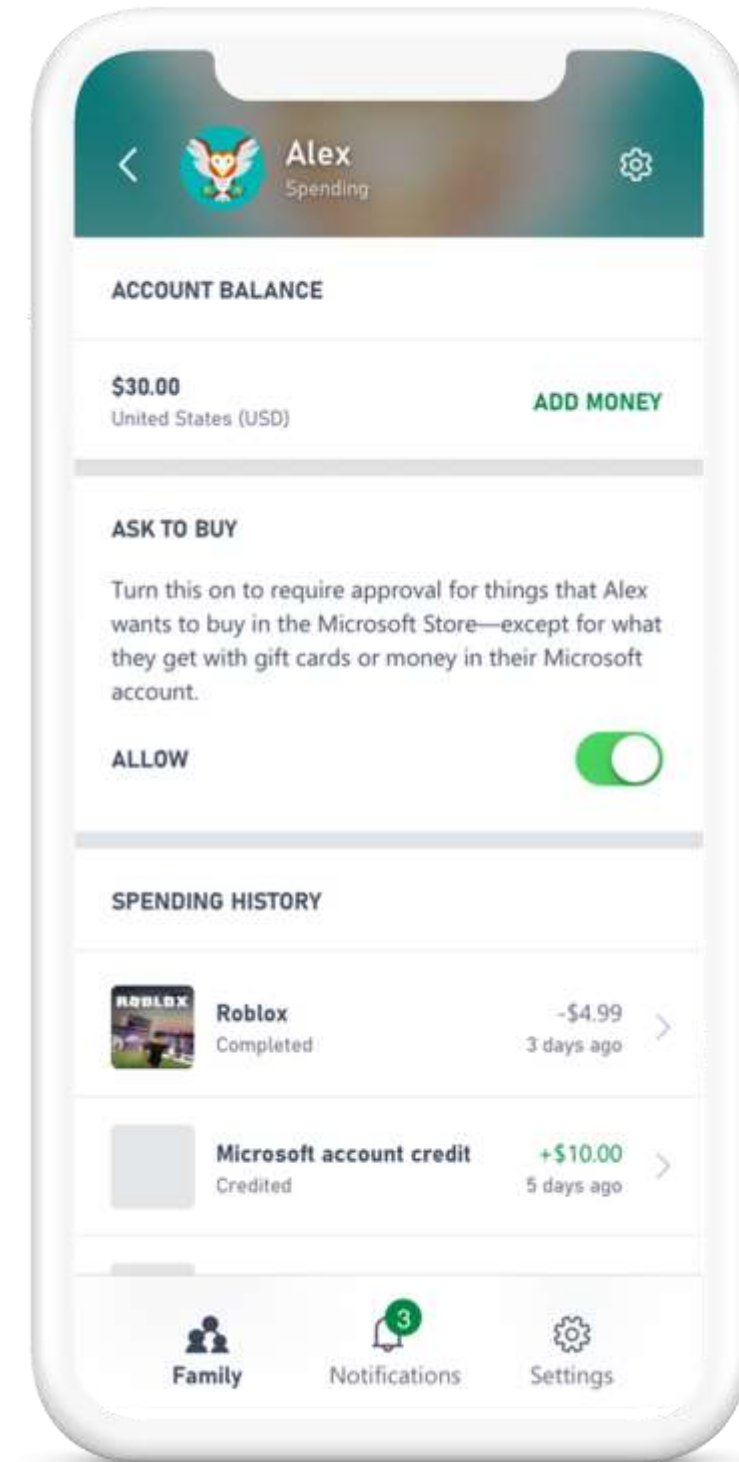
Xbox Family Settings app

To make a report and seek help

SG Helplines

Better Internet | List of Support Organisations

Other useful resources

Guidelines on Online Safety | Singapore Police Force

Online Safety Information for Parents | Cybersecurity Agency of Singapore

Online Safety Information for Students | Cybersecurity Agency of Singapore

Parents Resource | Comeback

SHECARES@SCWO Support Centre - SHE | SG Her Empowerment

PART 2: AGE-SPECIFIC ADVICE

This section sets out guidance for different age groups who are likely to be at different stages of online exploration. As all children develop differently, these age-specific recommendations may not be equally relevant and can be used as a guide.

For children under the age of 5 we recommend focusing on modelling good behaviours, particularly around screens and setting clear rules. Building safety awareness from a young age helps establish good patterns for life.

5-8 year olds: cultivating positive behaviours

For children in this age group, we recommend taking a close interest in all aspects of their digital lives, including gaming. At this age you can model and encourage positive online habits by exploring things together.

It makes sense to set more boundaries and use the highest level of parental controls to curate your child's experience. This includes strict limits on who children can interact with (if anyone), restrictions on content types and spending limits.

5-8 YEAR OLDS

Learn

At this age, we encourage accounts to be set up and managed by parents. It is critical that you set up their account as a child account so you can use the parental controls correctly. Once set up, add their account to yours through the Xbox Family Settings app or Microsoft Family Safety portal.

When you set up a child's account with the correct date of birth, the settings will default to blocking almost all interaction. We also recommend you manually check all settings to make sure they work for your family.

For families using Xbox Game Pass, age-limits for content still apply to titles offered as part of the subscription service. A child will need to request parental consent to download a game rated above the relevant age-limit.

On the Xbox Family Settings app navigate to your child and press the settings icon. Set controls to the highest level to ensure:

- You manage who they can communicate with on Xbox Live (we suggest "friends only" or "no one") and only allow them to add friends with your approval

- Content limits are set to the most age-appropriate, including for web searches

- Set message filtering to be "child default" for content they can receive in messages

- Set screentime limits appropriate to your family

- Manage Minecraft settings including access to multiplayer games and clubs

- Ensure "ask to buy" is on so they can only make purchases with your approval

Read community/user guidelines so you're familiar with what is allowed on our gaming services.

5-8 YEAR OLDS

Explore

- Choose appropriate games to play with your child, making sure they are suitable for their age and stage of development. You can find helpful information on game classifications here.

  - [Game Rating Information | Xbox](#)

  - [Video Games | IMDA](#)

- Play games with your child to see what they're exposed to and demonstrate good gaming habits. If there is a voice chat option, listen to the conversations in the chat.

- Set rules about where children can use their devices to play games – it is recommended that this include using devices only in shared areas and not in their bedroom.

- Start practicing good habits around privacy, screentime and online behaviour with children and talk about why they are important.

- Initiate conversations about online activities, gaming, and how it makes them feel.

Support

- Pay attention to how gaming makes your child behave - are they happy, sad, anxious, confused?

- Be on the lookout for changes in mood or behaviour, including a shorter temper or becoming withdrawn.

# CASE STUDY – Zhi Wei, parent of daughter aged 7

Zhi Wei is an avid gamer who frequently plays Xbox. Since becoming a parent, he has been eager to introduce his hobby to his 7-year-old daughter and has identified Minecraft as a suitable entry point.

Zhi Wei starts by creating a child account for his daughter inside the Xbox Family Settings app. He creates a new Outlook account for his daughter using her birthdate to establish the correct default settings. The child account is automatically linked to his family group with him as the organiser.

As he indicated that his daughter is 7 years old, the settings on her account default to the highest level of privacy and content filtering. Zhi Wei also uses the app to double check and adjust the content and messaging filters, interaction with other players, spending and activity reporting.

Zhi Wei plays with his daughter most of the time. Occasionally he will leave her playing alone but is generally in the same room so he can keep an eye on things. Because he is conscious of setting up good screentime-habits they only play for a maximum one hour per day. Zhi Wei uses the screentime settings on the Xbox Family Settings app to enforce this.

Zhi Wei regularly checks in with his daughter to see how she is feeling when she is gaming and discuss anything difficult that may have happened.
As his daughter gets older, Zhi Wei adjusts some of the settings to allow more gameplay and interaction on Minecraft. Zhi Wei uses the app to do all of this in one place.
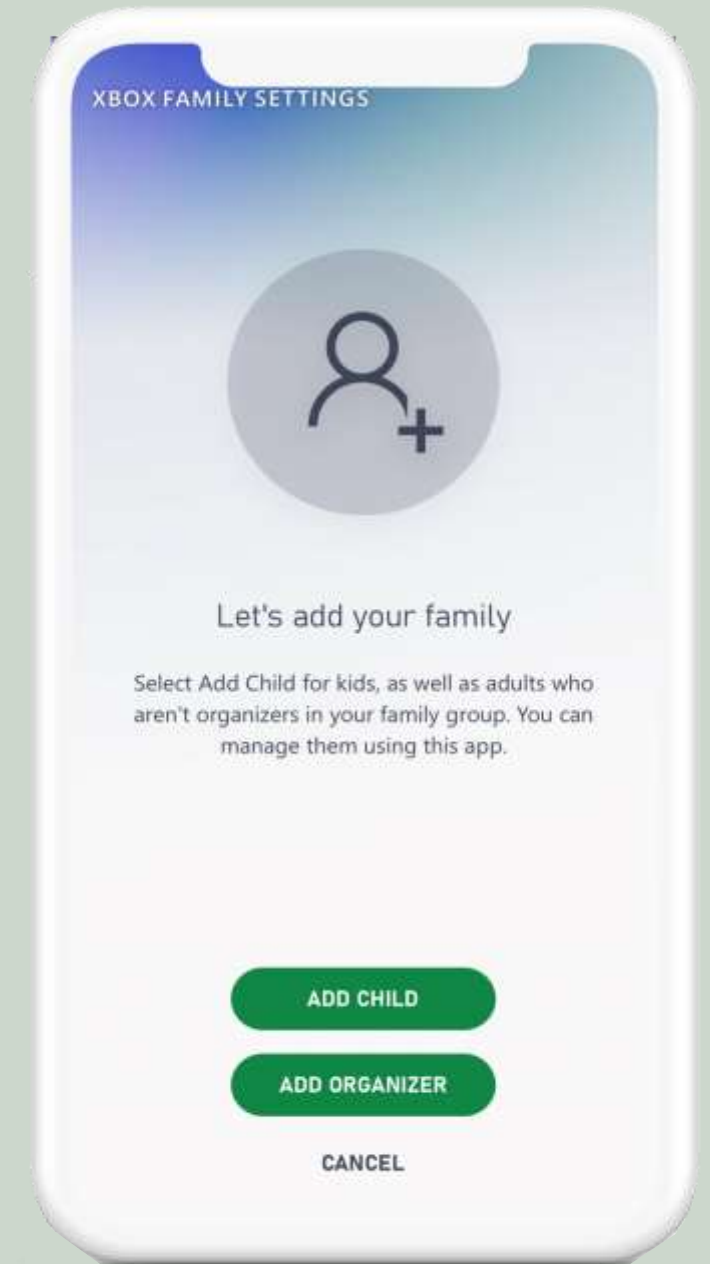
Xbox Family Settings app

9-12 year olds: fostering independence

Between 9-12 years is a great time for children to start learning to game independently while still under a carer's supervision. We encourage open conversations with your child on appropriate limits about the types of games they play and interactions with others online.

Age-appropriate games and the default settings for children under 13 are recommended for children in this age group. We recommend being transparent about the use of parental controls and explaining why you are using them and common online risks.
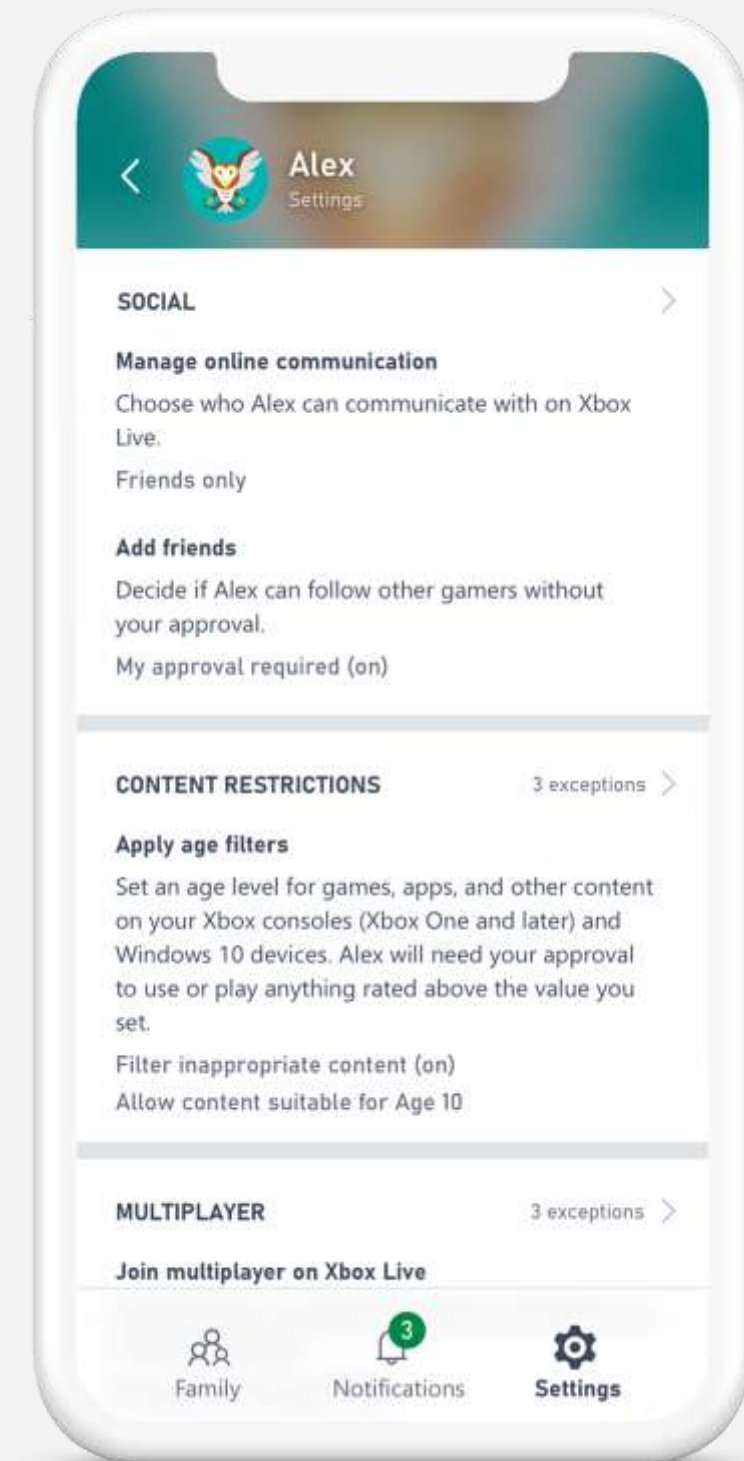
9-12 YEAR OLDS

Learn

A mix of parental and user controls can be used, and we recommend setting up both with your child. Parental controls can be set up using the Xbox Family Settings app by navigating to your child's profile and pressing the settings icon.

- Limit online interactions to those you approve, discussing who each person is with your child before you do so

- Set message filtering to be "child default" for content they can receive in messages

- Set appropriate content restrictions or age limits on the types of games played

- Set agreed screentime limits

- Explain how in-app purchases work and set appropriate spending limits

Together you can set up these user controls on the child's account to:

- Mute or block a person they no longer wish to interact with

- Set up messaging filters to filter text, media, and web links to only allow "friendly" content – these apply to content shared by users not on friends lists. Watch this demo on how it works

It can be helpful to role play scenarios where your child might want to block or restrict someone, so they feel more confident to do so

9-12 YEAR OLDS

Explore

- Begin to give some independence to your child by talking together to curate a list of age-appropriate games that they can play, considering their preferences and recommendations.

- Review community and user guidelines with your child so they know what is acceptable on the gaming platform.

- Continue to model good digital habits at home while slowly transitioning from gaming being a supervised group activity to include some solo gaming time.

- Co-create rules and agree on game time limits, types of games, where to access devices – which might now include at school, with friends.

- Introduce them to the concept of privacy and teach the basic rules of protecting their privacy as respecting others' privacy. Minecraft's Privacy Prodigy is a fun resource for families.

- Check in regularly with your child about how gaming affects their feelings and relationships and encourage your child to share with you their experiences and encounters while gaming.

Support

- While allowing some independence, closely monitor behavioural changes including:

  - Quickly changing screens, switching off devices or muting audio when someone else enters the room

  - Playing more often when unsupervised or using portable devices in private areas such as bathrooms

  - Withdrawn behaviour including being more defensive or less reactive to events and people

  - Becoming stressed or upset when online or using emotionally-charged or hateful language

- Look out for sexually explicit content, or violent content on their devices, evidence of visits to inappropriate websites, encrypted apps or platforms or live-streaming apps.

- You can also view device and app use histories and gaming activity reports.

CASE STUDY – Mohammed, 12 years old

Mohammed, 12 years old, was given an Xbox for his birthday. His mother, Fatima, takes a close interest in his use of screens and games because she has friends whose children had a bad experience on social media. Rather than leaving Mohammed to set up the Xbox alone, she goes through the process with him.

Fatima downloads the [Xbox Family Settings app](#) and together with Mohammed creates a new account for Mohammed, starting with an email address.

After Mohammed has been playing online for a few days, Fatima requests a notification that "Adam2011" wants to add Mohammed as a friend. Fatima knows Adam from Mohammed's school so accepts the request.

A couple of days later, Fatima notices that Mohammed is acting down and is less animated than normal, so she gently starts a conversation with her son about how he is feeling. Mohammed explains that Adam has been teasing him at school and is now taunting him via gaming chat.

Fatima sits down with Mohammed and together they look at the list of approved friends on his Xbox child account. They go through and remove a few of names that are causing Mohammed trouble at school. They also report Adam's account for the teasing comments, so that he is clear on what is appropriate for in-game chat.

Fatima and Mohammed agree on a new rule, that they will now discuss any new friend requests that Mohammed receives on Xbox using this as an opportunity for Mohammed to share anything that is going on at school.

Finally, as this situation is playing out at school, Fatima also arranges time to see Mohammed's teacher and talk about the bullying.
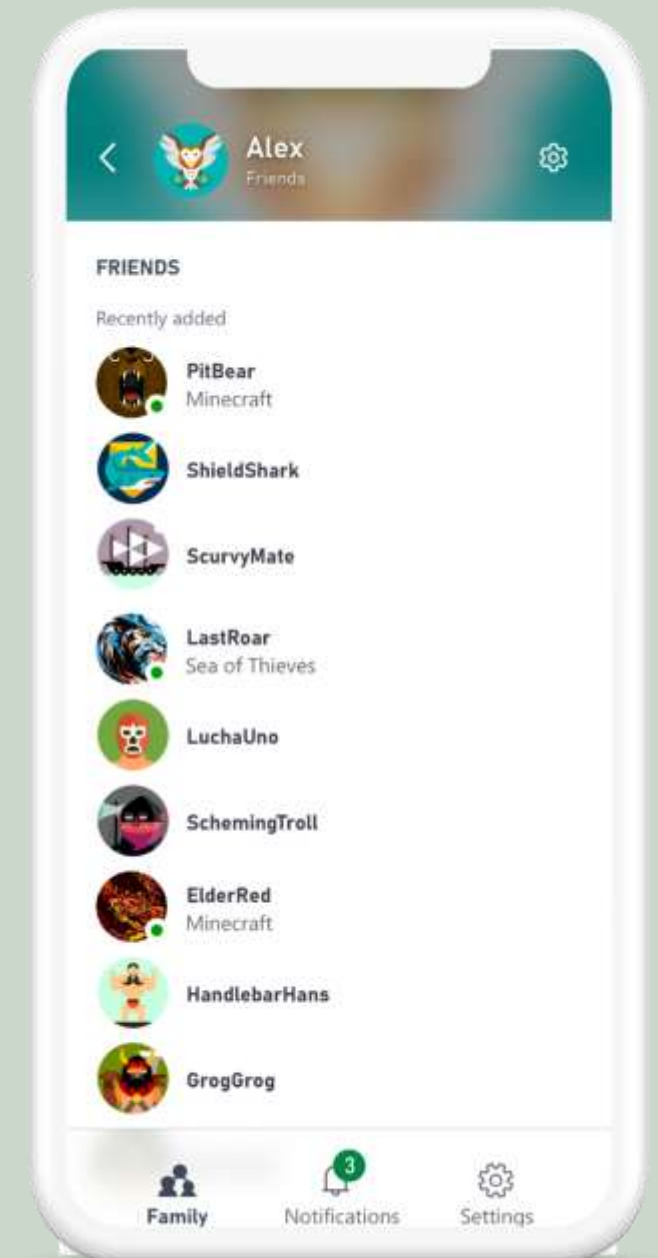
13-15 year olds: empowering youths to be confident gamers

For children between 13-15, we recommend continuing to develop an open and trust-based relationship that supports greater independence and may include some unsupervised play. It is important to find an appropriate balance for your family between maintaining supervision and allowing more freedom and privacy for your child.

At this age it is often more effective to discuss and negotiate rules rather dictate them.

13-15 YEAR OLDS

Learn

The balance between parental controls and trusting your child to game safely will likely change again during this time. We recommend children start to build their knowledge of safety tools, so they have some control over the content and interactions they are exposed to when gaming.

Together, you can set the controls on the young person's account to:

- Manage who sees their profile information and who can contact them

- Mute or block a person they no longer wish to interact with

- Report interactions or content that breach the community and user guidelines

- Set messaging filters to manage the type of media, text and weblinks they receive from players not on their friends lists

It is important to keep an open dialogue and check in regularly with your child to agree on appropriate screentime and spending limits.

13-15 YEAR OLDS

Explore

- Have a trust-based and non-judgmental relationship and understand that this age group values independence and freedom more. Talk about children's online activity and the types of games and content they enjoy.

- Transition from reviewing good online habits to trusting your child to know how to behave.

- Discuss privacy as well as consent and together review [Privacy for young people – Microsoft privacy](#).

Support

- Keep a close eye on any sudden behavioural changes such as:
  - tiredness, sleep disturbance, headaches, eye strain, changes in eating, sleeping or personal hygiene
  - not doing as well at school, obsession with certain websites or games or popular trends
  - extreme anger when being asked to take a break from online activity, appearing anxious or irritable when away from the computer
  - becoming withdrawn from friends and family, excessive in-app spending

- Occasionally review online histories together and keep track of topics/websites/types of games your child likes

- Be aware of harmful online influences including hate-based groups which may use messaging or gaming services to target vulnerable young people. Different language, signs and symbols may also be reflective of hate-based ideologies. There are helpful resources available such as [this database,](#) which contains a detailed list of common hate symbols

CASE STUDY – Radhika, 15 years old

Radhika is a 15-year old girl whose parents are not very tech savvy. Radhika has an Xbox but never had a child account set up so she manages her own settings. She's never really paid them much attention or switched on settings like message filtering or limiting receiving messages to 'friends lists', which means anyone can send her messages.

Radhika receives a message containing a nude photo of someone she doesn't know and asking her to send a photo of herself in the same position. This makes her feel nervous and scared, and her parents start to notice she's becoming withdrawn. Radhika's mum asks her what is going on, reminding Radhika that she can tell them anything and that they only want to support her, without judgement.

Radhika shares her experience. Radhika's mum talks to her about the importance of reporting this, so other people don't have to feel the same way Radhika did.

Radhika and her mum make a report to Xbox together using Radhika's console. They then read about the settings Radhika can switch on to prevent this from happening again. She starts by blocking the player that sent the message, then updating her settings so only people on her friends list can see her profile and send messages. Finally, she turns on message filtering settings to "medium" so that she won't receive inappropriate content from other players on Xbox.

This incident prompts Radhika to dial up her privacy settings across all her online and gaming accounts
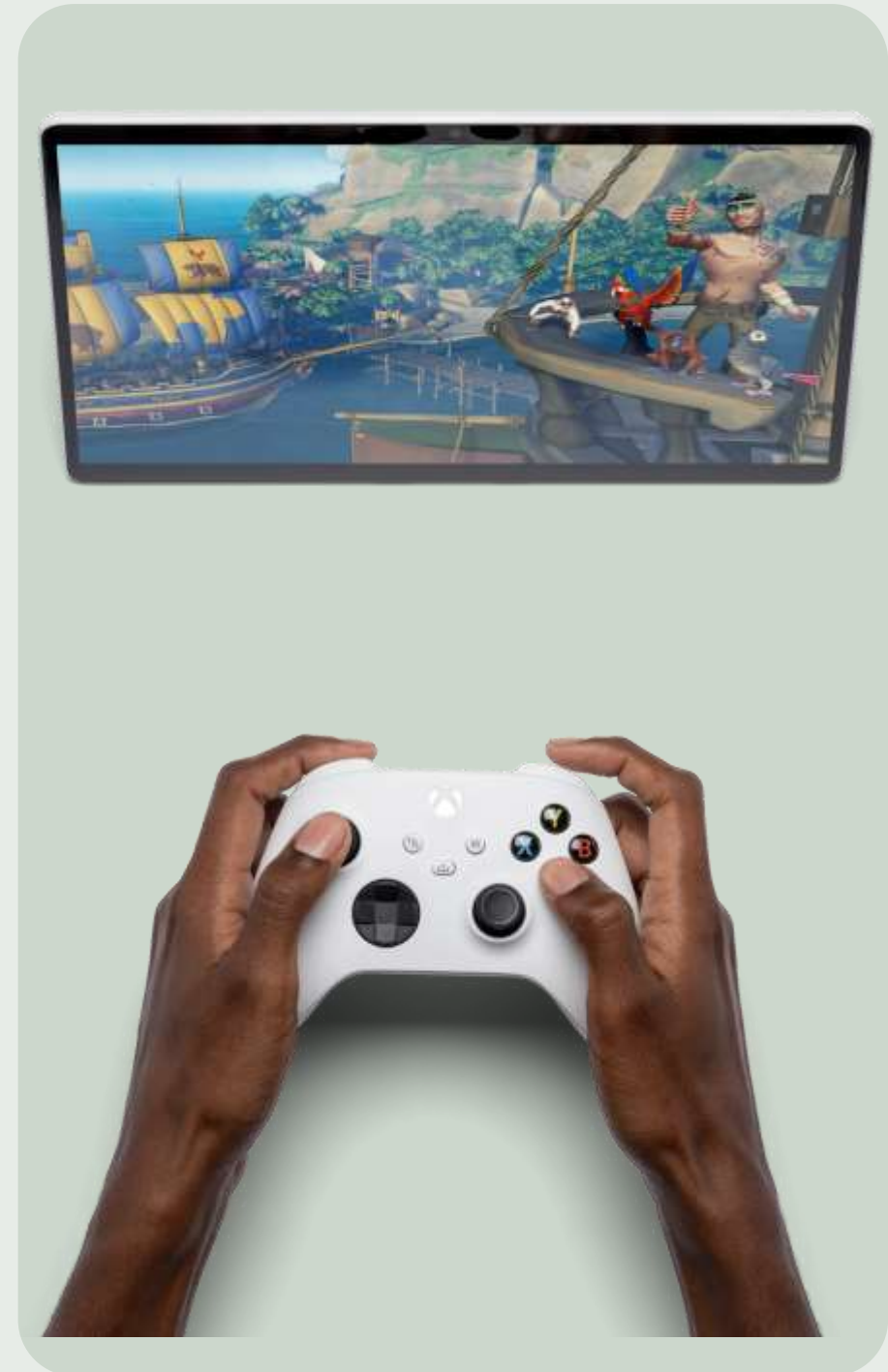
16+ year olds: championing a new generation of gamers

From age 16 young people will likely start to feel more confident to manage their gaming and online lives independently, and will naturally want parents and caregivers to be less involved. At the same time, it is important to make sure they still feel comfortable coming to you if they need help.

16+ YEAR OLDS

Learn

Depending on your family, and the young person's level of independence, parental controls may no longer be appropriate. To respect young people's privacy and independence it is a good idea to discuss any ongoing use of parental controls with them.

Work with the young person to set up their user controls in a protective way for them.

- Manage privacy settings, including who can see their profile and contact them

- Mute or block players that they don't want to be contacted by

- Report players that have made them uncomfortable or breached our Community Standards

- Turn on messaging filters to control the type of content that comes from players not on friends lists

- Get familiar with how data is used

- For spending limits, you can do this via parental controls or encourage young people to use their own money

16+ YEAR OLDS

Explore

- Encourage discussions around online risks and how these relate to gaming. Be interested in what young people are learning at school about the online world.

- Make sure young people know they can come to you if things make them feel uncomfortable online.

- Young people in this age group can be extremely tech-savvy. Be open to the fact they might know more about the latest technology - try to listen and learn.

- Have frequent conversations about who young people are speaking to online and encourage them to be curious if new friends try to add or contact them on any kind of platform.

- If you set spending limits for games, talk to young people about the value of money and why you're doing this.

Support

- Young people of this age naturally go through many changes, so it can be hard to notice behavioural changes that are influenced by gaming. Speak to teachers about what they're noticing and be on the lookout for certain things like:
  - Spending excess time alone, on their device or in their room
  - Becoming withdrawn or isolated
  - Asking for money
  - Quickly closing their screen when you enter the room

- Be aware of harmful online influences including hate-based groups which may use messaging or gaming services to target vulnerable young people. Watch out for noticeable shifts in their worldview or intolerances for certain groups of people. Different language, signs and symbols may also be reflective of hate-based ideologies. There are helpful resources available such as this database, which contains a detailed list of common hate symbols.

CASE STUDY – Sam, 16 years old

Sam is a 16-year-old, whose parents are both busy professionals. Sam spends a lot of time on Xbox playing first person games and is also active on a gaming-adjacent platform where he chats with others whilst gaming. Recently Sam has been expressing intolerant views about certain communities in Singapore.

One day Sam's mum, Rose notices a sticker with an odd symbol on Sam's laptop. She asks him why he has that sticker, and Sam quickly grabs his device and leaves. She finds more information online and realizes that a lot of the language Sam has been using recently is reflected in discussions around a prominent hate-based organisation.

Rose talks to Sam, telling him she isn't angry and just wants to understand. He eventually tells her about his new online friend who has been sharing material on the gaming adjacent platform.

Microsoft has explicitly prohibited the posting of terrorist and violent extremist content across our services, so the content shared with Sam would be in breach of our policies. We also use a range of proactive detection technologies to identify terrorist and violent extremist content to prevent it from being seen by players. Players that try to share this content could be subject to a range of enforcement actions including lifetime bans.

However, it is important to be aware that often recruiters encourage moving conversations to another platform such as an encrypted chat or a gaming-adjacent communications service.

Rose and Sam have long conversations about what has been going on, and Rose helps him to understand he has been led down a dangerous path. Following advice on Singapore's SGSecure website, they report the player that had contacted Sam to the ISD Counter-Terrorism Centre hotline.