At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

FINAL FANTASY XIV

AGE RESTRICTION PEGI 16

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

The video game Final Fantasy XIV launched in 2010, and, despite being critically panned, it saw an overhaul that has made it one of the biggest success stories in gaming. Its huge world, epic story and versatile combat system have continued to draw in new players, but there's a lot that trusted adults need to be aware of – not least the cost of paying monthly to play.

ALWAYS ONLINE

Final Fantasy XIV is an MMORPG, which stands for Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game. Much like World of Warcraft, players create a character in a chosen class and level up by completing quests to gain power and items. The game requires a constant internet connection, whether you're playing on PC, Mac, PlayStation or Xbox, and there's no option to play offline.

VOICE & TEXT CHAT

Final Fantasy XIV lets players send chat messages in-game or speak to each other over voice chat. On the one hand, that provides plenty of choice for how those enjoying the game can interact with their fellow fans. On the other hand, however, it's easier than in many games to receive unprompted messages from a stranger, with whom you constantly share your play space.

REGULAR EXPANSIONS

As with similar titles in the genre, players can purchase expansions to unlock additional content for the game. Those without the expansions will be locked out of certain new quests and activities, meaning that young people who play regularly will potentially have the next release earmarked on their calendar, ready to buy it as soon as possible.

VIOLENCE

While Final Fantasy XIV has a fairly light tone throughout some of its quests, many involve killing enemies and sometimes even wild animals. The violence isn't especially strong – more comparable to a cartoon or anime style – but the act alone may make some children feel uncomfortable, if they're not yet able to separate fictional harm from the real kind.

IN-GAME PURCHASES & SUBSCRIPTION FEE

Users need to pay £8.99 per month to play Final Fantasy XIV, but there is a free trial. If someone stops paying, they'll lose access to their character (although they'll be able to pick up the payments again and resume where they left off). If a player forgets to cancel their payments, however, those subscription fees will continue rolling on automatically.

POTENTIAL FOR ADDICTION

As with World of Warcraft, there's an element of addiction to Final Fantasy XIV. The gameplay loop can be quite engrossing, as minutes turn into hours and hours into days while playing alone or with friends. This can potentially lead to missing real-life events, a lack of interest in any activities not related to the game and procrastination around responsibilities like schoolwork.

FREE TRIAL

Advice for Parents & Educators

MANAGE PLAYTIME

Playtime limits are a great way to counter the addictive qualities of games like Final Fantasy XIV. They allow you discuss why it's still important to enjoy things outside of gaming while still letting a child enjoy playing online with their friends when it makes sense to do so. It's all well and good to have fun with a game, so long as they're able to step away and reconnect with the real world.

PLAY TOGETHER

The free trial makes it extremely easy to jump into Final Fantasy XIV and play alongside a child, provided they're old enough. Not only does that help you ensure that settings are adjusted for their privacy and safety, but it may also end up becoming a bonding experience for you both and any other family members that want to try it out.

MAKE USE OF THE FREE TRIAL

The Final Fantasy XIV free trial is a generous one, with no limits on how long someone can play until their character hits level 70. That's easily dozens of hours for a child to go through the game, complete quests, and see if they enjoy it before purchasing expansions or subscribing to a membership. They may well move on to something else before you need to spend so much as a penny.

REMEMBER, IT'S A PEGI 16

Despite its often-relaxing nature, Final Fantasy XIV carries a PEGI 16 rating for violence and drugs (although the latter is due to a character smoking a pipe on occasion). There's minimal blood, but characters can attack enemies (and other players) with weapons and spells. Take a look at some gameplay videos to see if the content is appropriate for a younger player.

Meet Our Expert

Lloyd Coombes is the Editor-in-Chief of GGRecon, and has been working in the gaming and tech industry for five years. A longtime fan of online games, he's also a parent, and therefore understands the importance of online safety. Writing mainly about tech and fitness, his work has previously been published at sites including IGN, TechRadar and plenty more.

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