

Screen Time and Digital Communication for Kids & Teens: How to Manage it All? Session 8 of 10



Your host, Alison Meredith:

Alison Meredith taught High School Math in the 1990s, at Dobyns-Bennett and at schools in North Carolina and Massachusetts. She received a national award in 1997. Alison and her husband Tim have been home-educating their kids for 20 years; they have 7 kids ages 8-20.

Tim and Alison own Holston IT, a business which provides cybersecurity to other businesses throughout Southwest Virginia and the Tri-Cities.

Alison is a best-selling author. She and other IT leaders wrote **You Are the #1 Target**, to help business owners implement cybersecurity. She also has a Kindle book about protecting kids in digital communications.



How do we decide
what video games
our kids can play?



Today's Big Ideas

- What are Game Ratings
- How do I look at Reviews
- What am I comfortable letting my kids play

How are Games Rated?





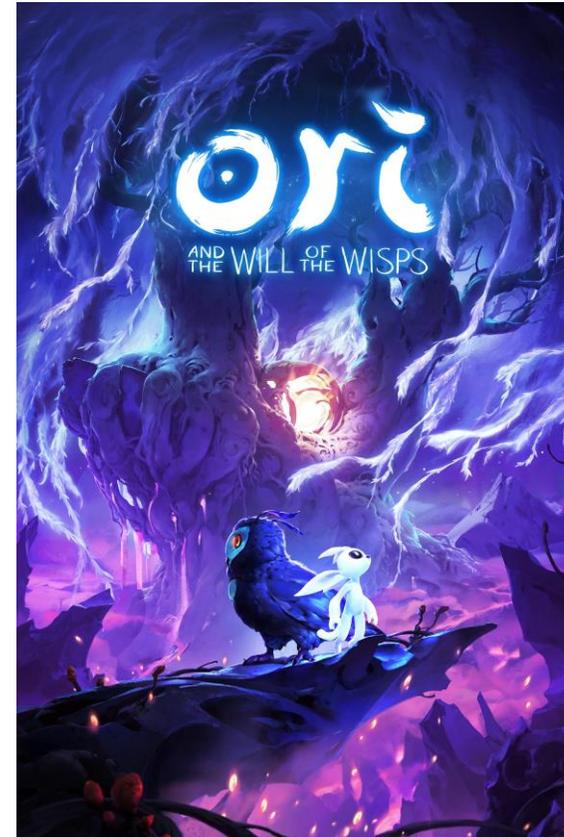
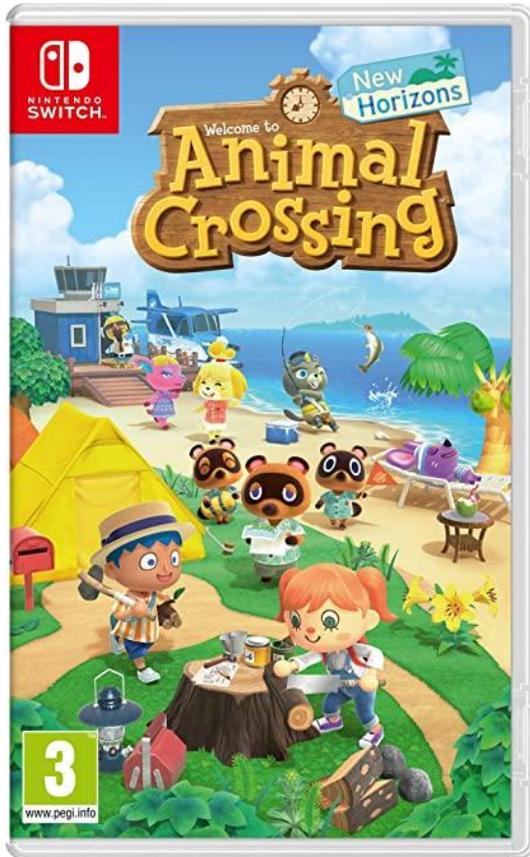
Everyone

Content is Generally suitable for all ages. May contain:

- Minimal cartoon, fantasy or mild violence.
- Infrequent use of mild language



Examples





Everyone 10+

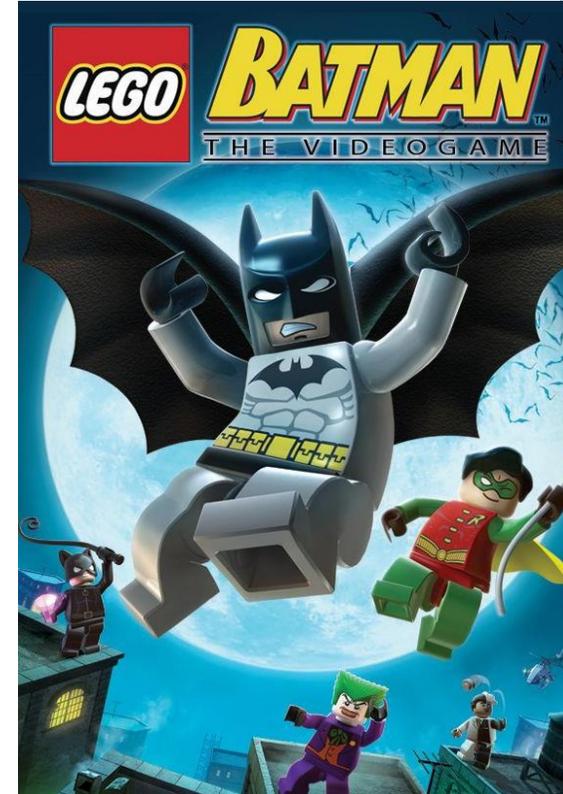
Content is Generally suitable for ages 10 and up.

May contain:

- Cartoon, fantasy, or mild violence,
- Mild language
- minimal suggestive themes.



Examples





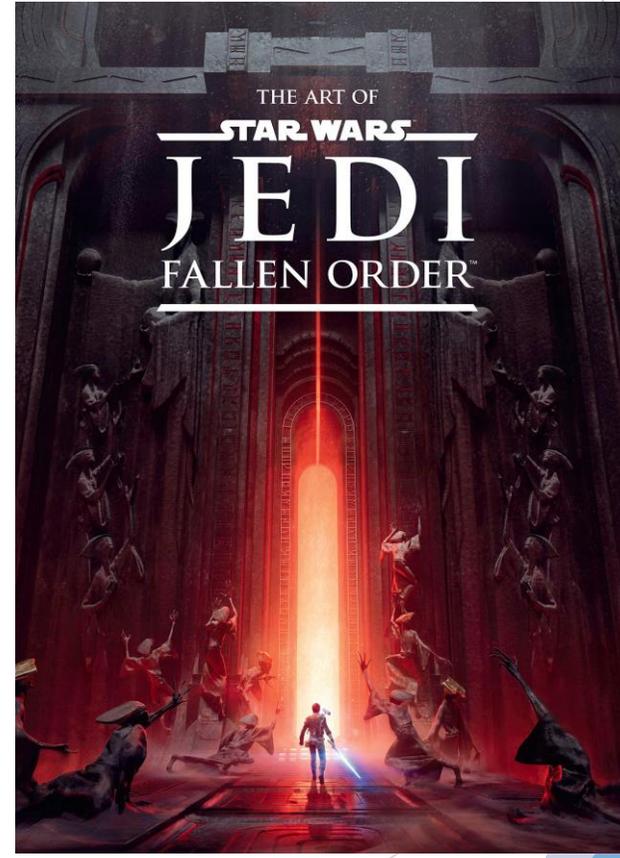
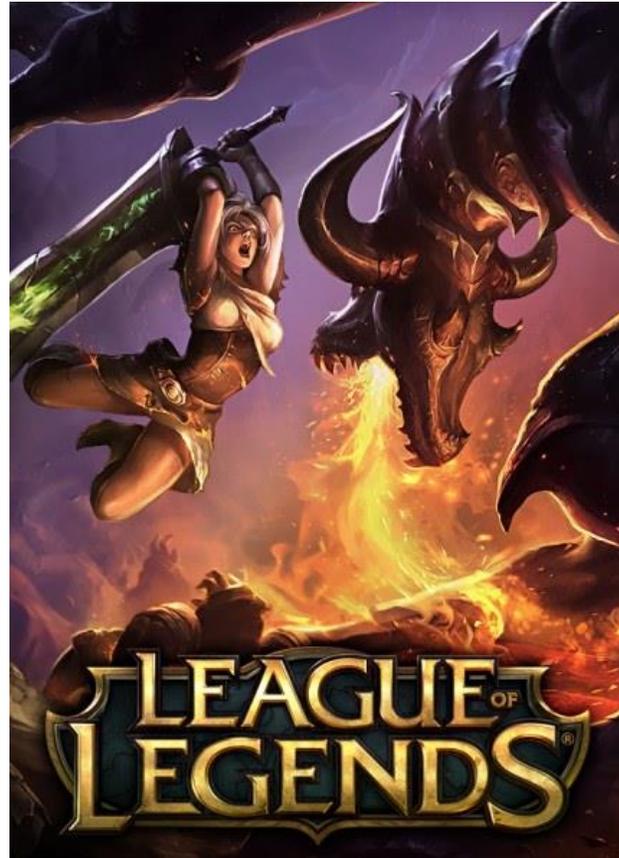
Teen

Content is Generally suitable for Ages 13 and up. May contain

- Violence
- Suggestive themes
- Crude humor, minimal blood, simulated gambling and/or infrequent use of strong language.



Examples





Mature 17+

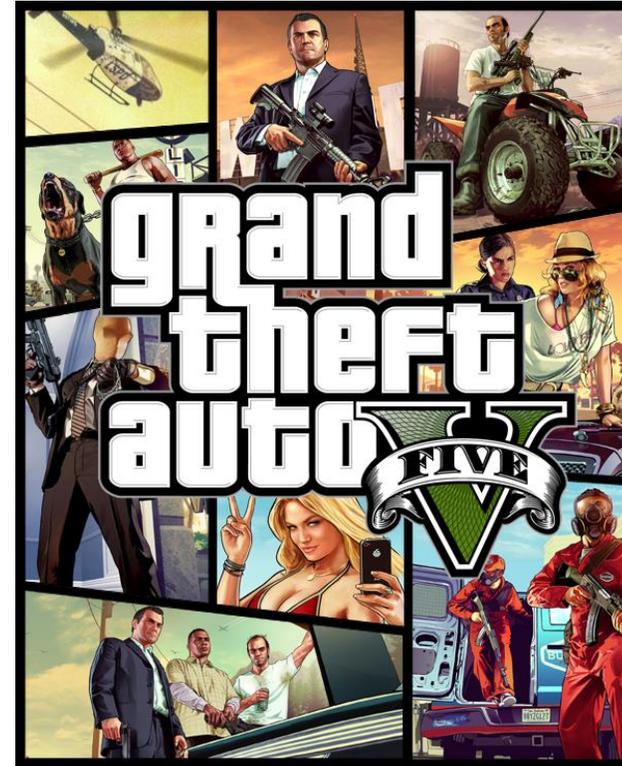
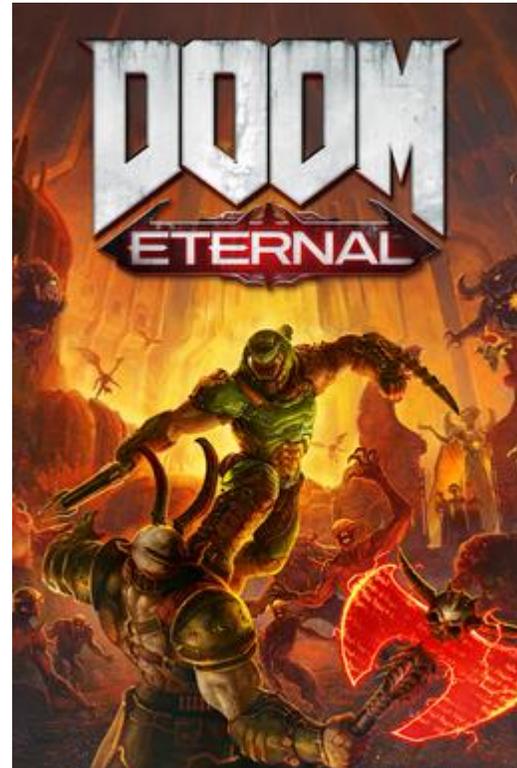
Content is generally suitable for ages 17 and up.

May contain:

- Intense violence
- Blood and gore
- Sexual content
- Strong language



Examples



**How do I decide what
is right for my kid?**

Be involved in the decisions



Read Reviews



Watch Gameplay



Connect with your kids



Play the Game yourself

**Why is it important to
look at reviews?**

**There is a lot of
variance in each
category.**

Example

Halo Reach (M17+)



- ▶ This is a first-person shooter in which players engage in futuristic battles against invading aliens. **Players use pistols, sniper rifles, machine guns, grenade launchers, and swords to kill enemies** during frequent and fast-paced combat. **Characters are occasionally impaled on glowing swords**, and aliens can be seen stabbing fallen figures during some battle sequences. **Gun fights are highlighted by realistic gunfire sound effects, explosions, and screams of pain**. Human and alien characters emit spurts of blood when injured; players are able to shoot dead enemies, causing more blood to splash out. Blood is sometimes depicted on the walls and ground.



Example

Grand Theft Auto V (M17+)

- ▶ In this open-world action game, players assume the role of three criminals whose storylines intersect within the fictional city of Los Santos. Players can switch between each character to follow his storyline, **completing missions which often include criminal activities (e.g., stealing cars, executing heists, assassinating targets)**. Players use pistols, machine guns, sniper rifles, and explosives to kill various enemies (e.g., rival gang members); players also have the ability to shoot non-adversary civilians, though this may negatively affect players' progress as a penalty system triggers a broad police search. Blood-splatter effects occur frequently, and the game contains rare depictions of dismemberment. **In one sequence, players are directed to use various instruments and means (e.g., pipe wrench, tooth removal, electrocution) to extract information from a character; the sequence is intense and prolonged**, and it involves some player interaction (i.e., responding to on-screen prompts). **The game includes depictions of sexual material/activity: implied fellatio and masturbation; various sex acts (sometimes from a close-up perspective) that the player's character procures from a prostitute**—while no nudity is depicted in these sequences, various sexual moaning sounds can be heard. **Nudity is present**, however, primarily in two settings: a topless lap dance in a strip club and a location that includes male cult members with exposed genitalia in a non-sexual context. Within the game, some cutscenes, TV programs and radio ads contain instances of mature humor: myriad sex jokes; depictions of raw sewage and feces on a worker's body; caricatures of ethnic/racial groups. Some sequences within the larger game allow players to use drugs (e.g., smoking from a bong, lighting a marijuana joint, hallucinating from peyote); cocaine use is also depicted. Players' character can, at various times, consume alcohol and drive while under the influence. The words “f**k,” “c*nt,” and “n**ger” can be heard in the dialogue.

Peter's Tips to Finding an Appropriate game

- Read Reviews
 - <https://www.common sense media.org>
 - <https://thesource4parents.com>
 - <https://www.esrb.org>
- Watch gameplay videos on your own
- Figure out what your line is
- What is the goal of the game

How do I watch Gameplay?

How do I watch Gameplay?

- ▶ Go on Youtube

- ▶ Search:

[Name of Game] Full walkthrough no
commentary

Example:

“Halo Reach full walkthrough no
commentary”

**What do I do if my kids
are already playing games
that I am not comfortable
with?**

One of Alison's friends gave excellent advice on how to respond to desensitization with regards to vulgar memes found on her son's phone. The same kind of conversation can work for talking through inappropriate games.

She sat down next to her son and had the following conversation, holding the phone in her hand next to him, displaying one of the inappropriate memes (he'd already seen it. So, nothing new in showing it to him again). The conversation went something like this:

Mom, calmly: "Look at this." (points to the meme, counts to 5 silently)

Son: (No comment, just sitting and looking)

Mom, calmly: "Think about this." (continues to point to it, counts to 5 silently)

Son: (No comment, just sitting and thinking)

Mom, calmly: "Would your dad or I ever post something like this?" (pauses, waits) Son:
(shakes head slowly)

Mom, calmly: "Do you know any respected adults in our life who would say or post this?"

Son: (pauses, shakes his head).

Mom, calmly: "Explain to me why this is wrong."

Son: Pauses, then talks—conversation between son and mom continues.