



Staying safe online



Online gaming leading to radicalisation

The world of online gaming provides a route for groomers to influence vulnerable people and allows for those looking to exploit harmful discussion online, with the aim of this leading to further harmful behaviour offline.

In 2021, it was estimated that there were 3.2 billion gamers across the globe, therefore providing a vast number of people who could potentially be exploited through this medium. The concept of '[Game Transfer Phenomena](#)' talks about how experiences from games, what players see, hear and do, can transfer into the real-life context. This process can invoke strong and very real emotions within gamers, and impact on their subconscious.

The ability to communicate with people across the globe through online gaming has meant that extremist groups have looked to use this as a means of recruitment to their causes. Daesh for example used to have a team whose objective was to play games online to try and build rapport with individuals over the headset function, with the end goal of recruiting members to their cause. Sometimes the approach to how they do this can be quite straightforward, the Call of Duty franchise is well-known for the fact that its online multiplayer option is its most popular game mode. Daesh used the game in their propaganda, telling followers that their cause was their own 'Call of Duty'. For individuals who may already be in a vulnerable place and investing a lot of time into playing the game, this approach could be very influential opening them up further to the group's ideology.





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Right-wing groups have also utilised games and gaming servers. The Daily Stormer developed a modification of the popular game Doom 2, which lets players fight against a Jewish world conspiracy and was well-received by the right-wing extremist community with one player commenting that there were “many options for genocide, lots of fun”. The German-speaking right-wing extremist scene has also come to use the gaming platform Discord as a meeting point with the movement Reconquista Germanica drawing around 7,000 users to their server. By their own account, Reconquista Germanica is nothing more than a LARP— a live-action role play game.

How can we trust what we may be hearing from those we are gaming with, and what can we do to keep ourselves safe?

- We need to think critically about things we may be told by others, talk with our friends and family and do our own research using trustworthy websites such as **FullFact** and **FactCheck** among others.
- It is important we avoid oversharing, as groups may look to use information we share as a way of building up a kinship and drawing people into their ideology over time.
- Keep a track of how much time your child is spending online.
- Set up your child’s gaming in a family space rather than their bedroom.
- Ask our child to not wear headphones, so you can hear their activity.
- Check that your child’s settings are set to friends only and that their settings are private.
- Ask your child to not use their real name/age/DOB in usernames and profiles.
- Make use of the parental control functionality on the consoles to help monitor your child’s activity and ensure they are only accessing content you are happy with. Sony have advice on implementing parental controls for the **Playstation 5** and **Playstation 4**. Microsoft also have information for the **Xbox**, and if you are looking for guidance on parental controls for PC gaming though **Steam**, **Internet Matters** have a guide for you.

