

Many families now have VR headsets in their homes so please have a look at this advice to parents taken from the NSPCC website.

Tips for keeping your family safe when using virtual reality

Make sure a VR headset is right for your family



Play together



Take some time to explore



Talk to your child



Get to know safety features



Supervise your child's activity



Make sure the surroundings are safe



Set healthy boundaries



Make sure a VR headset is right for your family



Do some research into the kind of games and apps you can use in VR. Think carefully about whether these would be suitable for your children. Most headsets have an age restriction of 12+ and all games in VR have age (PEGI) ratings. Don't forget that you know your child best, and you might decide that they need to be a little bit older before it's suitable for them.

Play together



The safest way to enjoy using VR is to make it a family experience. Because using VR involves putting on a headset, it can seem like something you do on your own. However, making it a family activity by taking turns or competing with one another means you can all enjoy it together. Some VR headsets allow you to cast to a television which can allow everybody to see what is happening.

Have a go at the games they want to play so that you know what kind of things they will experience. If you want more information, you can watch videos of gameplay online to get an idea of what the games are like and read reviews by other parents.

Take some time to explore



Make sure you try out the headset before your child has a go and check whether the device or game allows chatting with others. Using VR can be quite a disorientating experience and using it yourself will help you understand how your child might feel when they are wearing the headset.

Make sure you check out which games and apps your child wants to use and whether they are suitable by choosing them together. Remember, 3D experiences in VR are designed to be very realistic. This means they could have a greater impact on your child than 2D games they play or films they watch.

Talk to your child



Talk to your child regularly about their experiences in VR. Ask them what they enjoy about using it as well as what that they don't enjoy. If your child chats or plays with others, talk to them about who they spend time with and who can contact them. Make sure they are aware that personal information shouldn't be shared with people they don't know.

VR chat rooms are designed for adults only and have an age rating of 18+ so make sure that your child cannot access these.

Get to know safety features



Check out the parental controls available on the device and research the safety features available in-game. Make sure your location is set to private and that other privacy settings are switched on.

If your child is using VR to chat or play with others, make sure they know about blocking, muting and reporting tools they can use. Some VR headsets allow you to set up a personal boundary around your in-game character. This will stop other players being able to come too close.

Supervise your child's activity



With VR, all the action takes place within a headset. This means it can be difficult to see what is happening. Encourage your child to only use VR headsets in family spaces and consider getting a headset that allows you to cast to a screen or using a casting device. This helps to make sure they are in a safe space that is prepared for VR use and allows you to keep an eye on what your child is experiencing.

Stay in the room with them when they are using the headset. This makes it easier to pick up on how they are feeling whilst playing. You could encourage your child not to use headphones so that you can be part of the game experience with them.

Make sure the surroundings are safe



Many VR games need you to move around while playing. To avoid any accidents, make sure you clear a space for your child to play in, away from any trip hazards or sharp edges. Certain headsets allow you to mark out a 'guardian boundary'. This is a boundary set within the game that keeps track of your surroundings. It alerts you when you step outside of the lines which reduces the risk of bumping into physical objects.

Set healthy boundaries



In conversation with your child, decide how long they are allowed to spend using a headset. It is recommended to limit time spent in VR to 10-15 minutes at a time. VR can disrupt sleep, so it is best to avoid playing 1-2 hours before bedtime.

When ending play, help your child readjust to the real world slowly. You can do this by encouraging them to sit still, take deep breaths and focus on their real-world surroundings

More advice and information available if you click on this link;

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/virtual-reality-headsets/>

