TRUST & SAFETY

Creating a positive, inclusive and safe online experience for all players is paramount to the video game industry. Safety is not a competitive issue for the video game industry—it is a shared priority that requires collective action. Video game publishers and console makers work to promote civility, build community and incentivize positive behavior. The industry also works collaboratively to develop and implement leading-edge technologies, detection methods and practices to combat toxic and predatory behavior, while arming players with information and tools on how to keep their environments as safe as possible.

The video game industry also partners with trusted third parties, like the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), to ensure that its approach to online safety remains up to date. The industry recognizes that in order to continue to provide the vibrant, fun and safe online environment that players deserve, it must be vigilant and constantly seek new and improved methods to stop bad actors from creating toxic environments. The video game industry remains committed to that mission.

The Video Game Industry Constantly Explores Ways to Detect, Deter and Combat Bad Actors and Toxic Behavior

The video game industry is continually developing and deploying new and sophisticated technologies and practices to keep players safe from bad actors and other types of toxicity. The industry employs a multi-faceted approach to online safety that includes:

- the use of advanced technology tools;
- human intervention on networks, including steps like disabling certain in-game features;
- codes of conduct that set expectations and penalize disruptive behavior;
- other tools and practices that empower the entire video game community to take part in creating a safe and positive environment, such as tools to control a player's communication with others, to report bad behavior and to incentivize good behavior through a reward system; and
- cooperation with law enforcement, NCMEC and other educational and community outreach.

This approach maximizes the industry's ability to protect the safety of players online, while ensuring that all players can have fun and feel like they belong. The industry's commitment to safety is necessarily a shared concern. Online safety is a tall order, particularly as bad actors continually adjust their predatory tactics to avoid detection. The video game industry is committed to collaborating with one another and with other stakeholders in order to work together with the common goal of keeping players safe.

The Video Game Industry Empowers Parents with Tools and Resources to Protect Children

For more than 25 years, the video game industry has worked to ensure that consumers—especially parents and caregivers—have the most comprehensive information and tools needed to make informed decisions about video games. Since 1994, the video game industry's self-regulatory body, the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), has provided parents with age and content ratings for video games and apps to help them make informed decisions about which products are appropriate for their family. These tools have a high level of awareness and use among parents. The U.S. Federal Trade Commission has lauded industry efforts to responsibly market its products and has noted that the video game industry "outpaces" other entertainment sectors in having the "strongest self-regulatory code" and "high compliance" with that code.

In addition, parental controls, offered on virtually all video game devices, offer parents the ability to efficiently set preferences that are appropriate for their household. These controls enable parents to: (i) block video games by age rating category; (ii) manage the amount of money their kids can spend playing video games; and (iii) limit the amount of time their kids can spend playing video games. In addition to being able to set parental controls directly on the console, parents can download easy-to-use smartphone apps for each console to manage what, when and with whom their children can play. ESRB provides a centralized place for parents to obtain step-by-step parental control guides for all the game consoles, Windows computers and other platforms at ParentalTools.org.

The industry also provides in-game tools to enable players to mute or block other players online and to report unwanted interactions.

These safety and wellness features continue to evolve as consumer needs evolve. The video game industry regularly updates parental controls and other product features and tools to help consumers navigate the ever-changing world of video games.

Actionable Legislative Solutions are Needed to Fight Online Child Exploitation

The video game industry has a strong commitment to online safety, especially when it comes to children. Therefore, the industry supports updating existing laws to ensure that industry efforts to develop and implement effective solutions are not hampered. For example, the current retention period for possessing evidence of child exploitation often provides insufficient time to adequately study predatory patterns in order to devise and deploy preventive measures. In addition, some privacy laws limit how long personal information can be retained, which can hamper the ability to advance online safety. The video game industry is committed to working with governments and other stakeholders to fashion laws that permit the use of technology to develop stronger protections for children online. The industry also supports improved funding for NCMEC to allow experts to expand the reach and scope of child protection in the digital age.

entertainment® software association