

What Parents Need to Know about Overwatch 2

All National Online Safety, we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one of many games which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, tips and tips for adults.

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about OVERWATCH 2

A long-awaited sequel to 2016's massively successful Overwatch, this is a futuristic shooting game with a focus on teamwork and strategy which gives it an extra dimension to the majority of titles in the genre. Its cast of characters is diverse and memorable, while there's a definite (and rewarding) learning curve to players improving their skill. Created by established developer Blizzard Entertainment, Overwatch is free to play, with an emphasis on competitive multiplayer action – meaning that children may want to play the game even more simply because their friends have it.

AGE RATING
PEGI 12

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

MULTIPLE PASSWORDS
Overwatch 2 supports convenient cross-play across consoles and PC – as long as users link all their devices under a unifying account on the Blizzard Battle.net platform. This has other benefits (preserving a player's original skins for use as the new game), but if your child does want to link their accounts, be warned: the process can be extremely tricky and requires multiple passwords.

VOICE CHAT
As a shooting game which focuses on fast-paced, competitive play, teamwork is central to getting the most out of the Overwatch 2 experience. Many players use voice chat to coordinate with other users – often with friends, but sometimes also with strangers. In either case, this means your child is in contact with others, who may – for example – use offensive language in the heat of the moment.

IN-GAME PURCHASING
Like many free-to-play games, Overwatch 2 offers in-game purchases for unlocking its colourful skins. While new characters arrive as part of a free 'battle pass' each season (normally lasting around three months), players can unlock them much earlier by buying a premium version of the pass. There are also in-game bundles (with varying costs) themed around certain characters or events.

VIOLENT GAMEPLAY
Overwatch 2 heavily features combat, although the on-screen shootouts are relatively sanitised. Most of its characters are of a fantastical nature (there's a gorilla scientist with a laser weapon, for instance, and a DJ on roller-skates who fires sound energy), but some – such as Reaper, a assassin in a wrap-it-like metal mask – are a little on the darker side and could unsettle younger players.

Advice for Parents & Carers

ASSIST WITH ACCOUNT LINKING
If your child is trying to link their accounts from different devices together, it might be wise for you to help them set it up. Not only should it enable the process to run more smoothly (and save you being asked for the passwords for each account), but you'll also be able to make sure that the website for linking is correct. We've put the right web address under the expert's bio at the bottom of this guide.

MONITOR COMMUNICATIONS
Playing Overwatch 2 with friends is almost universally the most popular way to enjoy the game. If your child is playing with a new friend they only know online – or a stranger – you may want to monitor the chat to make sure they aren't being exposed to anything unsavoury. You might also decide to adjust the in-game voice chat settings so only confirmed friends can speak to your child.

USE IT AS INSPIRATION
Overwatch characters represent many races, nationalities, gender identities and sexual orientations. This eclectic roster of heroes offers a superb jumping-off point for discussing racial, sexual or gender diversity with your child. Whether it's finding a hero on a globe together or talking about non-traditional relationships, the game could be an excellent conversation starter.

LIMIT IN-GAME SPENDING
The loot boxes featured in the first Overwatch have been replaced by a rotating storefront – so users only have a set time to purchase a skin or item before it becomes unavailable. Your child can still earn plenty of items, however, through the free battle pass. In any case, we'd advise removing any payment methods – or at least setting limits in advance – if you're worried about in-game spending.

WATCH SOME GAMEPLAY
Overwatch players fight with an array of weapons and explosives, but the battles are presented in a way that forgoes blood, gore or dismemberment, regardless of the mode or character selected. The game also usually avoids the word "kill" – referring to "eliminations" instead. Watching footage of Overwatch 2 on YouTube could help you decide whether it's suitable for your child before they play.

Meet Our Expert
Daryl Coombes is Games Editor of technology and entertainment website Dailymail and has been working in the gaming media for three years. A long-time fan of gaming, he is also a parent and therefore a keen advocate of online safety. Writing mainly about tech and fitness, his articles have also been published on influential sites including Tech and Tech Radar among others.

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In fairness to the series' developers, Overwatch 2 features some encouraging safety tweaks – the controversial loot boxes have been completely removed, for instance. Some issues *do* remain, however: the first Overwatch attracted criticism for its toxic community, which is clearly still a concern if young players are using the audio chat when fighting alongside (or against) strangers.

Likewise, in-game purchases remain a possible pitfall thanks to the game's rotating storefront system, while – despite the comparatively restrained levels of on-screen blood and gore – many trusted adults will still have reservations about a game which revolves so heavily around violence. Our #WakeUpWednesday guide this week has the essential details about Overwatch 2.

Despite some residual safety concerns about the game itself, Overwatch's creators can certainly be applauded for its diverse and inclusive cast of heroes. One of the main characters, the time-hopping Tracer, is an extremely positive representation of the LGBTQ+ community, while others – such as the Haitian medic, Baptiste – hail from under-represented regions of the world.

The presentation of various races, sexualities and gender identities as universally accepted in the futuristic Overwatch world is heartening – and can be an excellent reference point for conversations with young people about equality and people's differences. You'll find more analysis and information about Overwatch 2 in this week's #WakeUpWednesday guide.

Please [click here](#) to download the guide