



Advance Gaming & the Digital World: Play Smarter, Start Here

A practical introduction for players and parents

Build safer habits, useful skills, and a clearer path through the gaming world.

SHAD EDDIE MONGRUE

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01

Why Gaming Matters Now

Gaming is part of everyday life for families. It can bring people together, build skills, and create fun—but connected play also deserves attention.

- ◆ Nearly two-thirds of Americans ages 5 to 90—205.1 million people—regularly play video games.¹
- ◆ Among players ages 8 to 90, 89% have played video games online.²
- ◆ Predators target children through games, consoles, social media, livestreams, video platforms, and messaging apps.³
- ◆ Clear boundaries and steady conversations help you make informed choices about play and online contact.

Gaming can give you a place to relax, compete, create, and connect. The same online features that make play social can bring strangers and pressure into the picture. You do not need to fear games or shut down every conversation. Instead, learn the tools, protect personal information, and talk openly about what happens online. When players and parents learn together, they can make choices that fit their household. Next, try one quick check you can do today.

INSIDE THIS BOOK

Start with a simple safety check, learn about ratings and controls, and follow a starter plan. Then explore how gaming can help you practice useful skills.

02

Make One Smart Check

Take a short pause from play and review the settings on one game or device. A quick check can show you what to discuss or adjust.

- ◆ Choose one game or device you use, then open its account, privacy, or safety settings.
- ◆ Review who can contact you, see your activity, join your sessions, or view your profile.
- ◆ Check communication and spending options; change a setting only when you understand what it does.
- ◆ Write down one question to discuss with a parent, caregiver, or trusted person.

Set aside a little time for this check. If you are a parent, invite your child to look with you rather than turning it into an inspection. Ask what feels comfortable, what feels frustrating, and whether anything online needs attention. If a setting is unclear, read the platform's explanation before changing it. Aim for one informed action and a useful conversation, not a perfect setup. Next, learn what ratings and controls can—and cannot—do.

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You've read the free pages. Here's what the rest of this book covers:

- 3 Know Your Tools
- 4 Build a Seven-Day Routine
- 5 Grow Skills, Avoid Traps
- 6 Your Next Moves

BY THE END OF THIS SHELF, YOU WILL

- ◆ A practical check for game and device settings
- ◆ A clearer view of ratings, controls, and their limits
- ◆ Conversation starters for players and caregivers
- ◆ Ways to practice useful skills through gaming
- ◆ A path to guides on careers, safety, and content creation

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Sources for the free pages

Every statistic in this book is numbered and links to the page it came from. Each one was checked word for word against its source in October 2026. Figures can change as sources update. This book is for education and is not personal financial, legal, medical or professional advice.

- 1 **Entertainment Software Association (ESA)**, Annual ESA Study Reveals Video Games' Universal Appeal Across Generations (2025-06-03). <https://www.theesa.com/annual-esa-study-reveals-video-games-universal-appeal-across-generations/>
- 2 **Entertainment Software Association (ESA)**, 2025 Essential Facts About the U.S. Video Game Industry (2025). <https://www.theesa.com/resources/essential-facts-about-the-us-video-game-industry/2025-data/>
- 3 **FBI**, Financially Motivated Sextortion. <https://www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/scams-and-safety/common-frauds-and-scams/sex-tortion/financially-motivated-sex-tortion>