



MANUAL OF GOOD PRACTICES FOR HELPING FAMILIES IN THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

PRESENTATION

Our parents took us to school when we were children and showed us the way, how to cross at zebra crossings or traffic lights, not to talk to strangers. They showed us the world and prepared us to be independent and self-sufficient. It was a known and limited world.

Today there is an unknown territory: the digital territory that has caught many parents off guard. It's a terrain that is too vast and unfathomable, full of possibilities, many of which are potentially dangerous and some of which are decidedly hostile. How can we teach our children to navigate in this world? How can we protect them in a terrain that is also unknown to us? How, in short, can we show them the way if we have no maps or compasses?

The way to enter the virtual world, for the most part, is through games. Video games. They are a highly attractive product that is becoming more and more widespread and increasingly an element that forms part of the collective imagination of children and adolescents.

However, not everything is fun in the world of video games. It's part of our responsibility as parents to ensure that this playful activity does not end up becoming a deforming element in the construction of their personality and does not nurture harmful behaviour in our children's habits.

Aware that the exercise of this responsibility with regard to the world of video games involves difficulties, both due to the lack of knowledge and the naturalness with which one enters an in principle "innocent" world of games, we have decided to draw up this manual, in an attempt to contribute to the conscious, healthy and responsible development of this parental duty.

Without demonising an element already normalised in our daily realities, we seek to ensure that this normality does not end up constituting an element of conflict in the growth of our children for coexistence and their conversion into valid members of society, but on the contrary, to try to get the most out of it and to make it a valid tool for learning.



We Will focus on video games, a very broad term, full of content, and it's important to be aware of the different types, uses, purposes, limits, resources... All the aspects, in short, that form part of our role as responsible parents in the protection of our children.

We have articulated this guide as follows:

1. SHARING
2. THE RESPONSABILITY
3. GETTING TO KNOW VIDEO GAMES
4. LIMITS AND KNOWLEDGE
5. RESPONSIBLE COVENANTS
6. SHORT DECLAOGUE
7. ADRESSES OF INTEREST

SHARING

We have always understood play as an element of training and acquisition of skills and even knowledge. Play is one of the main vehicles for human learning. And indeed it is; but, like everything else, depending on how well it is used, it can lead to undesirable results.

The first function of play is to share learning. Skills are acquired, strategies for communication, collaboration, overcoming complex situations, difficulties, etc, are developed.

The validity of this learning is only revealed when it is share with others (family, friends, environment). If the play activity is not developed in a healthy way, it can become the trigger for a processing of what has been learned that produces unwanted, harmful and inconvenient results, both for the child and for this or her environment and, therefore, for society.

There is, in fact, a problem surrounding the use of video games, there is a certain "social alarm" (proof of this is the proliferation of attempts to bring some order to this reality).

Sharing is a way to socialise, to develop our sociability, to train ourselves to be with others by being part of a human group.



This is the most important function of playful activity. Any effect that goes in the opposite direction (to which we should be particularly attentive) will be pernicious and unhealthy.

If the use of video games leads to isolation of the individual, something is not working properly, something is wrong.

For a child to disregard the world around him, to disconnect from his environment and to enter a reality in which only he/she and the game exist, full of virtual (not real) characters, is, in fact, something very common and highly dangerous. Something that alters his normal behaviour, distorts, and limits his/her communication with the real people he/she lives with. Something which, in the end, generates a conflictive relationship between the child and his or her environment. A reality in which escape to the virtual world is increasingly presented as something gratifying that the child's mind pursues and rewards. At this point, the doors have been opened to addiction, with all that this entails in terms of poor health and deterioration of the child, his or her environment and the relationship between the two. Problematic behaviours begin to proliferate desires are no longer translated into requests, but into demands; treatment loses sight of parental authority and becomes authoritarian and dictatorial on the part of the child; emotional blackmail techniques are developed, etc.

It is not that these realities are the generality, but it is true that their frequency is increasing and seeing them coming is not easy, and even less so for a child who lacks the tools to defend himself/herself against dangers that he/she does not see, and which are presented to him/her as something attractive and desirable.

If the play activity has been shared, and is designed to teach sharing, to reinforce this aspect, in all likelihood the adverse effects we have just mentioned will not occur.

We will now look at some aspects that can help us to prevent the use of video games from leading to these undesirable situations.

LA RESPONSABILIDAD

The scenario presented in the previous point is not inevitable. It's the responsibility of all of us, as members of a society that we want to be healthy, to assume that we have a role in preventing the undesirable. For many reasons, but primarily because we have a commitment to the society we live in and the society we want to be in the future.



As citizens, we have endowed ourselves with institutions from which we must demand that they fulfil their function of protecting individuals (legislating, educating, looking after our health and that of our children).

As civil society, we have created spaces for participation, action and mobilisation in all areas, including this reality of video games.

And, as parents, insofar as we are the first line of defence of our children, we have a very primordial, fundamental and very direct role in the exercise of this responsibility, because we are the first line of defence of our children;

1. We are the ones who know our children and what they do best.
2. We are the main vehicle for the transmission of values.
3. Our performance is the closest and most direct example for them.

GETTING TO KNOW VIDEO GAMES



Many parents are unaware of the types of games that exist and that their children play. Some parents with underage children have rules for their children's use of video games. Among the measures most commonly used by parents is that of controlling the time spent

in front of the computer, but it's also essential to know and have information about the types of video games available for children.

1. Action games

Of all video game genres, the action genre is undoubtedly one of the most diverse. In this type of video game, the player controls the action and is often confronted with physical and reactive obstacles.

2. Adventure games

They stand out from other similar games because they do not focus so much on combat and confrontation. Instead, your task is to explore and discover the secrets of the overall story and the surrounding environment.

3. Medieval games

Some of the best types of video games are fundamentally based on a theme that encompasses characteristic scenarios.

This is the case with medieval games; they will take you back in time to the era of swords and shields, bows and arrows, and battlefields.

4. MMO games

Massively multiplayer online games have been popular since the emergence of online gaming.

MMO games span a large number of sub-genres and all have one thing in common: they play online with a huge number of people at the same time.

5. Puzzle games

Games in which you have to find ways to move pieces on a board to complete it; the puzzle restarts if you don't succeed.

6. PvP games





In “player versus player” or PvP games, you go head-to-head with another player, and both test your teams of fantastic creatures in battle.

7. Robot games

The task is usually to take control of a robot, so the sci-fi theme almost always dominates.

8. RPG games

In role-playing games, you are the protagonist, and you must explore the world, undertake quests, find items, create, improve, build, fight, and reach the end of a story of stories.

9. Solitaire games

Solitaire games are one of the world’s favourite card and video games.

10. Strategy games

Many types of video games have a lot of sub-genres. In the case of strategy games, there are only two. On the one hand, we have the turn-based strategy games. In this mode, you make your move and then wait for the other players or teams to make their move in order. On the other hand, there are the real-time strategy games. In this case you must adjust your tactics and plans as the action unfolds, usually during a battle.

11. Survival games

Usually, you are thrown into a highly hostile environment with little more than the basics and your bare hands to survive. You must then find a place to prepare, produce resources, build tools, construct defences and explore the world around you.

In terms of content, we could make a very long list.

There are basically two types of games:

- Individuals
- In groups

The latter require closer attention, as many of them contain chat rooms where interaction with other players takes place. This constitutes a risk of infiltration on occasion by people who seek contact with children for highly undesirable purposes.

We will make a special mention to those games that include purchases in their development, acquiring through micro-purchases (very small amounts), longer duration, more “lives”, weapons, tools... The risk of this system is that it’s enough to have a bank card.

Regarding the recommended age for playing video games, the PEGI code (Pan-European-Game-Information), which includes age recommendations and content keys.

In terms of age, it’s divided into 3, 7, 12, 16 and 18 year age groups, and, in terms of key content, the following nine criteria are taken into account: violence, foul language, terror, sex, drugs, discrimination, gaming, gambling and online gambling.



LIMITS Y UNDERSTANDING

Speaking of minors, in addition to the applicable legislation, the task of ensuring the proper and healthy use of video games falls to the parental authority exercised by the parents or guardians of the minor.

It's not only a matter of limiting children's use of video games with inappropriate content for their age, but also of actively and carefully observing their behaviour in their interaction with video games and whether this interaction can alter their normality in any way (disruption of routines, changes in character, abandonment of obligations such as studies or assigned household chores, increased disorder, abandonment of social relationships, etc.).

As regards the use of video games, limits need to be set:



Limit Access to video games with context that is not recommended for their age, by implementing parental controls that require minors to enter security codes that they do not know.

Set limits on the amount of time spent on video game activity and encourage activities

that are more directed towards social interaction with the people around them, without neglecting their academic and home obligations, and prevent video game activity from limiting the necessary rest.

The establishment of these limitations should ideally involve the participation of the child, after a prior understanding that they are only aimed at protecting him/her and the healthy use of this activity. This will be dealt with in greater depth in the next point.



RESPONSIBLE COVENANTS

Once the limits have been established and understood by the child, it is a matter of formalising a covenant stating that he or she accepts them and undertakes to comply with the terms established. The recommended content of such an agreement should be:

- ✓ Time limit for weekly and daily use, distinguishing weekends, holiday periods and school/working days. Time limit for each session.
- ✓ Make it clear that the time dedicated to leisure will always be after having attended to obligations and other commitments.
- ✓ Commitment to turn off the video game console, exit apps and game pages at the end of each session.
- ✓ The place where the gaming sessions are held, preferably in a common place in the home and not private to the child.
- ✓ Both the media and access to video games must have parental control for access.
- ✓ Commitment to study and assess the content and suitability of each game to be acquired, whether by purchase or download. Likewise, commitment to abide by the PEGI code.
- ✓ Commitment not to use any information on the Internet that could identify the minor, nor to provide any information such as address, telephone number, school, etc.
- ✓ If passwords are used, to consult with parents and inform them of them.
- ✓ Inform parents of any contact established with the child in online gaming chats.
- ✓ Commitment to other activities of a different nature (sport, reading, etc.).



LIST OF TIPS FOR PARENTS



1. Be informed about the content of the games and the age rating, through iconography and PEGI report.
2. Gather information about the game before purchasing or downloading it, and before allowing minors to use it.
3. Focus the child on video games that stimulate creativity or encourage reading, story-building, etc.
4. Keep an eye out for unexpected costs from in-app purchases.
5. Avoid access to games with an online social component if careful supervision cannot be maintained.
6. Control network connection and data access authorisations to our devices.
7. Try to use large screens located in places of common use in the home.
8. Keep an eye on the child's reactions while playing the game activity.
9. Never allow play activity to be prolonged at the expense of rest.
10. Pay attention to elements such as posture, lighting, etc.





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