

Pokémon Go - a parent's guide

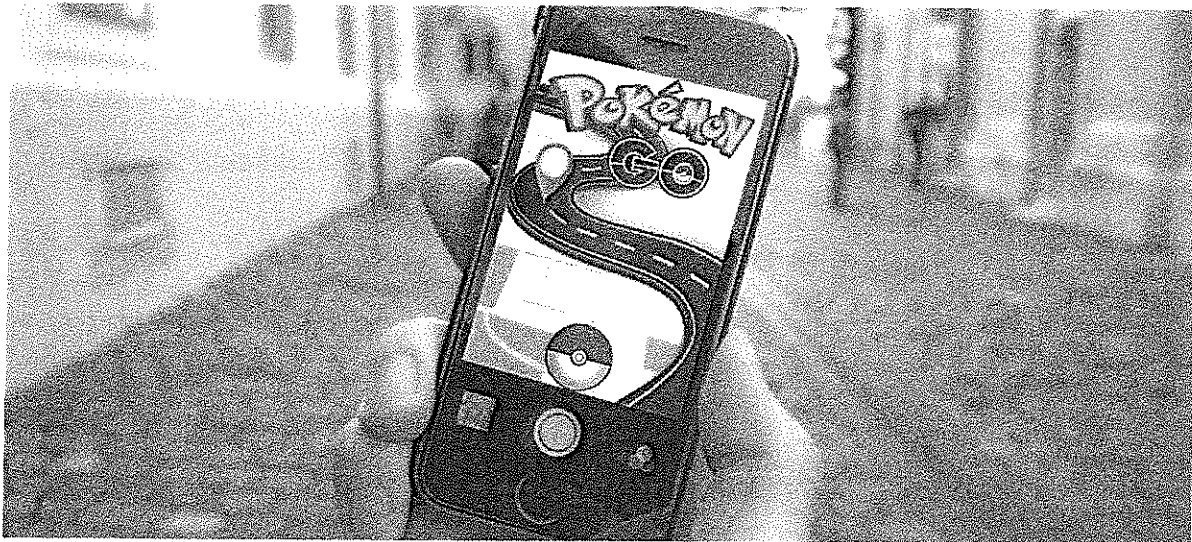


Image: DigiPD

What is Pokémon Go?

A smartphone game featuring the infamous 90s characters that allows users to interact with the real world using the phone's camera and GPS capabilities.

Using augmented technology, the game allows players to catch Pokémon in real life. Players will see a map of their current location, super-imposed with their character and all of the game elements.

Different types of 'wild' Pokémon will appear and users travel around the real world catching them.

On Level 5 players can unleash their Pokémon on 'gyms' normally located at real-life local places of interest – to do battle with other people's Pokémon.

Pokémon

Pokémon (pocket monsters) are creatures of all shapes and sizes with varying powers and abilities. Players, or 'Pokémon trainers', capture Pokémon using a sphere called a Poké Ball and train them to battle other Pokémon for sport.

Poké Ball

A sphere used by trainers to capture wild Pokémon. The balls are thrown and when they touch a Pokémon they draw it inside and shut automatically.

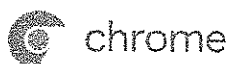
- Players don't have to walk around while staring at the map on the screen. If a wild Pokémon appears near them the phone will vibrate to let them know.
- Players don't have to visit a Pokémon's exact location to capture it – you can stop at a nearby area where it's safe (ie: not in the middle of a busy junction).
- Your child should choose a username that won't identify either them or where they live.
- Use caution when visiting Pokéstops and gyms. Your child might make some new friends at these places but they need to be aware of the dangers.
- Be wary of 'lures' that players can buy with PokéCoins. They drop them at Pokéstops and Pokémon are lured to that stop for around 30 minutes. This gives people the power to lure a group of kids to a certain spot for 30 minutes.
- Remind your child to save some phone battery for the journey home. The game uses a lot of power and will run out the battery faster than normal.

This is an edited version of an original article that appeared on [Parent Zone](http://parentzone.org.uk/article/pokemon-go-parents-guide) (<http://parentzone.org.uk/article/pokemon-go-parents-guide>).

Experts: [Parent Zone \(/node/42\)](#)

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Pokémon gyms and Pokéstops

Gyms are where players teach their captured Pokémon to fight. At Pokéstops, trainers can pick up extra Poké Balls, snacks and medicine for their captives. The 'real life' location of gyms and Pokéstops is likely to be a public place of interest.

Pokédex

An electronic device where information about the captured Pokémon are stored. Players try to fill their Pokédex with the different types of Pokémon.

Who do players interact with?

There's no built-in chat function but the game encourages you to interact with other players in 'the wild'. Gamers are highly likely to encounter other real life people while playing outdoors.

Is there an age limit for players?

You have to be 13 or over to download the app, according to the app's terms and conditions.

How much does it cost?

You can download the game on Android and iOS for free and play it without making a single in-game purchase. But as players progress they might require PokéCoins to buy items such as Poké Balls. You can earn coins during the game, but it's quicker to buy them. In-app purchases: 79p for 100 PokéCoins to £79.99 for 14,500 coins.

Concerns for parents

- The general lack of awareness players have for the world around them can lead to accidents (<http://www.whcc.com/news/people-hurt-playing-pokemon-go/4194089/>).
- You need a Google account to play the game and there have been reports that the app is granting itself permission to access people's Gmail and Google Drive accounts.
- A malicious version of the Android app gives attackers full control over the victim's phone (<https://www.proofpoint.com/us/threat-insight/post/droidjack-uses-side-load-backdoored-pokemon-go-android-app>).
- Muggers have reportedly used the app to lure victims.
- Once your child starts playing, they probably won't want to stop. Parents who have concerns over screen time beware!

Safety tips

- Try it yourself, or walk around with your child while they play it and ask them questions.
- If your child wants to venture out without you, make sure they go with friends. Players need to have location services set on their smartphones, so parents may wish to consider this when deciding whether or not to allow younger children out unaccompanied. Information on why location settings can be problematic can be found here (<http://parentinfo.org/article/should-you-share-pictures-of-your-children-online>).

