



Call of Duty: Warzone is the latest and possibly biggest battle royale game on the market, following in the footsteps of titles like Fortnite, Apex Legends and PUBG. In Warzone, up to 150 players will drop onto a huge map in teams of three battling it out in an ever-shrinking radius, in a bid to become the last team standing. Because this is a Call of Duty game, you already know what you're getting; fast-paced action that includes depictions of violence and coarse language - and that's before you even consider players from across the globe adding their own voices to the mix.



What parents need to know about CALL OF DUTY: WARZONE



ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Battle royale games can be addictive. The rush of evading a foe in a frantic firefight or reaching the final moments of a game to come out on top can be a massively fun experience, but also one that some will struggle to walk away from. While many studies have been done into video game addiction, it's never a bad idea for children to stop before they get carried away. Behaviours to watch for include irritability, increased levels of frustration or anger, and constant thoughts about playing when engaging in other activities.



CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

If kids aren't playing with friends in a 3-man team, it's possible that they can join a group with total strangers who may be able to talk to them via the in-game voice chat. For the most part these strangers will be interested in playing the game and having fun, but as with any online game, there's always the chance they could be looking for young children to talk to and potentially groom.



IN-GAME SPENDING

Warzone can be downloaded for free on PS4, Xbox One and PC. However, this doesn't mean the game is totally free. Players will be able to (and are regularly encouraged to) spend real money in-game for certain upgrades, tools and skins to make them look cool on the battlefield. While these will be marketed as enhancing gameplay, the reality is that they can be purchased with real money and could contribute towards a hefty bill.



ADULT THEMES AND VIOLENCE

It will come as little surprise to anybody familiar with Call Of Duty to hear that the game carries a Mature rating from the ESRB (Entertainment Software Rating Board) and as such is packed with things like shooting, physical violence, blood and bad language. Naturally, this may be distressing to younger children. The game is specifically made to closely depict war-like scenarios and should be treated with care, especially when it comes to allowing children to play.



Safety tips for parents



ENCOURAGE BREAKS

The great thing about battle royale games, is that there is always a natural stopping point when you're either eliminated from the game, or win. Because play sessions can range anywhere from mere moments to twenty minutes, allowing for one more game gives a clear and decisive cut-off point, while also allowing some degree of leeway in time. Getting a break from the screen can also help kids disengage from the tunnel vision they might get while chasing the win. If you're worried your child might be becoming addicted to the game, limiting screen time is a necessary step.



PLAY WITH FRIENDS

The beauty of battle royale games is that they encourage close, cooperative team play. This means that if kids plan ahead and group up together, they will be much safer and happier interacting among themselves and not with strangers. It always helps to coordinate with other parents so clear times of the day to play are outlined, and so that friendship groups can be online at the same time.



LIMIT ABILITY TO SPEND

It can be extremely easy to make a purchase online for things like COD points. These online shops are designed to be easily accessible to the point where some children might not realise they're buying with real money. Be sure that credit cards are not connected to any online accounts to minimise the risk of accidental spending or large amounts building up.



IN-GAME SAFETY OPTIONS

While Warzone doesn't have any parental settings as such, you can still take steps to prevent strangers from talking to children in the game. In-game chat can be turned off in the settings menu, which enhances safety while playing, but anybody persistent enough could add another person's account and communicate through text chat. Any incoming friend requests and party invites can also be hidden. People will be able to send them, but the notifications for them will not appear.



DISABLE GORE EFFECTS

There are options to disable profanity, dismemberment and gore effects in the game's options menu under the 'general' tab. Be aware that these are not turned off as standard, so children playing unaccompanied may well be exposed to these things straight away. While this does go some way to easing the life-like scenes in the game, parents should still think hard about whether they want their children exposed to them.



Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for over 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGbible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.

