At 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 game of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

What Parents and Carers Need to Know About...

ROCKET LEAGUE

Age Restriction
PEGI 3

Rocket League is a free-to-play multiplayer vehicle football game. It was developed by Psyonix, now part of the Epic Games family (which also includes Fortnite and Gears of War). Rocket League is essentially a football game where, instead of running, the players drive rocket-powered cars. The game was a surprise hit that took the world by storm when it first released in 2015. Rocket League is available for the Xbox One, Xbox Series X, PlayStation 4 & PlayStation 5, Nintendo Switch, Windows PC, MacOS and Linux.

Fiercely Competitive Community

Competitive gaming isn't necessarily bad. However, playing purely to win (as opposed to simply having fun) can result in aggressive behaviour among some players if they're not successful in the game. Certain people can become hostile or "toxic" towards other players. Continually seeing this behaviour can cause children to think it is acceptable and lead to anger issues while playing.

Unsuitable Online Interactions

18+

A video game's age rating cannot take player-generated elements into account. Rocket League is rated PEGI 3, but its online features mean that appropriateness can't be guaranteed. Audio and text chat, player usernames, player-to-player trades and other user-created content may not be suitable for young players. The game *is* moderated, but catching everything can be difficult.

Grinding and Increased Screen-time

Features like the Rocket Pass and the ranking system can make Rocket League a grinding-focused game. This means players need to spend a lot of time on the game to progress through levels and collect rewards. Grinding encourages regular long gaming sessions for players seeking to climb the rankings (meaning increased screen time) but it doesn't always result in making much headway.

Scams and Bad Trades

Player-to-player trading is common in Rocket League. The game has lots of cosmetic items to collect, and some can be very valuable. Players can trade items among themselves, but younger gamers are not always the best judges of what constitutes a fair deal. This can lead to them being swindled in trades – or to children signing up to illegitimate trading websites, where they then get scammed.

In-App Purchasing

Free-to-play games (so called because they don't cost anything to download) like this depend on players making in-game purchases to turn a profit. Rocket League's in-game currency, called credits, are used to buy items in the game. Credits can be earned by playing the game or can be bought with real money – which could prove expensive if a child lets their love of the game and desire to progress get the better of them.

Advice For Parents & Carers

Use Parental Controls

Psyonix *has* added some safety measures into the game. The text and voice chat can be disabled, for example, limiting contact from strangers. However, it's not currently possible to block contact from other players about trades. It's a good idea, then, to talk with your child about the possibility of scams and bad trades either before they download the game or early in their Rocket League 'career'.

Stay Aware of Spending

Free-to-play games can become money sinks without children realising. For peace of mind, make sure you don't have any payment methods attached to your child's gaming account to avoid accidental purchases. Rocket League credits can be earned through gameplay or bought with real money: encourage your child to use their earned credits first before they ask you to top them up.

Monitor Gaming Time

It's impractical to sit and watch your child every time they play Rocket League. Keeping an eye on their gaming hours is crucial, however: it's easy to lose track of time while playing (even for adults), so "one more game" can soon turn into ten more games. Helping your child to balance their gaming time with their homework, chores and other activities is a life lesson in time management.

Encourage Regular Breaks

Sitting in the same position all day while gaming isn't healthy, but it is an easy habit to fall into. A short break every hour or half hour is important. It allows players to rest their eyes, brains, hands and arms. Learning the value of an occasional break from *any* activity is good practice for the future. Encouraging your child to rehydrate regularly can also help to lower any rising competitive tempers!

Meet Our Expert

Clare Godwin (a.k.a. Lunawolf) has worked as an editor and journalist in the gaming industry since 2015, providing websites with event coverage, reviews and gaming guides. She is the owner of Lunawolf Gaming and is currently working on various gaming-related projects including game development and writing non-fiction books. With experience in esports and content creation, Clare has seen the benefits *and* drawbacks of all aspects of gaming.

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SOURCES:: https://support.rocketleague.com/hc/en-us/articles/360015613074, https://support.rocketleague.com/hc/en-us/articles/360053542814-Parental-Controls, https://support.rocketleague.com/hc/en-us/articles/360039907693-How-can-I-protect-my-child-from-online-interactions-, https://theglobalgaming.com/rocket-league/credit-system-free/

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