What parents & carers need to know about ...

AMONG US

PEGI 7

Among Us is one of the most popular games to release in 2020. A space-themed 'social deduction game' where 4-10 players take on the guise of Crewmates, who must complete various tasks around their spaceship, while randomly selected Imposters must try their hardest to sabotage the others' efforts. The Imposters have to remain undetected through rounds of voting to win. Among Us is a game about deception which is heavily focused on players communicating with each other to succeed. Players need to look for the truth and lie to each other. Among Us is available for all platforms and it's free to play on mobile.

INAPPROPRIATE CHAT

While Among Us can be enjoyed locally via wi-fi, it is commonly played online. Between rounds, players come together to discuss who they think the Imposter is with a text chat, and it's here where children will come into contact with others. There is a profanity filter on the game as standard, but it can very easily be disabled and (like any unmoderated chat groups) children can be exposed to inappropriate, sexual or explicit language. Among Us has mods that allow for proximity voice chat (players can hear other people within a certain range of themselves). Voice chat is also possible using other software such as Discord.

IN-GAME PURCHASES

Among Us is currently available on both PC (via the gaming service Steam) and mobile devices. On the PC, the game costs a flat amount of £3.99 and has some in-game purchases, whereas the mobile version is free to play but contains adverts and in-game purchases. You can pay to remove the ads or purchase in-game cosmetic items. While these amounts are relatively low, there's still the possibility that young ones could accidentally spend lots of money on the game without realising it, as the process is complete in a couple of taps if a card is connected to your store account.

RISK OF HACKING

Among us has been the target of hacking activity. Indeed, only recently the game's developer, InnerSloth, tweeted advice that users play private games or with people they trust, in response to hacking issues. There is a risk of scam links being shared which take the player away from the platform and encourage them to enter private details, which could lead to criminals having access to credit card data and other personal credentials.

USE OF EXTERNAL APPS

There are many Among Us dedicated groups on Discord for voice chat with each other while they're playing. The problem with this is that it is unregulated by the game. Usually on Discord, players will only talk to other people they know in private chats, but a stranger could add a child on an external app: pretending to be interested in playing Among Us with them, when in reality they could be attempting to bully, groom or extort. Hackers will also create fake software that looks similar or identical to legitimate software to steal information. Like above, users enter their username and password which hackers then steal. For internet savvy users, this is not a problem.

MILD VIOLENCE

The art style of Among Us is cartoony but does contain some very mild violence. Imposters must kill off Crewmates one by one and can do this in a number of different ways. Some younger children might find this uncomfortable and could get scared or become upset when an Imposter is chasing them, or if they are the Imposter and are forced to kill. An age rating of PEGI 7 should help guide you in deciding if the game is appropriate or not.

National Online Safety®
#WakeUpWednesday

Safety tips

PLAY WITH YOUR CHILDREN

Playing with your kids is one of the best ways to understand the game, and what makes it so popular. Among Us is free on mobile and is incredibly easy to pick up and play. It's also a great way to bond with your young ones - unless of course you're the Imposter or vote them out of the spaceship! You can do this by picking 'Local' on the main menu then 'Create Game'.

USE PRIVATE LOBBIES — ENTER LOBBY

Among Us uses private lobbies to let players keep track of who they're gaming with. Using a uniquely generated code that can be given to friends prior to a game starting, it gives parents peace of mind knowing who their kids are playing with. To get a game code, simply select 'Host', choose the game settings, press 'Confirm', then send the six-digit code at the bottom of the screen to friends to invite them.

DEACTIVATE CREDIT CARDS

Having your credit card automatically paired with any online accounts that can be accessed by children is asking for trouble. A solution could be setting them up with their own account with no credit card attached. They can still ask you when they want to make a purchase, but it's totally up to you as and when that transaction happens.

USE AN ALIAS

By default, your name on Among Us will be set to whatever name your device recognises you as. If this is your child's real name, you'll want to ensure they change it before hopping into a game. This is really easily done by clicking 'Online' on the main menu, then simply typing in a new name at the top of the screen.
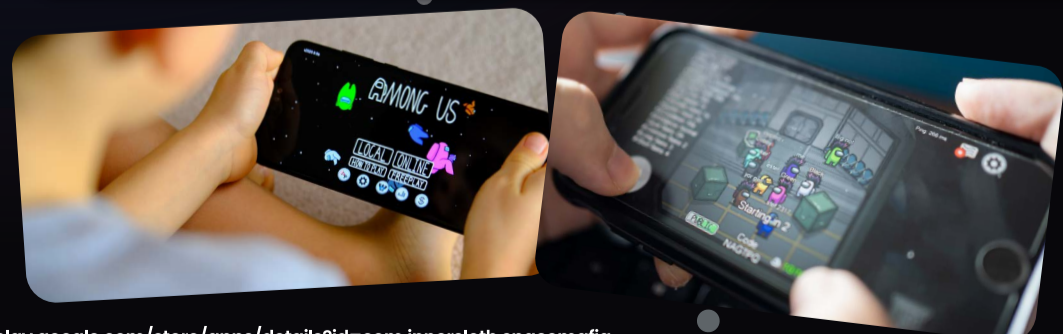
TALK ABOUT THE RISKS

It's a good idea to talk to your child about the risks associated with online gaming, especially when there are chat options and an ability to communicate with others. Try to maintain an open dialogue with your child: talk about their experiences of the game and who they're playing with. This will help you to stay on top of how they're feeling and ensure they know they can come to you if ever they feel upset or uncomfortable about anything they've experienced.

Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for five 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.