



## Get the answers to the questions you're asking about Minecraft

Minecraft is a construction game using virtual blocks. Players find raw materials like trees, stone, sand and coal and transform them into more refined materials, like sticks, a workbench, glass and tools. Players must quickly work out how to build torches and a shelter to protect against a mob of zombies that come out at night. As their understanding increases they can create more elaborate structures.

A modified version of Minecraft is used by some teachers to teach subjects such as physics, geography, history and biology. Players can install Mods (modifications) to enable a variety of different functions in Minecraft such as the creation of new weapons, new construction tools, transport, and decorative themes. With many players developing Mods the options are endless. There are computer, pocket, Xbox and Play Station editions available.

### *Is my child old enough to play Minecraft?*

Minecraft is an open-ended game where children explore and create. There is some violence, with zombies and monsters attempting to kill players at night. Players need to fight them with weapons or hide from them. There is minimal gore, but young players may be scared as the creatures appear out of nowhere.

### *What are the risks?*

Parents should be aware that if children play online they may encounter other players who may attempt to communicate them and make have created suggestive or offensive structures. Talk to your children about this. Ensure your children don't use their real names or provide any personal information like their address, their school, or your work. Sit with them for a couple of sessions to see what they are doing, and understand how it works. Anecdotally, parents say the main risk with Minecraft is their children wanting to spend too much time playing it.

### *Should I be setting time limits?*

Setting time limits from the beginning can help. For young children a visual timer is very useful. Think about requiring your child to complete chores and homework before they can play Minecraft—and stick to it.

Keep in mind that the American Academy of Paediatrics recommends children be limited to 2 hours of total media time a day, with no media in children's bedrooms. They discourage any media exposure for children under 2 years of age.

### *Why is my child obsessed with Minecraft?*

Minecraft is fun and is intrinsically rewarding for children. Children feel a sense of accomplishment as they construct caves, weapons and buildings to protect themselves. Minecraft constantly hits the reward centre in children's (and adults) brains. They feel good about what they are constructing, and it is easy to beat the baddies.

Minecraft doesn't come with an instruction guide. Instead players share hints with each other and many have posted instructional videos on YouTube. Your child may switch between playing Minecraft and watching the instructional videos.

### *How do I reduce the time my child spends on Minecraft?*

If you think your child is spending too much time on Minecraft and/or they are becoming aggressive when you ask them to turn it off, it may be time to restrict their use or even ban it. If Minecraft use stops children going to sleep on time, doing their chores or getting ready for school, consider turning off the WiFi in your house at certain times.

Talk to your child about your concerns and introduce rules about how often and when they can use Minecraft. If your child recognises they are using Minecraft too much, they may be able to help you come up with the rules. If they deny there is a problem it will be harder to manage, but it can be done if you enforce the rules consistently.

**Kids Helpline provides free online and phone counselling for children and young people. Visit [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au) or call 1800 55 1800.**

