



7 EASY-TO-USE TIPS TO
MANAGE YOUR CHILD ON

Minecraft



*If you are the parent of a child aged 5-17, you have undoubtedly heard of **Minecraft**. The phrase 'heard of,' in most cases being a euphemism for 'struggled with.' If left unmonitored, your child would pretty much play this video game non-stop and would use seemingly nonsensical phrases that you may have trouble decrypting.*

Tick the box if you have heard the following phrase. You may tick more than one.

- “A creeper just blew up my house.”
- “The zombie pigmen are attacking.”
- “Ooohhh, I found diamonds.”
- “I went to the Nether and saw lava and Netherbrick.”
- “Look at my spawn eggs: pigs, witches, sheep, villagers, zombies. So cool.”
- “Yes, (air fist pump) I just spawned a lot of mobs.”

This lingo becomes even more puzzling if your child is playing with a friend or is in multiplayer mode, in which case, most parents just reach for a glass of wine and like Elsa from the immortal Disney movie, “Let it go.”

But perhaps you are made of sterner stuff and you have peeked at the game and you still can't understand what all the fuss is about. Let's face it, the game looks like a fuzzy, pixelated **Atari game**, where instead of shooting asteroids or caterpillars, you just sort of push blurry **lego** blocks around. And that Steve guy, the main Minecraft character, reminds you of the **Blockheads from Gumby and Pokey** episodes from the 70's.

Well, nostalgia aside for the good ol' games (that your mom never yelled at YOU about), let's gear up and understand Minecraft once and for all. And if your eyes start glazing over, then skip to the end where I provide serious tips on how to manage your child's Minecraft obsession.

What is Minecraft?

Minecraft is an open-ended building game, a sort of electronic version of Legos on steroids. The game is never-ending and the combinations of play are endless.

An official description for the game states:

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Minecraft is a game about breaking and placing blocks. At first, people built structures to protect against nocturnal monsters, but as the game grew players worked together to create wonderful, imaginative things. It can also be about adventuring with friends or watching the sunrise over a blocky ocean. It's pretty. Brave players battle terrible things in The Nether, which is more scary than pretty. You can also visit a land of mushrooms if it sounds more like your cup of tea.

“

And I think that is a perfect summation of the game: it has a little bit of something for everyone.

The game was developed by Swedish video game programmer and designer, **Markus Persson** a.k.a. Notch in 2011, who sold all of the assets to Microsoft in 2014 saying, “**If I ever accidentally make something again that gains traction, I will probably abandon it immediately.**” Oh yeah, he's a billionaire.

How do you play it?

You can play the game on almost any device: gaming console linked to computer or TV, tablets, smartphones, or handheld gaming consoles.

You can play in **creative mode** (you create things and cartoon-like monsters can't attack you), **survival mode** (you must survive against monsters and hunger) or **adventure mode** (you can not break blocks, but you can kill or be killed by monsters).

Why does your child want to play it for hours on end?

Being in a 3D Lego like building environment can be very attractive for young people. My own children love it because they are able to create and destroy and rebuild at will.

They are able to create an environment, create a character, choose tools, construct buildings, worlds and hey, the sky is the limit.

How old should my child be before I let her play Minecraft?

Minecraft was NOT created for children. GASP. Who knew? And yet millions of children around the world are hooked on the game.

I would advise waiting until your child is at least 7 or 8 before introducing them to Minecraft. I have seen children as young as 5 playing, however Common Sense Media [rates the game for children 8 and older](#). One challenge you may face is when an older sibling plays Minecraft and you have to refuse your younger child.

What are the benefits – if any – of letting my child play Minecraft?

Minecraft can be a fantastic educational tool and [Marianne Malmstrom](#), an award winning teacher using Minecraft in the classroom, is proof of that. Other teachers have chimed in and written brilliant pieces about [Minecraft in the Classroom](#). There is even an official Mojang supported website dedicated to [Minecraft Education](#).

But wait, your child isn't playing in class, he's playing in his room. A few benefits of Minecraft at home: Minecraft encourages creativity, teaches kids to set and complete goals, makes math fun, encourages teamwork when in multiplayer mode. Check out these articles for more [benefits; 10 thing parents need to know](#), or the in-depth [Parent's Guide to Minecraft](#).

What are the risks of playing Minecraft?

Obsession with playing Minecraft is a huge problem with this never-ending game and one of the most important thing parents can do is to set limits. Read this article to [understand the difference between Minecraft obsession and addiction](#).

Obsession / Addiction / Problematic Use

There is no graphic content in Minecraft, however there are cartoon monsters, which may be scary to younger children. More frightening monsters may enter from multiplayer mode if your child is playing with strangers. Limit this mode and/or allow your child to play in multiplayer mode only with friends that s/he knows.

Check out this MineMum article on [10 problems that parents may have with Minecraft](#), which takes a look at the not-so-good things about Minecraft and offers suggestions to make it better.

How can I keep my child safe on Minecraft?

Given the huge number of players, there are servers in Minecraft that are reserved for children to play on safely. Two examples include <http://intercraften.org> and <http://www.sandlotminecraft.com>.

Even with a dedicated server, your child will somehow find her way to YouTube where there are tons of Minecraft videos demonstrating how to build better and faster or other never-before-seen playing skills. The videos, usually show someone else playing Minecraft and believe it or not, there are young 20 something's out there who are millionaires with Minecraft channels. Oh I feel the disbelief. Check out Youtube stars [Joseph Garrett](#) a.k.a. [Stampylongnose](#) or [Daniel Middleton](#) a.k.a [DanTDM](#) and then you will understand why your daughter or son is no longer studying for a career as an architect but rather planning on becoming a YouTube sensation.

There are other channels out there and some have presenters who swear or are a little violent, but use this [guide to find kid-friendly Minecraft channels](#) – and remember to set limits on how long your child can watch the episodes.

With older kids, limit text and chatting within Minecraft and as always keep that multiplayer mode open only to known friends.

What are some of the warning signs that your child is playing too much Minecraft?

Like with many other online addictions, there are little signals that your child's online activities have **taken an unhealthy turn**. Some warning signs may include:

- Preoccupation with Minecraft; only thinking about the next online session.
- Feelings of restlessness, moodiness or irritability when unable to play Minecraft.
- Lies to conceal the amount of time they play Minecraft.
- Feelings of euphoria when they play Minecraft.
- Physical symptoms may include: headaches, weight loss, or sleep problems.



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1. Understanding the benefits of the game while setting limits on actual playtime is the best way to go. You have read this guide and now you firmly believe that there are benefits to playing Minecraft – who would've known?

2. Check around with friends and family to see how others manage Minecraft. You may grab some new ideas or share those that you have learned. You might want to read the comments section of this [Common Sense Media article to hear from young people themselves on how to manage Minecraft](#). Hearing it from the horse's mouth is pretty amazing AND you can also tell your own children that you received those tips from another kid! A winning argument if I ever heard one.

3. If your children are mature enough to self-regulate and can follow your rules, then grab a chart and note when and how long they can play Minecraft. For example, after they finish their homework and household chores, they can be rewarded with 30 minutes of play. And when they shut down on the 30 minute mark, remember to reward/compliment them for that good behaviour as well.

4. If your children are too young to self-regulate their screen time, you may have to step in with parental controls tools that will allow you to set the limits. I have found with my own children, that if I allow them to finish a task or play until it's daytime (in the game), then they are less likely to throw a fit if I just willy-nilly try to shut them down.

5. Mix and match screen limit ideas with schedule ideas until you find **something that works for your family**. For example, limiting Minecraft to just weekends or allowing a blowout Minecraft Monday to get your kid through the week. Don't be surprised that you have to change your management methods again in a few weeks, but stay firm – even when you are sick of hearing about mods and zombie pigs and the Nether.

6. Create a Family Media Agreement to help you establish limits. This is not a real legal eagle contract, but just a gentle way of saying I promise to respect your desire to use technology and you promise to respect my rules while you use technology. Don't know where to start? This blogpost from **Be Web Smart** gives you a choice of sample agreements to choose from.

7. Get familiar with the website Minemum, “Minecraft Help for Desperate Parents.” Although the blog is no longer updated, the site is a gold mine of resources on managing Minecraft.

Well there you have it, a fact-filled sheet on understanding Minecraft along with tips to manage Minecraft. I really hope that this resource has proven valuable for you and your family and if you have any tips and suggestions that work for you, please do let me know so that I can share them with other families.

Parenting in the digital age can be challenging, but we are all in this together with identical goals: raising responsible digital citizens.

Now go get on Minecraft and build something with your child! You have so got this.

Portions of this text originally appeared in March 2016 on Inspirelle.com as “[Minecraft: an Epic Cheat Sheet for Parents.](#)”

Resources

[HowToGeek](#)

[Common Sense Media](#)

[Minimum](#)

[Be Web Smart](#)

[Netaddiction.com](#)

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Thanks for reading!

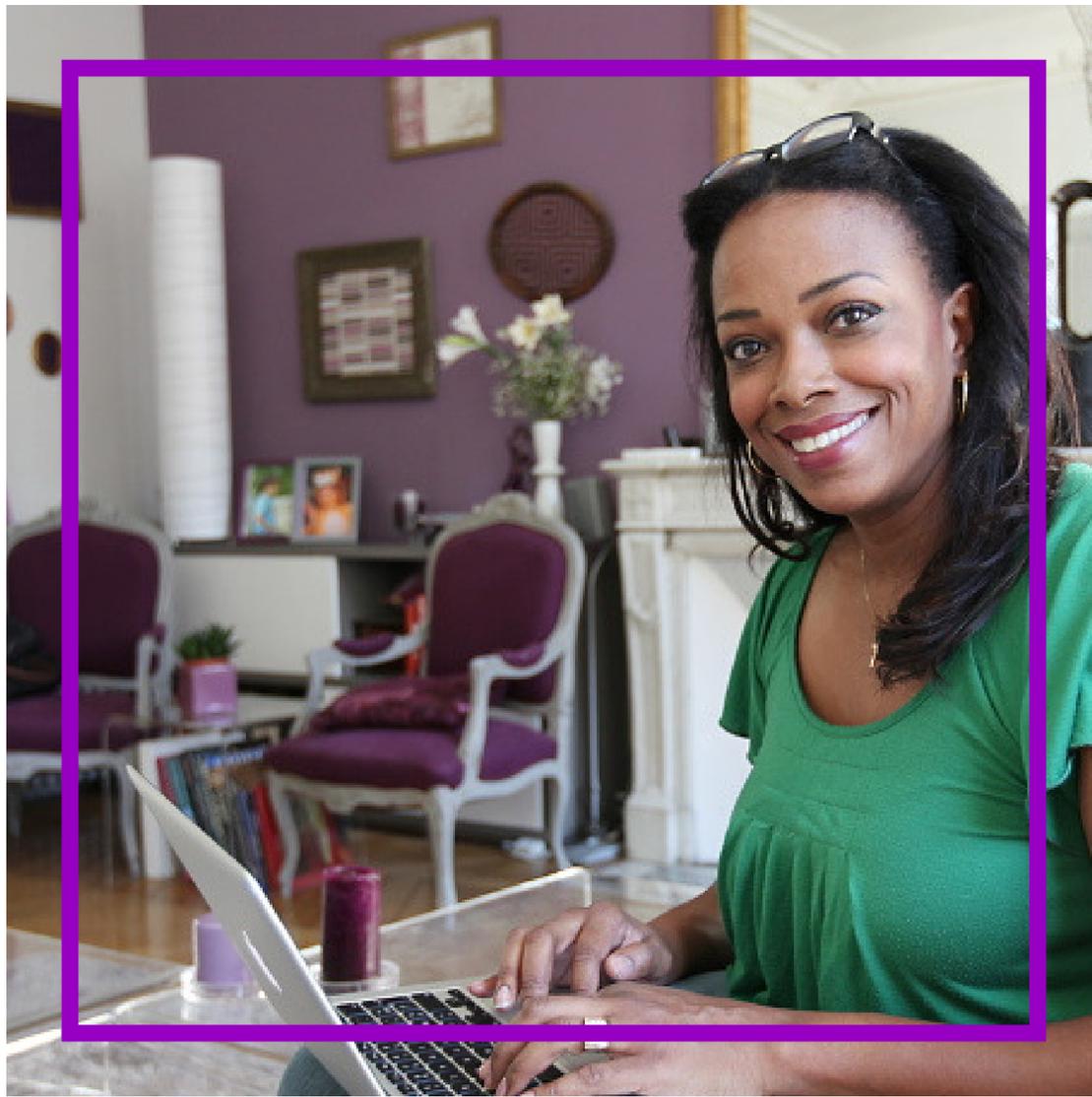


Photo credit: Alexis Duclos

Thank you for reading. I really hope that you found this resource informative, useful and easy-to-apply in your family.

Don't hesitate to reach out on social media or contact me at elizabeth@digitalparentingcoach.com and let me know how it's going.

