At National Online Safety we believe in empowering parents, carers and trusted adults with the information they need to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. This guide focuses on one platform of many which we believe trusted adults should be aware of. Please visit www.nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

VIOLENCE AND GRAPHIC CONTENT

Call of Duty has been given an 18+ rating due to "violence against vulnerable and defenceless characters, motivated killing of innocent characters, graphic violence and use of strong language." Despite the rating, the game is still extremely popular amongst under 18’s who could be exposed to violent themes or foul language that parents and carers may not deem suitable or age appropriate for their children.

CHATTING TO STRANGERS

By far the biggest pull for players to Call of Duty is the expansive multiplayer. As well as offering up a wide variety of competitive game modes, Modern Warfare also includes some co-op gameplay modes. Ideally, games players and co-op to avoid them, children can join a group with their friends and play together online. However, players can play against or with anyone in the world and, with no filter, the language used may often be inappropriate for young children. Due to the competitive nature of gaming and the fact conversations are not moderated, your child could also be at risk of cyberbullying.

LOOT BOXES SWAPPED FOR BATTLE PASSES

Previous versions of Call of Duty have included 'loot boxes', which have been widely discussed in the news and are considered by critics to essentially promote a form of gambling. Modern Warfare however has swapped loot boxes for 'battle passes'. This means a greater level of transparency as players know exactly what they are buying, how they will be unlocked and when they will receive them in the game.

INCREASINGLY RAW CAMPAIGN

The single player campaign in Call of Duty: Modern Warfare focuses around a war in the fictitious Middle Eastern country of Urzikstan. It features special force operations, large open battles, chemical weapons and torture. Infinity Ward (who developed the game) have gone on record saying this is the most realistic and grounded game they’ve ever made, so it stands to reason that the campaign has generated a huge amount of controversy, especially in today’s heated political climate. While younger players might not fully grasp what’s going on on screen, it’s bound to raise some uncomfortable questions if they’re left to play it unsupervised.

BE WARY OF GORE AND VIOLENCE

There’s no getting around the fact that this is an incredibly realistic game, from the themes down to the gameplay, and that includes the amount of gore in the game. While there is an option to disable disembowelment of bodies in the game (settings > general > disembowelment off) it still includes a rather visceral amount of violence that is prevalent throughout.

TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT THE THEMES

Modern Warfare at its heart, is a game about good vs bad and the grey areas in between. Morally complex characters and situations are more prevalent in today’s modern age than they’ve ever been before and they do carry some important political and social commentary. If you’re okay letting children play the game, it’s definitely worth setting down with them to discuss the themes and why it’s important to approach them critically. For example, Captain Price is clearly a good character, but he does questionable things in order to achieve his goals. Does this make him a bad character? If kids are old enough to see these situations, they’re old enough to question why.

What parents need to know about CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE

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