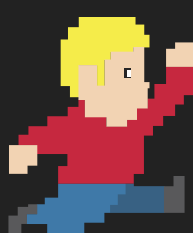# DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CONTROLS
IN GAMES

Ages 10-13 (Setting Foundations)

DEVELOPMENT:
At this age, children are still developing their problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, taking initiative, and developing confidence.

RECOMMENDED CONTROLS:

- Limit playtime to encourage a balanced range of activities.

- Use cabined accounts to restrict access to certain games or features that may be too complex or inappropriate for young players.

- Be mindful of the growing need for initiative as the child matures. Being overly restrictive undermines opportunities to make mistakes and interferes with developing confidence.

EXAMPLES:

- Minecraft's adventure or creative modes can benefit cognitive development. Consider limiting time spent in 'Survival' mode, which may contain more aggressive elements, particularly if your child suffers from anxiety.

- Kids learn from failure in a game (like running out of lives) and continue to work and build the skills they need to reach the next level. Successful games reflect Csikszentmihalyi's (1991) model for optimal engagement, called Flow, a balance of skill and challenge that makes gaming intrinsically rewarding.

Ages 14-15 (Seeking Independence)

DEVELOPMENT:
Teens become more independent and better understand the consequences of their actions.

RECOMMENDED CONTROLS:

- Loosen some restrictions, like chat functions, but maintain periodic check-ins.
- Discuss in-app purchases and instilling a sense of financial responsibility.

EXAMPLES:

- Games like Fortnite can provide an opportunity to discuss teamwork and strategy.
- Kids benefit from discussion about in-game spending and clear rules about when purchases are OK and who's paying.

Ages 16+ (Preparing for Adulthood)

DEVELOPMENT:
Older teens are near adults and have well-developed cognitive functions but are still building self-regulation and emotional management skills.

RECOMMENDED CONTROLS:

- Discuss boundaries rather than setting them when possible, such as the amount of acceptable playtime.
- Talk about the themes and messages to help develop awareness of social stereotypes, manage emotional reactions to inappropriate content, and cope with hostile or aggressive behaviors like trash-talking.

EXAMPLES:

- At this age, games like Call of Duty can be appropriate but should be accompanied by conversations about violence and its real-world implications.
- Role-playing games can also provide opportunities to experiment with identity in a low-risk environment.

FROM" "LEVELING UP" BY DR. PAMELA RUTLEDGE