What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE II

The Call of Duty (CoD) series is a worldwide gaming phenomenon, with millions of copies sold every year. While 2021’s release, Vanguard, wasn’t quite as well received, this latest entry in Modern Warfare II has so far proved a massive commercial success: A sequel to the recent Modern Warfare reboot (and not to be confused with the original Modern Warfare 2; from back in 2009), the game is an online shooter which features unsurprisingly extreme violence, rendered in realistic graphics. Amid the explosions and political nature of the plot, there’s much for parents to be aware of.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

VIRTUAL VIOLENCE

Like most of its predecessors in the franchise, Modern Warfare II carries an 18 age rating from PEGI (the Pan-European Gaming Information system), which assesses content for suitability. This means players will encounter — according to PEGI and Warner’s wording — depictions of “gross violence, apparently motiveless killing, or violence towards defenceless characters.”

OFFENSIVE CHAT & MESSAGING

Most CoD players are likely to spend the majority of their time on Modern Warfare II in online multiplayer mode. This entails competing against — or cooperating with — strangers on the online battlefield. The fast-paced, cut-throat world of CoD means fast communication through the game’s voice chat and direct messages often turn heated and aggressive, which may upset younger players.

IN-GAME PURCHASES

Modern Warfare II follows the ‘battle pass’ model of games like Fortnite. For a fee — usually around £10 — each ‘season’ (every three months or so), players will be invited to complete extra challenges to earn new weapons and equipment. These tiers of battle pass (costing more money) enable them to achieve this more quickly, while items can also be purchased from the in-game store.

Advice for Parents & Carers

RESPECT THE AGE RATING

Based on accurately recreating combat situations, Call of Duty games are unflinching in their portrayal of war. Limbs are shot off and limbs are flung flying, with the previous Modern Warfare II offering the same style of brutal realism, it’s worth reiterating that the 18 age rating is there for a reason.

CLOSE OFF COMMUNICATION

Unless they’re playing with their real-life friends, it may be worth closing communication channels if your child plays Modern Warfare II. There’s less of a team focus than in many other online combat games and therefore no real need to interact with strangers. Call of Duty fans can be intensely competitive, so even a single action by your child could provoke a barrage of abuse from strangers.

POLITICAL SENSITIVITY

Previous CoD games have been accused of attempting to “rewrite history,” failing to correctly attribute alleged war crimes to the US military, for example. The semi-fictional version of history presented in screen can cause players to misunderstand past conflicts and the reasons they took place. This could lead to young people developing a distorted, inaccurate view of world politics.

AN ADDICTIVE EXPERIENCE

Multiplayer mode in Call of Duty titles revolves around levelling up your character to unlock new weapons, abilities and equipment. The progression is designed so it doesn’t take too long to see an improvement, and the feeling of making meaningful progress can keep players hooked for hours. It’s easy for gamers of all ages to lose track of time, but younger ones are especially susceptible.

SET SPENDING LIMITS

If your child is likely to be tempted by buying that ‘must-have’ weapon or item, consider removing your bank details from the console or computer to prevent impulse buy-in. An unwelcome bill. Pre-paid cards could be an option for in-game purchases, allowing you to control how much your child can spend in advance — and helping them learn the basics of budgeting.

TRY OTHER MODES

If it seems that your child only ever plays Modern Warfare II in multiplayer, you could try out the Spec Ops mode with them — formulating strategies while playing each other’s company. You could also play multiplayer together, taking it in turns to ensure regular breaks. Another alternative is the game’s campaign mode, featuring bespoke missions and scenarios which follow an overarching plot.

Meet Our Expert

Iloyd Cowburn is Games Editor at technology and entertainment website Deeken and has been working in the gaming media for three years. A long-time gaming enthusiast, he is also a parent and therefore a keen advocate of online safety. Writing many about tech and fitness, his articles have also been published on influential sites including FHM and TechEdrard, among others.

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