What Parents & Carers Need to Know about WORLD OF WARCRAFT

World of Warcraft originally launched way back in 2004, and since then the game has blossomed into a major entertainment property. It’s spawned spin-off novels, merchandise, and even a Hollywood movie announcement — but why are we still talking about it in 2023? World of Warcraft’s most recent iteration, Dragonflight, launched last November and marks the game’s ninth major expansion.

This latest addition has attracted a whole host of lapsed players back to the game — as well as newcomers jumping into the realm of Azeroth for the first time.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

ALWAYS ONLINE

World of Warcraft is an MMORPG, which stands for Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game. Players create a character and head off on mythical quests to earn rewards and become more powerful. The game’s environment is absolutely vast, and it can only be played online. So, if it’s lost, there’s a high probability of young Warcraft fans wanting to monopolise the family computer.

REGULAR EXPANSIONS

As is common with many MMORPGs, World of Warcraft’s developers, Blizzard, release regular expansions for the game (usually every months to two years). So although there’s still plenty of content for young players to experience right now, there will almost inevitably be a requirement to continue buying future expansion packs, which tend to cost around £30.

IN-GAME PURCHASES AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

Just like its genre contemporary Final Fantasy XIV, World of Warcraft requires a monthly subscription fee to play. It’s currently £9.99 per month (although you can get it cheaper by signing up to a longer subscription). There are also many items which can be purchased from the in-game store that don’t affect gameplay, but instead add cosmetic alterations to a player’s character.

MANAGE PLAYTIME

World of Warcraft can be an extremely enjoyable game to play with friends, but it’s also easy to lose track of time as the players navigate through the game’s vast landscape. It’s important to keep an eye on the child’s playtime, especially if they are spending more than 1-2 hours playing each day.

MAKE IT A REWARD

If your child is excited about getting the next World of Warcraft expansion, you could consider using it as a reward for completing their weekly tasks (you could even call them ‘quests’) like tidying their room or doing their homework. This will demonstrate that you’re happy for them to play the game but will also help them to build good, productive habits, reinforcing that hard work earns rewards.

SIGN UP FOR THE FREE TRIAL

World of Warcraft’s monthly subscription effectively ‘pays’ for the regular new content, but there’s also a sizeable fee that isn’t exactly a freebie. It’s also a game that might get a little repetitive for young players, so it’s worth considering a free trial before signing up to a full subscription.

REMEMBER THE AGE RATING

Due to mild violence and the occasional use of offensive language, World of Warcraft has been rated as appropriate for players aged 12 and over by PEGI (the Pan-European Game Information System), which gives games their age certificate. It isn’t really suitable for anyone below that age, so you may potentially have to explain this reasoning to your younger children if they want to play it.

ADVENTURE TOGETHER

World of Warcraft can certainly be addictive, but playing it together is also a great way to spend time with your child. The game’s focus on cooperative questing and building alliances can make it feel like you’ve accomplished something as a team, and you’ll also be in a prime position to spot any early signs that your child might need to remember to apply gaming time limits to yourself as well as your young ones!

Advice for Parents & Carers

VOICE AND TEXT CHAT

Because World of Warcraft is played exclusively on PCs and Macs, it’s easy for users to type or send messages if they aren’t comfortable using voice chat. If you’re concerned about kids being exposed to inappropriate content, it’s also a good idea to set up a family-friendly group on the in-game messaging function.

SIMULATED VIOLENCE

The fact that World of Warcraft is almost 20 years old means that even its most violent battles look slightly antiquated compared with the level of authenticity in more modern games. The exception tends to be World of Warcraft’s cinematic sequences — animated sections which move the plot along the next stage. These offer more realistic visuals, but they still aren’t overly gory or scary.

POTENTIAL FOR ADDICTION

World of Warcraft can trigger a powerful “just one more quest” mentality in players (especially teens), which can be a bit of a problem if you children struggle to limit their own gaming time. It’s also a game that can be very time-consuming, so it’s important to ensure that your young ones are not spending more than a few hours playing each day.

Meet Our Expert

Stuart Sutcliffe is a Games Editor at the gaming and entertainment website Densin and has been writing in the gaming media for over a decade. A long-time gaming enthusiast, he is passionate about helping to educate about online safety. Writing mainly about tech and fitness, his articles have also been published on influential sites including IGN and TechRadar among others.

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