



Gooseberry Parent

Pokémon GO

What is Pokémon GO?

A free online social gaming app which is popular with all ages, particularly children. The app can be downloaded to any digital mobile device and uses the player's location, allowing them to 'catch, train and battle with' up to 151 virtual Pokémon characters in a real-world environment.

Key Features of Pokémon GO to be aware of

- To play the game users need to sign up using either an online Google account or a 'Pokémon Trainer' account, which gives the user added features/bonuses and options to add 'friends'.
- App includes options for 'in-app' purchases allowing the user to buy items (with real money) to enhance game play.
- Requires the digital mobile device to have access to the internet and the 'location settings' switched on allowing the app to use GPS technology to pinpoint where the user is. This allows the user to find Pokémon but also gives apps and other websites access to you.
- Pokémon GO is currently a mainly single player experience (until Level 5 of the game) but playing the game brings users into contact with people in the real world. Hunting for Pokémon poses potential risks to personal and public safety and being aware of these and how to reduce them will help to make playing the game the enjoyable experience that it should be.

Enjoying Pokémon GO safely and managing the risks

- **Signing Up** – Encourage your child to keep log in details and passwords secure and share them with you
- **User Names** – Choose an original and creative username that avoids giving away your own
- **Adding Friends in 'Pokémon Trainer'** – Discuss basic rules about adding friends to their account. Encourage them to only add friends who they know well in the real world.
- **Location Settings** – Turn off location settings when Pokémon Go is not being played to avoid your child revealing their location to other online users. Or alternatively select the specific apps you are comfortable with location settings having access to. You are also able to restrict your child in making any changes to the location settings. The 'restriction' function is password protected.
- **Pokémon Hunting** – Reinforce the need for personal safety when hunting Pokémon. Be positive and proactive about this as a social activity and depending on the age of your child, arrange a trip out to catch Pokémon with them and their friends. If they are older and are already exploring the world on their own, remind them of their responsibilities when it comes to keeping themselves and others safe. Following basic social rules will include your child being aware of their surroundings, taking care when crossing roads, always having a friend or two when going out and about and being aware of the needs of others who are not playing Pokémon. Encourage your child to be respectful of others privacy when taking photos and video. Report any issues directly via the app. Discuss with your child where they will be going and places they should not, try and explain why.
- **PokéStops** – These are essentially 'hotspots' for finding and catching Pokémon and in-game items to help you play. Be aware that these areas are likely to be popular with other Pokémon players and your child is likely to encounter them. Pokémon Go can bring out the competitive streak in some players, remind your child to keep their game play friendly and as low key as possible.
- **Sharing Information** – Remind your child not to share any personal details with other game players they may meet when out and about. Updates to the software mean only basic personal data can be accessed by the game.
- **Likely updates:** The possible introduction of trading of Pokémon's amongst players may mean the need for users to interact online and communicate with each other.

Pokémon! GO catch them all...but catch them safely!