



Call of Duty is undeniably one of the most recognisable video games on the planet. The first game was released for the PC way back in 2003, and the franchise has spawned a whopping 16 titles to date, and featured on almost 20 gaming consoles and devices. Despite being one of the most popular games on the market, CoD has never been a stranger to controversy; themes of war, terrorism and other adult subjects parents and guardians might feel uncomfortable exposing their children to, have always been a part of the series. The latest iteration, Call of Duty: Modern Warfare, is no different, even doubling down on some of these mature themes. So with that in mind, here's a helpful guide to aid you in navigating the world of Call of Duty.

AGE RESTRICTION

18+

If under 18, supervision of a parent or legal guardian required.



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



VIOLENCE AND GRAPHIC CONTENT

Call of Duty has been given an 18+ rating due to "violence against vulnerable and defenceless characters, motiveless 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.



INCREDIBLY 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 forces 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.



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, this means players and 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.



ADDICTIVE NATURE

Call of Duty: Modern Warfare has promised to be the best yet. The game features a number of new game modes and now includes crossplay for the first time, whereby players can now play each other across any device (i.e. Xbox, Playstation or PC). As always tends to be the case when a new game is released, players spend large amounts of time getting to grips with the new features and the repetitive nature of COD means children can find it difficult to stop playing and realise their limits.



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 gambling. Players could unlock items as they progress but wouldn't know what they were purchasing beforehand. 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.



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Safety Tips For Parents

STICK TO THE PEGI RATING

It really can't be stressed enough how much this game is not for younger children. While you could argue that most of the horrific scenes are in the single player campaign, and you can just play multiplayer and co-op to avoid them, those modes are not without their shortcomings. For example, one of the killstreaks you can attain in multiplayer is white phosphorus - a chemical weapon that can do indescribable things to the human body. This really comes down to the personal judgement of the adult, and the emotional maturity of the child, but if there's still any doubt, stick to the PEGI rating - it's there for a reason.



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 dismemberment of bodies in the game (options > general > dismemberment off) it still includes a rather visceral amount of violence that is prevalent throughout.



STAY SAFE DURING IN-GAME CHAT

By default, Modern Warfare allows multiplayer in-game lobbies to have an open chat feature. This basically means that anybody in the lobby with a mic can hop in and say whatever they like. Naturally, this could lead to some profane language or undesirable viewpoints being expressed. Turning this off is as simple as going to the game options, clicking the audio tab, then setting voice chat to off. Be aware that this also disables the mic on your end too, so the safest and best option is always to make sure children are in a party with their friends before they start the game, then they can still chat to each other without outside interruption.



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 it does carry some important political and social commentary. If you're okay letting children play the game, it's definitely worth sitting 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.



Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGbible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.

