

# Safeguarding Bulletin

### **ISSUE 16**

Mount Kelly's Safeguarding Bulletin aims to provide parents and carers with the information needed to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with their children about potential risks in the wider world and online. This week's bulletin is on the topic of the games Tekken 8 and Fortnite.

Since they were first played in arcades on oversized machines, fighting games have found their way not only into our homes via consoles and PCs, but also – in the case of franchises like Street Fighter and Mortal Kombat – into the pop culture elite, with merchandise and movie adaptations.

With £10 million in sales within 10 days and 50,000 simultaneous players, the most recent entrant to the arena is the fighting game Tekken 8, which has enjoyed an astounding degree of success since its release in late January 2024. Its impressive presentation and entertaining roster of characters has struck a chord, both with long-term fans and newcomers to the Tekken series – many of whom are children and young people.

Tekken's relative lack of gore distinguishes it from similar titles such as Mortal Kombat, making it seemingly more suitable for under-18s. Its inherent focus on violence, however, plus a highly competitive online play mode against (often older) strangers and some potentially problematic strands of the plot combine to earn it a PEGI 16 age rating. The first of this week's **#WakeUpWednesday** guides has the full story.





If you know any young gamers, you'll almost certainly be familiar with Fortnite. It's one of the most popular video games on the planet – up alongside other mega-hits like Minecraft, Roblox and Call of Duty in terms of its sheer number of fiercely dedicated players. Fortnite currently has more than 400 million devotees worldwide – around 25 million of whom play it every day. Given Fortnite's relatively young user-base, though (as many as one in four pre-teens are reported to have played the game, despite its PEGI 12 age rating), it's prudent not to conflate immense popularity with absolute safety.

The second of this week's **#WakeUpWednesday** guides assesses the latest version for potential pitfalls that parents and carers of young Fortnite fans should be aware of. In the guide you'll find a number of potential risks such as compulsive playing, audio chat with other gamers and in-game spending.

# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

# TEKKEN 8

WHAT ARE THE RISKS? Thirty years after its debut on the original PlayStation, the Tekken franchise is back with its eighth mainstream instalment. A one-on-one fighting game series in the same vein as Street Fighter and Mortal Kombat, Tekken 8 can be commended for its relative lack of in-game purchases – but there's still plenty to consider in keeping young players safe from potential hazards.



### FUTURE SPENDING?

Tekken 8 carries a PEGI 16 rating, with the assessors noting its violence, occasional profanity and in-game purchase options. The latter issue, however, is a little different to what you may expect from a modern game: unlike many high-profile releases, Tekken 8's content is all accessible without spending any extra money. The exceptions are new characters, which will become available to purchase separately in the future.

### COPYCAT RISK

With characters flying across the screen using a mixture of authentic and fantastical fighting styles, younger children and impressionable teens may find themselves tempted to copy their favourite characters or act out their epic fights in real life. This could simply amount to harmless fun – but could also easily lead to accidents, injury and distress if young gamers start actually landing blows.

### VIOLENT GAMEPLAY

As a fighting game, Tekken 8's gameplay is heavily based on punching, kicking and throwing opponents around - while some characters' attacks occasionally involve weapons. Most of the violence is comparatively cartoonish in its execution and lacking in gore, but the fact remains that the action still revolves entirely around intense combat and inflicting damage on an opponent.

### **FAMILY CONFLICT**

Tekken 8's story mode, 'The Dark Awakens', focuses on two of the series' most important characters – Kazuya and Jin, a father and son who have been warring for years. The sight of two family members physically fighting each other may be hard to understand (and difficult to deal with) for some children – causing confusion and concern over why relatives would want to hurt one another.

### RANKED ONLINE PLAY

Tekken 8 features an array of online modes most notably its 'Ranked' section, where players battle to reach the top spot of a worldwide leaderboard. Many players will dedicate significant amounts of time to practising and while the challenge can be fun—some of these matches can get extremely competitive. Children could become obsessed with climbing the rankings and dedicate an unhealthy amount of time to the game or grow angry if they wind up on a losing streak.

### ONLINE CONTACT

Tekken 8 doesn't offer voice chat by default, but a player's platform ID is visible (such as their PlayStation Network ID, Steam account or Xbox gamertag). Rival players can, therefore, reach out via messages if they wish. Given the game's flercely competitive nature, these communications can potentially put children at risk of online abuse if their opponent is a particularly sore loser.

# Advice for Parents & Educators

### TRY IT OUT YOURSELF

As with many popular games, we'd recommend checking it out for yourself in advance if you have any concerns. In the case of Tekken 8, there's a free demo version available (for all platforms) which lets you experience fights with a handful of the characters: a useful way of establishing first-hand whether some children might find the game's violence to be too intense.

### MARTIAL ARTS MOTIVATION?

With characters utilising real-world fighting styles such as jiu-jitsu, boxing and kickboxing. Tekken could represent an opportunity to channel a child's fondness for the game into a beneficial interest in real-world martial arts. Classes can help to build young people's confidence and physical fitness, as well as providing avenues for making new friends.

## **EXERCISE YOUR JUDGEMENT**

While Tekken 8 features a sort of 'spray' impact effect when attacks land, it's not the kind of game that most observers would describe as gory (unlike, for instance, the Mortal Kombat franchise). Of course, any fighting game worthy of the name will include a significant degree of violence – but the level at which the battles in Tekken are pitched may not be an issue for some children.

### CONTROL COMMUNICATIONS

If a child plays Tekken online with anyone apart from their friends, then parents and carers could consider restricting communications – such as shutting off the facility to be messaged by other players (although the child's profile name will still be displayed) – to reduce the chance of contact from strangers. This can be done via the console's account settings or through the child's Steam account (if playing on PC).

### Meet Our Expert

Editor in Chief of gaming and esports site GGRecon, Lloyd Coombes has worked in the games media industry for five years. He's played every Tekken title since the series began and, as a parent, also values the importance of online safety. Writing mainly about tech and fitness, his articles have been published on influential sites including IGN and TechRadar.





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## What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

# CHAPTER

ortnite may be something of a veteran in gaming terms (having launched back in 2017), but it remains massively popular – with more than 250 million people playing online every month. That is partially due to the competitive nature of its player-vs-player combat, its pop culture crossovers and its constantly shifting map. Significant updates are rolled out with each new version of the game known as 'chapters' – and within these sit shorter 'seasons', which bring more subtle changes. The latest iteration, Chapter 4 Season 2, adds a cyberpunk-themed city and

anime-style areas, for example, along with new weapons and characters

## ALWAYS ONLINE

WHAT ARE

THE RISKS?

### IN-GAME COSTS

## POP CULTURE

## Advice for Parents & Carers

## MATCH GAMING TIMES

## USE UPDATES AS REWARDS

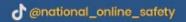
### BE WARY OF SCAMS

### **ENJOY FORTNITE TOGETHER**



## Meet Our Expert

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