

Amazing games guide for families

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Just like encouraging them to read books on different themes and topics, enabling children to explore a wider range of games beyond the most popular ones contributes to positive gaming.



Positive gaming made simple

Make video games a family affair and explore games off the beaten track to encourage children to adopt healthy gaming habits and develop their imagination, ambition, empathy, resilience and emotional intelligence.

PEGI 3+ suitable for all age groups



Go Vacation

What's it about?

It's an open world game where you explore different resort locations. Each one is huge and has a lot to discover for young children – including working public transport systems, vehicles, friends to help and 100s of minigames. Best of all, you can play with four players at once.

What can you play it on?

Go Vacation is available on the Wii and Wii U if you still have one, and more recently updated for the Switch.

Forza Horizon 5

What's it about?

The new Forza Horizon game isn't aimed at young children but actually works well when played together with an adult. There are over 500 cars that are fully customisable both in terms of how they look and how they perform. For children, it is the stunning open world that sets Forza Horizon 5 apart from other racing games. Substantially larger than the already large map in Forza Horizon 4, it's brimming with life, weather and a day-night cycle that make it incredibly realistic.

What can you play it on?

This game is exclusive to PC and Xbox consoles.



Florence

What's it about?

This is a storybook style game about a young girl who falls in love. Like any good children's book, this works well for both adults and children, so playing it together isn't a chore. The interactions are simple and it's beautifully hand-drawn.

What can you play it on?

The game is played on any smartphone or tablet and costs just a few pounds.

Alto's Adventure

What's it about?

This game manages to create an experience that is both exhilarating and calming at the same time. It's a beautiful downhill snowboarding experience that's ideal for very young players because it only requires one tap to jump. The challenge is in the timing, which develops as you get a feel for how the game flows.

What can you play it on?

The game can be played on iOS, Mac, Android & Kindle Fire smartphones and tablets. Both Alto's Adventure and the sequel, Alto's Odyssey, are available in The Alto Collection on Xbox, PlayStation 4 and Nintendo Switch.



PEGI 7+, suitable for children aged 7 and over



Rocket League

What's it about?

While other games command more fans and playground talk, Rocket League is one that is on the rise for good reason. It's a strange concept that places you in a car trying to play football with large balls. But the combination of real physics for the rocket-powered vehicles and knife edge tactics makes it a great game for competitive youngsters wanting something based on skill rather than lucky head shots.

What can you play it on?

You can play the game on PC, Mac, PlayStation 4 and 5, Xbox One and Series X|S and Nintendo Switch. Rocket League Sideswipe is available on iOS and Android.

Tearaway Unfolded

What's it about?

This game is played in a world entirely made of paper. You control a small boy or girl who is trying to get to the sun to deliver a unique message. It looks intriguing and has perfect level design, but it's the joy in how the game is crafted that makes this so much fun. With paper surprises around every corner, it's a game that kids will quickly warm to and play over and over again.

What can you play it on?

This game is available on PlayStation 4 and 5. You can also play the previous Tearaway game on the PlayStation Vita.



Nintendo Labo

What's it about?

With the Wii came all sorts of plastic peripherals for the unusual controller. With the Switch, Nintendo has created its own cardboard version of this. The twist is that you make these yourself by cutting and colouring. More than that, these peripherals are hugely varied and come with their own range of games and experiences. It's a great way to enjoy some Nintendo fun with your young gamer.

What can you play it on?

This game can be played on Nintendo Switch.

Cadence of Hyrule

What's it about?

This is a Zelda adventure with a difference. Play is in time with the music so that you have to attack or defend with the right rhythm to do well. This adds an interesting twist but also makes the game different to play. You have to commit to actions while you are in time with the beat of the music or they will fail. For youngsters, this is a lot of fun, but for parents too, the music based game-play and elegant controls make it easily accessible.

What can you play it on?

This game can be played on Nintendo Switch.



PEGI 12+, suitable for children aged 12 and over



Celeste

What's it about?

Video games are more than entertainment for teenagers. They are social. They are stories. They are psychological. Celeste is an example of this your child will enjoy. It's a platforming challenge to reach the top of a mountain. Along with appealing retro visuals, it also includes a well-judged and insightful narrative about mental health. There's also an assist mode where you can make the game as easy as you want to be able to just enjoy the story.

What can you play it on?

This game is available for Mac, PC, Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4 and 5, Xbox One and Xbox Series X|S.



Kena: Bridge of Spirits

What's it about?

Kena: Bridge of Spirits is an adventure about a young girl who travels to an abandoned village in the hope of finding a sacred mountain shrine. To get there she must find and grow a team of charming spirit companions called the Rot, enhancing their abilities and creating new ways to manipulate the environment.

It's a charming story that offers occasional challenging game play for ambitious players.

What can you play it on?

You can play this game on PC, PS4 and PS5.



Wandersong

What's it about?

Most platform games require you to run and jump with precision and lightning reflexes. Wandersong has some of that, but its main novelty is your character's ability to sing. You control this with the colourful song wheel to trigger abilities and interact with the environment. With just this ability in hand, you set out on an adventure where you must use friendship as well as skill to progress.

What can you play it on?

You can play this game on PC, Mac, Nintendo Switch and PlayStation 4.



Reigns

What's it about?

This is a super simple decision-based game where you control a kingdom one choice at a time. The decisions and the world itself are represented through a deck of cards. Each of these asks you to make a choice. Swipe left for one answer or right for the other. These each result in an increase or decrease in your resources, population, wealth or religion. What starts as a super accessible experience soon reveals a complex and dark narrative that can only be discovered through multiple play-throughs.

What can you play it on?

You can play this on Android, iOS, Mac, PC and Nintendo Switch. Some versions are also on Xbox.



PEGI 16+, suitable for older teens



Her Story

What's it about?

In the game, you are presented with an old fashioned police computer to access video interviews about a murder. The challenge is that the recordings are in multiple parts and can't be accessed together or in order. The game presents a retro pre-Windows style interface where you must type in search criteria to find the interview clips you need. It sounds a little strange but creates a compelling hunt to follow the trail of clues from one video to the next and uncover what really happened.

What can you play it on?

You can play this on Mac or PC, iOS or Android tablet or smartphone.



Subnautica and Subnautica: Below Zero

What's it about?

Although rated for younger players too, this is a game enjoyed by older teenagers. It's an underwater (mild) horror, exploration and base-building game. The scares are usually fish-shaped as you explore an oceanic world. It expands on this central thrill by enabling you to conquer the ocean and build not only a substantial base but develop technology and vehicles to explore further and deeper. The excitement builds a desire to progress, but each journey into the deep comes with fresh caution and deep water creatures.

What can you play it on?

You can play this on PC, Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4 and Xbox One.



Horizon Zero Dawn and Horizon Forbidden West

What's it about?

This is an open world exploration and combat game set in the future. Our technology and architecture have decayed to leave only robot animals roaming around and small tribes of people. As Aloy, you learn to survive, hunt and develop new skills. Much of this is common in video games, but the level of storytelling that stems from Aloy's childhood loss of parents and the visual prowess of the world sets this apart.

What can you play it on?

This is a PlayStation 4 and 5 exclusive with the first game available on PC.





Life is Strange (series)

What's it about?

Whilst these games are full of teen angst, relationships, violence and sex, it approaches the subject matter with a deft touch and considerable maturity. You click or tap to move around and can interact with characters and the world. The decisions you make affect how the story proceeds, but, unusually, you can also rewind time to see how a different decision will play out. Played together with an older teenager, this is not only entertaining, but a good way to talk about complex relationship issues. There are five installments to choose from.

What can you play it on?

You can play it on Android, iOS, PC, Mac, PS3, PS4, PS5, Xbox 360, Xbox One, Xbox Series X|S and Nintendo Switch.



Games to play together



Spaceteam

What's it about?

This is a co-operative game where each player connects via the smartphone app. Together you must pilot a spaceship by pressing the right controls on the screen in time when instructed. The switches, dials, sliders and levers are labelled with randomly generated peculiar names: the "Astral Synth", "Gripvent", "Starmesh", "Autospoon". The twist is that the instructions on one screen may be for switches on another player's control panel. You have to communicate this quickly enough to other players trying to do the same.

What can you play it on?

You can play this on Android or iOS, tablet, smartphone or iPod touch. There is also another version called Spaceteam VR for Oculus, PC and PlayStation VR, where you play in a virtual space ship.





Beast of Balance

What's it about?

This is an unusual Jenga-style game of balance played with animal pieces. But along with the physical balancing, each piece placed on the digital plinth (a real physical peripheral) triggers an animal to be added to the associated virtual world on your tablet screen. To do well you must work together to balance the right animals and score the most points. There's also a brilliant competitive game where you must battle each others' animals by adding special items and playing smart cards. It sounds complicated but, in practice, is just a really good game of balance that picks up on the popularity of these kinds of board games.

What can you play it on?

You can play this on Android and iOS smartphone or iPod touch.

Fru

What's it about?

This was one of the last games for Xbox's Kinect camera. If you (or a friend/family) still have one, it's more than worth dusting it off to play. You use your body to stand in front of the camera and see the outline of your body on the screen. The other player then controls a small character who must get from one side to the other. Where your silhouette intersects with the platforms changes them in different ways to help the character pass. It's fun, physical and very collaborative.

What can you play it on?

You can play this on Xbox One with Kinect camera.



Tricky Towers

What's it about?

This is like the old Tetris game where you stacked colourful blocks to make horizontal lines. Here though, it's not about making lines but creating a nice neat tower. The game introduces real physics so that if your construction is not perfectly straight, it can topple over. Played with up to four people competing on their own towers (and sending different attacks and handicaps to each other), this becomes a joyous game about balance and forward planning.

What can you play it on?

You can play this on PC, Mac, PlayStation 4 and 5, Xbox One Xbox Series X|S and Nintendo Switch.

Created with support from tech expert Andy Robertson