

Pokémon GO – an updated guide for parents

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In 2016 we released a blog, [the parents' guide to Pokémon GO](#), which looked at the benefits and risks of the global phenomenon that is the Pokémon GO game, along with our tips for using it safely. However, with the introduction of 80 new Pokémon, Pokémon GO is growing in popularity once more. We look at the latest updates to the game and what these mean for young people who want to *catch them all*.

What is it?

Pokémon GO is an app-based augmented reality game, based on the popular Nintendo games. The goal is to collect cartoon creatures called Pokémon and it merges the virtual and real world, as you use a virtual map to physically visit different places to find and capture the Pokémon.

As well as Pokémon, there are also gyms and Pokéstops placed on the virtual map. A gym is a place where users can battle one another, and Pokéstops are stations that release prizes when you tap them. These are usually attached to landmarks in the real world. With both gyms and the Pokéstops, the user needs to be near them, in the physical world, in order to use them.

When the latest update of Pokémon GO saw the introduction of 80 new Pokémon this brought with it a revival in the popularity of the game and an ability for players to really 'Catch them all'. Pokémon GO may be a new and exciting game, but the safety messages we have always taught our children stay the same – be wary around strangers, stay aware of your surroundings, and always tell an adult where you are going.

The latest updates – and our advice to stay safe while making the most of them

1. Watch out for new in-app purchases

The update also brought with it the chance for players to update their avatar, and the ability to change the avatar's outfit into multiple styles which hadn't been available before. Each item of clothing costs Pokécoins, the currency in the game which is only available through in-app purchases. Players can spend real money to buy Pokécoins, the risk with this feature is that players may not associate the Pokécoins with real money or may get into the habit of spending money whenever they want a new item, with the costs starting to add up. To limit players spending any money in the game, parents can disable in-app purchases on their own and their children's mobile devices. To do this it is best to explore the in app purchasing settings on your device, within these settings you will be able to disable in app purchases or set a password for purchases. Read our [premium rate content hot topic](#) for more information about avoiding in app purchases and the [parents' guide to technology](#) for device specific advice.

2. Stay aware of surroundings

At certain times of the year, such as Easter and Christmas, limited edition Pokémon are released. These characters may only be available for a few days, making it seem more of a draw to go out to play on the game. When these characters are available young people may want to rush out and catch them, but it is important that they remain aware of their surroundings and stay in areas they know they are allowed to go. The Pokémon GO home screen advises users to stay safe and aware of their surrounding whilst tracking Pokémon.

3. Stay safe

Another new feature in the game is the update to the tracking screen. Users can now see the location of Pokémon near to them. This could be at a well-known location or landmark. These are

usually the only select few locations in an area where Pokémon are guaranteed to be found, it's important to be aware of these location as other players may also be catching Pokémon in the same place. Remind your children of the key principles around stranger danger, such as not to give any personal information out to strangers they might meet on the street through playing the game.

4. Play together

A great and fun way to learn more about Pokémon GO is to take a moment to play the game yourself, and keep the conversation around it open and honest. There are many reasons why children might enjoy playing the game, such collecting all the Pokemon, evolving their favourite Pokemon to make it stronger and exploring new places both in the real and virtual world, and it is important for the adults in their life to help them minimise the risks involved whilst still enjoying the benefits. Doing so will help make sure they will be better equipped to look after themselves and all the more likely to ask for help if they need it.

For more information on gaming in general, visit the Childnet Hot Topic

page: <http://www.childnet.com/parents-and-carers/hot-topics/gaming>

In-game terms and definitions:

Augmented reality: A new technology that overlays digital information on a user's view of the real world, in real time.

Eggs: If a player receives an egg, it will have a distance attached to it. For example, if an egg is marked as 5km, the player will need to walk for 5km with the app turned on in order to hatch it.

Incense: If a player releases incense, it will attract Pokémon towards the user for 30 minutes. Other players will not be able to see this. Users will often get incense for free from Pokéstops.

Lure: A player can release a lure and attach it to a Pokéstop. Lures attract Pokémon to the area for 30 minutes, and all players in the area will be able to see. Lures are not commonly given out as prizes from Pokéstops – players usually have to buy them.

Pokécoins: Players can purchase Pokécoins to use in the shop. Prices range from £0.99 for 100 Pokécoins, to £99.99 for 14,500 Pokécoins