

DIGITAL CHILDREN

online gaming: An interview with Seth from The UK

Hi Everyone,

My name is Alison Kahn, and I am a visual and digital anthropologist. That means that I am interested in how people live their lives online all over the world. I am also a documentary filmmaker and I have worked with companies such as the BBC and made a series for Discovery Channel. My research investigates how children have adapted to the digital world and I use my experience as a mother and a teacher to find out what children need and how we can support you throughout your lives.

I am based in the UK and with my family. My husband is American, but I am British. My father was brought up in India and I have Indian cousins. I have three children, Helena (15), Seth (12) and Lukas (9), who use digital media as part of their school learning activities; they also play video games, make videos, record songs, stream content and create digital art. Over the next few editions of this magazine, I will share with you some of their work and tips for how to use digital media creatively to expand your worlds and offer tips for a healthy digital lifestyle.

Today we are going to start with on-line gaming. My 12-year-old son plays video games. He thinks Minecraft is a great game for all ages, but he also wants to share some advice about the dangers for children using on-line platforms.

Here is an extract from a short interview with him:

Mum: What is the difference between gaming and online gaming?

Seth: Online gaming is the same as gaming on a computer, but the online means you need Internet access.

Mum: Which games do you like to play online and why?

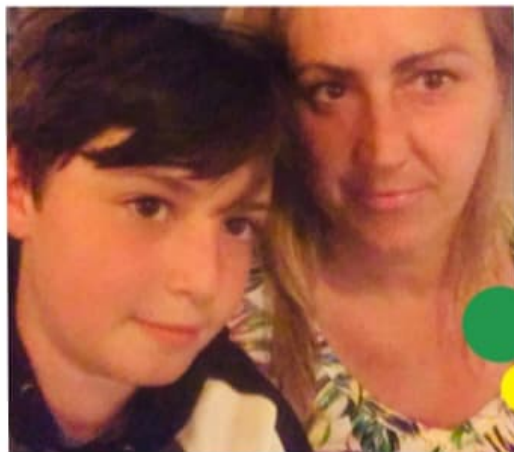
Seth: Minecraft because it is fun; there is a lot of creativity. Fortnite is good but you should limit yourself as it can pull you in. 2K21 is great; it is NBA Basketball. Rocket League is a football car game. You need to calculate the angles properly to angle the ball into the goal.

Mum: What is the attraction for children to play games online?

Seth: The advantage is that you have the game to yourself; you can play with people on the other side of the world.

Mum: Have you experienced any inappropriate behaviour online?

Seth: Yes, on a few occasions; on ROBLOX people were swearing; they insulted other players and swore at them. But there are options to censor this kind of behaviour. You can turn a censor option on during the game, and it puts any bad language into hashtag. I have not experienced bullying but sometimes friends can be mean and annoying. You do have the option any time to leave. It's easier online just to turn off the game.



Mum: What do you think parents and children need to know before they allow their children to play online games of any kind?

Seth: First, the content of the game, if there is any risk of harming your child's mind. You should look at reviews as well. You should always check with your parents first. Type up 'Guidelines' or 'Reviews' for the game in question and this could help.

Mum: How do you stop adults coming on to children's games?

Seth: You should check you know the person before answering requests to be your friend online. You should call your friend on the phone and ask them for their username, so you are sure you are accepting the friend request. It is OK to play with unknown players if you are only playing the game, but never have any text contact with them. If they try to contact in the chat box, you should leave the game immediately. In school we have lessons on cyber bullying and the dangers of giving out personal information online. Basically, don't give anyone any details about yourself, your age where you live, or any bank details online.

Mum: Will you always let me know if anything happens online that upsets you?

Seth: Yes, I would always. Once my friend was being really annoying and it was irritating me, and when you are hearing all this through headphones, it magnifies the voice. I told you about it. I called him on the phone, and we decided to meet at school and be face-to-face to make up. If anything makes you upset, you should always tell your parents. Rely on your own instincts and stop the game if you start feeling agitated.

Mum: I allow you to play online games on Fridays and Saturday evenings for 2-hours each time during term time, and almost every evening during holidays. Do you think this is too little or too much?

Seth: Four hours a week is OK but sometimes there can be exceptions when you want to level up and get good at the game. Your parents should let you finish a game if it is important to you, but don't do this too often, and not on a school night. You should not have screens in your bedroom, and always wind down with a book for half an hour before you go to sleep.

Mum: Do you think you should let me know which games you are playing and who you are playing with each day? Why?

Seth: If it is a different game or a 12 + and you are 11, you should check with your parents to see if it's a suitable game. This is important as your parents should be aware of the content in case something disturbs you and the can help you. This should be agreed upon. An inappropriate game is GTA, there's blood, guns, stealing and bad behaviour. It is 18+ but I don't think that kind of game is good for anyone.

