



*Tell me your nickname and  
I'll tell you who you are!*

Computer games and data protection

INFORMATION ABOUT COMPUTER GAMES  
FOR PARENTS OF 12 TO 16-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN

**GAME  
LIFE**



## **A TYPICAL SITUATION IN FAMILIES**

A teenager has been playing a free smartphone game for some time. The game revolves around developing a farm. She gets the daily offer of receiving a special present if she invites several friends to join the game. After some days she gives in, she is just too curious. The e-mail addresses and phone numbers of her friends are shared. From now on they receive ads from that app. Soon her friends are irritated. And her parents are annoyed by the fact that their daughter submitted personal data to the provider without thinking about the consequences.

## **WHAT DO MANY PARENTS THINK ABOUT THIS?**

In general, the topic data protection in our digital world seems to be complicated and hard to understand. Whether it's social media, one's own smartphone, streaming services or games: the providers collect their user's data to use it for advertising or other purposes. The parents usually don't notice, which data the gamers provide. Due to the enormous number of platforms and services it is almost impossible to stay on top of things. Teenagers are often very trusting when sharing personal data – both their own and their friends'.

## WHAT DO MANY TEENAGERS THINK ABOUT THIS?

Everyone in their circle of friends is playing the game. Furthermore, it is available on the internet for free. There are no sensible and understandable reasons why you should not play the game. If you spend your allowance on games, the parents don't like it. If you play free games, they also don't like it. And the parents' argument that you should not play these games, because you must disclose personal data, is also hard to comprehend. What can happen if providers know the name and the date of birth?



Additional information about computer games and „money“ can be found at [www.games.jff.de](http://www.games.jff.de).

## WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

**How is the data collected?** Data is collected by the game provides in several ways. For example, one must provide data or allow access to functions such as the use of the camera during the download or the installation of the game. Or data is collected automatically during the game, especially in apps: location information, connection data or contact information and telephone numbers.

**What is the data worth?** Nowadays there are many games that appear free at first glance („free to play“). However, it should be obvious to everybody, that no game is really offered for free. The production and the operation of games costs money. If the game itself is offered for free, the costs must be covered in some other way. This can happen, for example, by collecting personal data. This data is then used for personalized advertising or sold.

**Why do young people pay so little attention to data protection?** Parents often attribute more importance to the subject data protection than young people, because adults think further into the future. Young people live in the moment, want to try new things, experience their boundaries and provoke. This is normal in that developmental phase. If you talk to young people about this subject, you can often hear the following sentence: “I don’t have anything to hide!” The current benefit of the game outweighs the possible long-term downside. Very few realize, what the data can potentially be used for and what the risks are (and what that means for you).

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

**Information:** Inform yourself, preferably before the game is installed, what you must authorize in order to get the game. Before entering data or authorizing anything, following questions should be asked:



Why does the game need the authorization or the data?



Is it, for example, really necessary to share contact information to play the game?



What exactly is the data used for?

Only if these questions can be answered sufficiently, should you decide to install the game. Smartphone-Apps in general, often demand very extensive authorizations.

**Handling data responsibly:** Talk to your children about the value of personal data as early as possible. Make it clear to them, that games are never free and explain how games providers make money using data. Also show them possible other negative consequences of handling personal information too casually.

**Be especially careful when money is involved!** Specifically bank and credit card information should be handled with great care. You should never save it in the game or on a platform and should always make sure to delete the data once the purchase has been made. Due to security gaps, information leaks or insufficient precautionary measures, such as weak passwords, this sensitive information can fall into the wrong hands very fast. The unauthorized use of a gaming account happens more often than generally assumed. Should your child be affected by this, contact the games provider as soon as possible.

**Raise awareness for the value of games:** The production and the operation of good games costs money. Discuss with your child what constitutes a good game and whether the game really corresponds to the value of their personal data or their allowance.



Additional information about computer games and „media culture“ can be found at [www.games.jff.de](http://www.games.jff.de).

## LINKTIPS

### **webhelm – competent online**

The information service of the JFF – Institut für Medienpädagogik on the internet usage of teenagers for educational staff and interested adults  
[www.webhelm.de](http://www.webhelm.de) > Data protection

### **Gaming guidebook NRW**

Here you can find guidebooks on the topics legal aspects and data protection (among others). [www.spieleratgeber-nrw.de](http://www.spieleratgeber-nrw.de) > legal aspects > data protection

### **klicksafe.de**

The EU-Initiative for more internet security offers materials on the topic data protection (among others). [www.klicksafe.de](http://www.klicksafe.de) > materials > tips for parents on data protection



Additional information about computer games and „right to play“ can be found at [www.games.jff.de](http://www.games.jff.de).

## **BROCHURES ON OTHER TOPICS**

### **Tell me your nickname and I'll tell you who you are!**

*Computer games and data protection*

### **Money Money Money!**

*Computer games and money*

### **Gamegirls and Gameboys**

*Computer games and gender*

### **Shot in the head!**

*Computer games and violence*

### **Loser!**

*Computer games and contact risks*

### **Stars from the generation games**

*Computer games and media culture*

### **Let's Play!**

*Computer games and the right to play*

### **Turn that thing off!**

*Computer games and time*

**free of charge at [games.jff.de](http://games.jff.de).**

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