



# *Let's Play*

Computer games and the right to play

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

**GAME  
LIFE**  
♥♥♥

## **A TYPICAL SITUATION IN FAMILIES**

Excerpt from a discussion between a mother and a father whose son spends too much time playing computer games in their eyes.

Mother: “He’s been sitting in front of his computer all day again.”

Father: “When I was his age, we did completely different things. I just can’t understand what’s so great about it.”

Mother: “He could do meaningful things, like read a book or something. Why does it always have to be the computer?”

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

Being sympathetic about something that you cannot identify with yourself, is often not easy. Accordingly, it is understandable that parents would prefer their children to engage in other leisure activities than play on the console or smartphone. Since games are entertainment media, parents often have the feeling, that every minute spent playing computer games is a complete waste of time.

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

Children and teenagers have a completely different perspective on games. The endless possibilities allow them to dive into exciting worlds, have fun together with friends, relax and unwind. They have a sense of achievement and gain recognition. They see computer games as an activity that is in no way inferior to other hobbies and leisure activities.

## WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

**Computer games as a cultural asset:** Even if computer games have a relatively short history (the first video games were developed in the 70s), they are now considered cultural assets. This is due to the fact that the stories are often very sophisticated and the game content is portrayed in a diverse and partly artistic way. Furthermore, the influence on our society due to its' wide distribution may not be underestimated.



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

**Right to play:** In principle, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Art. 31) grants children and adolescents a right to play. That, of course, includes digital games as well. It is the responsibility of the legal guardians to ensure that their children's leisure activities are appropriate for their age and to protect them from risks. This also applies to computer games. The spectrum of different games is very large, with very different tasks, challenges and possible stresses and strains. It is important to set a clear framework, in order to provide an age-appropriate gaming experience and to set boundaries when the playing gets out of hand.

## **WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

**Question your own attitude towards games:** What prejudices do you have towards computer games? What are important values for you? What does it trigger in you, when your children play? What are you afraid of, what negative thing could happen? Discuss this with your children. Don't demonize your children's preference for computer games, but rather analyze it critically and provide well-founded criticism.

**Find out more about games:** Furthermore, you should find out more about the games your children want to play – so-called Let's Play videos, that can be found for almost every computer game on video portals such as YouTube, are well-suited for this purpose. This will usually give you a good impression of the games. Sometimes it also helps to talk to other parents. Of you can make it into an experiment and have your children show you the game or even play along yourself.

**Enrich the play culture:** The range of computer games is extremely diverse. Get tips on particularly recommendable and educational games. Especially in the indie game industry many exciting game concepts are being created. Encourage your children to play with others rather than alone. Encourage creativity by helping your children design their own games and co-create the games of tomorrow. Using free and easy tools, this is very easy. Below you can find links to instructions, as well as to current and recommendable information pages.



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

**Protect against risks:** Children and teenagers should have fun playing computer games. In order to protect them from the harmful influence of games, the legal protection of minors and the USK age rating must be observed (see brochure on the subject of violence). Furthermore, it is important to keep an eye on the gaming time and to agree on appropriate rules (see brochure on the subject of time), to be aware of the costs that may occur (see brochures on the subject of money and data) and to pay attention to the legal protection of minors.



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

## **LINKTIPS**

### **Gaming guidebook NRW**

Here you can find guidebooks and educational evaluations, that include the teenagers' perspectives.

[www.spieleratgeber-nrw.de](http://www.spieleratgeber-nrw.de)

### **Spielbar.de**

The website of the Federal Agency for Civic Education highlights games, current discussions and information about digital games.

[www.spielbar.de](http://www.spielbar.de)

### **games.jff.de**

There are simple and free tools for game design. Here you can find recommendations and instructions.

[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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