

Is *Fortnite* Bad for Kids? Well...

By: Katherine Pressor



Millions of kids spent much of their summer on an island, running through fields, exploring caves, and building forts. They weren't at summer camp, however. They were playing *Fortnite: Battle Royale*. Since the wildly popular game was released last September, more than 125 million players around the world, including my son, have joined the action.

But many people don't think *Fortnite* is right for kids. Players shoot each other and win only after 99 other players in each game have been killed. The violence earned the game a rating of T (for Teen)—meaning it's not suitable for kids under the age of 13. Plus, I have found quite few critics argue that kids spend hours at a time trying to win the game, which keeps them from doing more important things. This worried me, so I gathered a few experts together to discuss this issue.

“Playing too much *Fortnite* can interfere with sleep, homework, and responsibilities,” says Sierra Filucci. She works at Common Sense Media, a group that reviews games, movies, and music to determine whether they're appropriate for kids.

“From what I’ve seen, *Fortnite* is harmful for many kids. First, many kids display signs of addiction when playing it,” warns Filucci. “They become obsessed with winning and start having a hard time focusing on other activities like school, friends, and other meaningful extracurricular activities. If players continue in this fashion, they’ll fall behind on developing key skills they’ll need later in life.”

Nancy Gilbert, a pediatrician from Minnesota, agrees. “My son downloaded this game and after a few weeks began to show signs of irritability, frustration, and obsession. After his school grades started to slip, I had to set a time limit for him, which I never had to do with other games he’s played in the past. Also, I’ve had numerous parents share concerns with me about their children playing this game as well. My advice; don’t even download it!”

Tom Keliq, a media watchdog, shared similar concerns. “*Fortnite* is honestly pretty violent. Sure, it doesn’t show blood, but players still kill each other, and that’s too intense for kids in my opinion. Also, the game is free, but it pushes players to spend money to buy extras, like dance moves, equipment, or special skins for the characters. A recent survey found that nearly 70 percent of players buy items in the game. Is this the best way for them to spend their money? What is this teaching them?”

Adam Schmith, a professor from Iowa, completely disagreed with the other experts in the room. “*Fortnite* is a great game for kids. They can play together in a variety of modes and it seems to naturally promote collaboration.

It also helps build other strategy skills as well. I mean, think about, you have to avoid being eliminated by other players or teams. To do that, you have to figure out how to find loot, such as weapons and supplies, and use it to help you survive against others that are trying to take you out. The game never even mentions death or killing. You’re simply eliminated if you get taken out, sort of like a game of paintball. You guys are taking this way too seriously.”

Too seriously? As a mom, I hear from many other moms, that *Fortnite* is causing problems in the home. Like the experts mentioned, kids are getting frustrated, upset, and are losing their focus on other things that matter greatly. For now, I plan to enforce time limits on my son so his enjoyment of this game does not turn into an obsession any time soon.