



Amid the excitement of the world's biggest football tournament, it is important to stay vigilant online and make sure your child is aware of the potential dangers that they may be exposed to. Like all large events, the popularity and scale of a football tournament can become a significant target for cyber-attacks, with fraudsters looking to exploit football fans with an influx of tournament-related scams, malware, fake merchandise and fake ticket offers.



Parents online safety guide for a SUMMER OF FOOTBALL

GAMBLING

An estimated 370,000 children in Britain gamble each week, according to the UK's Gambling Commission, with 70 percent of children aged 11-16 being exposed to gambling on social media. There are many gambling apps available to download which do not require age checks, meaning your child can sign up and place bets with ease.

Your child may be shown online adverts and pop-ups when using the internet, promoting 'free to play' games associated with football, including daily scratch cards with big prizes up for grabs.

FOOTBALL STREAMS WITH MALWARE

Football matches are available to watch online, but cybersecurity experts warn that fraudsters are using streaming links to trick fans into 'downloading malicious code and unwittingly give up account credentials'. A current common type of malware is known as 'cryptomining', this is when programs are loaded into people's computers and used to secretly mine cryptocurrency (like BitCoin). Researchers say one recent football-streaming miner was distributed via Google Play and downloaded by more than 100,000 users.



FAKE MERCHANDISE

From footballs to flags and boots to replica shirts, poor-quality and fake merchandise is being sold online at 'knock-down' prices. Some scammers are also selling football paraphernalia purportedly signed by famous footballers with fake 'certificates of authenticity'. Whilst replicas may look similar to the authentic merchandise, it is more than likely to be poor quality and there are no consumer rights if it starts to fall apart.

VIRUS-LADEN SWEEPSTAKES & WALL CHARTS

There are hundreds of free printable wall charts and sweepstakes available to download online, allowing children to track football tournaments, but sadly, not all links and attachments are genuine. Cybercriminals may share links on social media, through emails or text messages to websites that are infected with malware or seek to obtain personal information.

PRIZES & TRAVEL SCAMS

There have been reports of emails and text messaging scams, claiming that recipients have been selected as a lottery prize winner by official tournament sponsors and have won large sums of money. The scammers try to collect personal information and copies of documents, such as a passport, as proof of identity in order to claim the prize. Of course, the prize money doesn't exist, but fraudsters can then use the information provided to steal identities. Other phishing scams to watch out for include offers of ticket-inclusive hospitality packages, accommodation-booking services and flights to match-hosting cities.

PHISHING PAGES SELLING MATCH TICKETS

Phishers are selling fake match tickets through fraudulent branded websites and other online marketplaces. Children may fall victim to purchasing a fake 'free' tickets through these websites or pop ups which are made to look appealing. England's games have been spotted among the fakes, with some tickets being advertised online for thousands of pounds.



National Online Safety

Top Tips for Parents

HOW TO SPOT GAMBLING

Experts warn that gambling is 'causing more problems than street drugs among children because they get hooked and once they feel the buzz they can't stop'. If you are concerned that your child is gambling, be alert for physical or emotional changes, problems at school or unusual online activity. You could monitor their devices to see if they have any gambling apps downloaded. Encourage your child to talk freely about their feelings, explain the dangers of gambling and try to keep them engaged in family activities.

KEEP FINANCIAL DETAILS SECURE

Have an agreement in place that requires children to ask for parental permission before buying any World Cup-related games, apps or merchandise. If you do not want your child to make payments online, ensure that your card is not associated with their online accounts. You could set up a separate bank card and account with a limited amount of money, specifically for online purchases. This will help to avoid serious financial losses if your bank details are stolen. One payment option called Paysafecard allows you to make payments online without the use of a bank account or credit card. Because you can top up balances, it makes it easy to control spending.

STREAM SAFELY

Children that watch football action via streaming sites could be putting their devices and personal privacy at great risk. Make sure all their devices are running the most up-to-date versions of the operating system, security software, apps and web browsers to stay protected against malware, viruses and other online threats. Speak with your child about the dangers with data-capture surveys and prize giveaways from brands and websites that they don't know or trust.

AVOID UNOFFICIAL TICKET SOURCES

Make sure your child is wary of anyone offering tickets online. If you are wanting to buy tickets for you and your family, only buy tickets from the official ticket selling websites.



PLAY SAFE WITH FOOTBALL DOWNLOADS

There are plenty of safe places to download football wall charts and sweepstakes to keep track of all the action. So, advise your child to avoid clicking on links offered by strangers or social media profiles they don't know. Look to well-known sources to download wall charts and get them to check with you before downloading.

RESIST THE URGE TO BUY UNOFFICIAL MERCHANDISE

Your child may want to show off their football allegiance, but this can hit your wallet hard. They may search for clothing and merchandise online that they want you to buy and think they have found a bargain, but cheaper alternatives are likely to be fake. Explain to your child that fakes will often have spelling mistakes or other distinguishing marks, it may be poor quality or made from dangerous substances, leaving the product unusable or even unsafe. You or your child can report fraud and cybercrime online at www.actionfraud.police.uk.

SOURCES

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