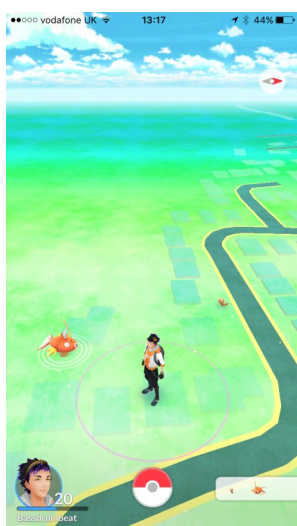# What is Pokemon Go?

Pokemon Go is an Augmented Reality (AR) game where players walk around the real world and catch Pocket Monsters (Pokemon). There are 150 Pokemon in total and the aim is to catch them all by 'throwing' a Pokeball at them through a swipe on your phone screen.

The App uses the GPS in your phone to show where you are in the real world through a map. Some Pokemon will only appear in certain areas such as fields, near water and in built up areas. Pokemon can be captured using a Pokeball or 'hatched' from an egg—you will need to walk a certain distance to hatch your egg, either 2km, 5km or 10km.

Pokemon Go WILL require a player to travel to different locations in order to catch different Pokemon, especially if you live in a village or a small town.
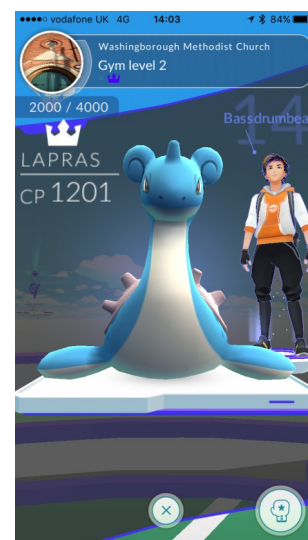
Do age restrictions apply?

Yes, you need to be over the age of 13 to set up an account. The app does allow a parent to set up an account for their child to use if they are not 13 yet. You can either set up an account by using your Google email address or by setting up a Pokemon Trainer account—both of which have a 13 age requirement.

Are there any privacy settings/controls?

The app doesn't currently offer any online chat facility. You are asked to set up a username but this cannot be seen by other users unless you leave one of your Pokemon at a gym. You are represented in the game through an Avatar (a digital character) which can only be seen when one of your Pokemon occupy a gym. The App will track where you go through the GPS location and will also store the users name, age and email address.
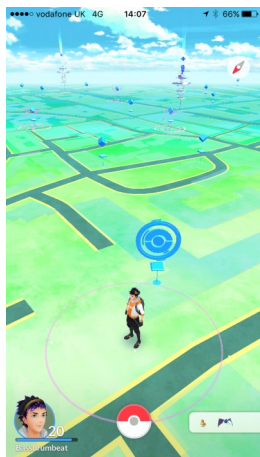
It's also important to note that Pokemon Go, like many other 'Free' mobile games, has it's own virtual currency to enable players to purchase additional Pokeballs as well as other items which help players. Pokecoins can be earnt by taking over a Gym (although only a small number of coins are on offer) or by purchasing them through the App.

Always ensure that you have set your smartphone to ask for a password for every purchase, otherwise it may end in a very expensive phone bill!

Things to think about

Pokemon Go requires players to travel on foot to different locations. carrying their smart phone. This gives the game some rather unique risks when compared to other games: as all interactions with other players will be in the real world:

Strangers

Pokemon Go encourages people to get together in the real world. Gym's and Pokestops are usually the places where people congregate which means that children and young people may meet and engage with strangers.

There have been some reports of children being encouraged to follow strangers to find 'Rare' Pokemon—ensure children know to stay in groups of friends and to never follow a stranger, even if they are with their friends—Pokemon appear randomly so there is no way of knowing which ones will pop up. If a situation feels uncomfortable or unsafe, get to a safe, public place.

The safest way to play Pokemon is as a family or with a trusted adult.

Personal Safety

Ensure children know how to stay safe outside and to be aware of the risks around them. Crossing roads can be dangerous if they are too focused on their mobile device, as well as other obstacles such as people and lamp posts.

The game will always let you know when Pokemon are near by vibrating, which means that it isn't necessary to stare at your device the whole time. Playing with an adult can be a great way to help them have fun but keep them safe

Respect

Make sure that children know to show respect to other people when playing—this includes respecting other people's property. It's not necessary to trespass in order to play: If you can see it on the screen, you can catch it! It's also important to remember that some Pokemon and Gym's are found around churches and graveyards—it's vital to think about other people when playing the game.
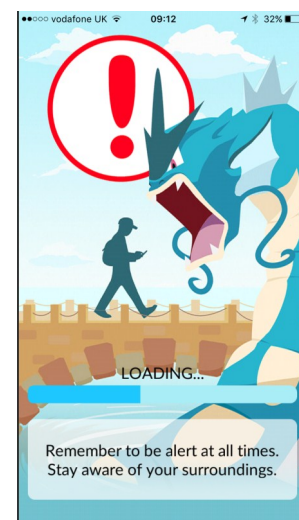
Want to learn more?

NSPCC Guide to Pokemon Go for Parents:
https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/pokemon-go-parents-guide/

Pokemon Go Terms of Use:
https://www.nianticlabs.com/terms/pokemongo/en

If you have concerns about the immediate safety of a child, you can call Lincolnshire Police on 101 or, in an emergency, dial 999