

## Hooked on upskirt photography

### Under Cover among online games that the young are found playing

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**A** NINE-YEAR-OLD girl started playing games like Under Cover, where the player snaps upskirt photographs of women, after her friend sent her a link to the website which hosted them.

Such free online games that **mask** sexual content have been an “in thing” among her friends for about three months, because they found playing such games exciting, the girl said.

She said she knows that the behaviour portrayed in the games is unacceptable. She would not behave that way, or want to be on the receiving end of such actions, in reality.

But she felt that playing the games was harmless as their characters are “fake, like cartoons, and do not have feelings”.

Her alarmed accountant mother, 38, said: “It’s shocking, I didn’t know my child could play such games online.”

The average parent is unaware of such potential risks in free online games, said Mr Poh Yeang Cherng, 41, manager of Touch Cyber Wellness & Sports, a cyber-wellness education programme for youth run by Touch Community Services.

The programme does not track the number of children playing such games online.

But its informal poll showed that up to 40 per cent of lower-secondary school students have played Grand Theft Auto 4, even though it is a violent video game with sexual content that has been rated “mature-18”.



**UNSAVOURY GAME:** In Under Cover, the player snaps upskirt photographs of women. (INTERNET SCREEN GRAB)

Such games are harder for children to access than free online games, as they can be bought only by those aged above 18.

Ms Yuvarani Thangavelu, the Media Development Authority’s (MDA) deputy director for licensing policy, said that it has taken initiatives to safeguard the young from harmful online content, but these have limitations, given the Internet’s borderless nature.

Parents can subscribe to a service that **filters** out undesirable materials, which is provided by Internet service providers SingTel, StarHub and PacNet,

with help from the MDA.

But such content in games cannot be detected easily by the filters as it is **embedded**, a StarHub spokesman said.

Parents can also adjust settings on the Internet browsers or install client-based filtering software to block specific websites.

But probably the best precaution they can take is to be more aware of their children’s online activities and to communicate openly, said the National Institute of Education’s Associate Professor Angelina Khoo, who developed Internet safety materials for parents.

The nine-year-old girl has

since stopped playing the games, after her mother told her why they were **inappropriate** and began monitoring her online activities more closely.

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#### HELPDESK 我的字典

**Mask:** 掩饰 yǎn shì

**Filters:** 过滤 guò lǜ

**Embedded:** 嵌入的 qiàn rù de

**Inappropriate:** 不相宜的 bù xiāng yí de