

Gotta Catch Them All? Catch These Safety Tips First

Are you wondering why you are seeing adults and children wandering around your parks and neighborhoods staring into their phones and suddenly changing directions? It is very likely they are playing an augmented reality game such as Pokémon GO.

What is an Augmented Reality Game?

Augmented reality games, such as Pokémon GO, are games for smartphones that blend the real and digital worlds together. Kind of like a reboot of the geocaching craze a couple of decades ago, players create an avatar of themselves and try to collect virtual monsters using real time GPS on your smartphone.

The Potential Benefits of Playing

Games like Pokémon GO may encourage you to move and travel around the real world trying to catch monsters in the game. While anything that encourages physical activity is beneficial to your health, users should take some commonsense precautions.

Safety Comes First

Parents and legal guardians should regularly talk to their children about safety when crossing streets, stranger danger, Internet safety and respect for others' property. Create rules for where children can and cannot go and adapt those rules as children demonstrate responsible behavior. Below are some sound tips for all users to follow when playing augmented reality games:

- Adhere to the law and use common sense.
- Walk, don't run.
- Be aware of your surroundings — don't venture in the virtual world where you wouldn't in the real world.
- Beware of potential predators in the game who may prey on unsuspecting victims.
- Let others know of your plans and your whereabouts, when you plan to return and with whom you're going.
- Use the buddy system when venturing into unfamiliar areas or going outside at night.
- Don't venture into private properties, no matter what.
- Understand that some people unfamiliar with the game may believe you're a suspicious person.
- Look up when walking. It's easy to be distracted by a monster that is always a few steps away and doesn't change no matter what direction you go.
- Stop moving for a short while — You might find the monster you are chasing
- Never play when operating a motor vehicle, skates, skateboard, hover-board, bicycle or other means of travel.
- Be sure to follow your employer's mobile use policy should you decide to download on a corporate device and/or play at work.
- Know and abide by park and/or facility hours – Even Master game players need sleep too, you know.
- Play at appropriate times.
- Watch your battery life.

Remember, it's just a game! It shouldn't threaten your real-life or the safety of those around you.