

# In Tech: Minecraft For Schools, Amazon Dash, Data Encryption

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Published at 21:12 EDT on 20 January 2016

Microsoft has purchased Minecraft's educational version and plans to create a bigger and more robust version for classrooms.

The Redmond, Washington, software company will collaborate with TeacherGaming LLC, creator of MinecraftEdu to turn that game into "Minecraft: Education Edition." Financial terms were not disclosed.

Microsoft claims that the latest version will have improved features that make Minecraft classroom-friendly, including improved maps and coordinates that will aid teachers and students navigate the Minecraft world together. Developers plan to improve the game's multi-player features, so that up to 40 children can play together.

The game allows players to explore, fight monsters and build complex structures out of blocks. You could easily use it to teach math, according to Deirdre Quaranstrom, Microsoft's director of Minecraft education. But kids could also explore ancient temples in the game for classes in history or even look at the inside of the eyeball in the science class.

Perks for educators include an online community that includes mentoring programs that connect teachers who have experience with Minecraft to those new to it.

The game will be released this summer with free trial for teachers and students. Microsoft will reveal pricing details before the end of the school year. However, it states that it plans to keep the price at \$5 per year for all users.

Amazon is expanding its smart-home ordering service to include a assortment of new appliances. Its Dash "replenishment" service lets users reorder common household items at the click of the button. (Its initial form was based on plastic "Dash buttons" that were devoted to specific items; pressing one orders a set quantity of diapers, for example, or dishwasher detergent.)

The new Dash devices will work similarly but they won't be designated buttons any longer. Brother printers will allow users to purchase ink or replacement toner automatically. A GE

washer can automatically order detergent when it is running out. And a Gmate glucose meters, which test blood sugar levels for diabetics, will automatically order testing strips and blood-drawing lancets as needed. To activate the service, users can sign up online.

Amazon first announced the expansion of its Dash line in October. the new products are now being sold. Other products in development include Purell dispensers for hand-sanitizers, Samsung laser printers, "smart" home locks from Austin and more.

- Mae Anderson, AP Technology Writer

Some government and police officials might be furious because encryption makes it difficult for them to catch extremists and criminals, but it turns out that a lot of companies aren't bothering to protect their data by encoding it in the first place.

Sophos released on Tuesday a brand new study that surveyed 1,700 IT managers from mid-sized companies across the U.S. and Canada. 44% of those surveyed said they are currently using encryption extensively, and 43% use encryption at least on a small scale.

The encryption levels were lower in the smaller businesses surveyed, with only 38 percent of organizations that have between 100 and 500 employees claiming to be encrypting extensively.

In the U.S., encryption rates are higher and 54 percent of those surveyed said they make extensive use of encryption. Australia came second with the highest rate of 49 percent. Malaysia recorded the lowest percentage of 26 percent.

37% of respondents indicated that they did not want to encrypt extensively because of budgetary constraints while 31% mentioned concerns about performance.

- Bree Fowler, AP Technology Writer

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Verizon is the newest cell phone company to offer Web surfing to customers that don't count against their data limits.

Under such limits, you could be hit with extra fees or slower speeds if you go over the data limit of your plan. This isn't a big problem to do, particularly if you're constantly watching

videos or listening to music while on the move.

Verizon has said it's interested in "sponsored data" as another source of revenue. A company can pay Verizon so that phone users can browse their websites, play videos, or download apps without consuming their data allotment. All about video games Verizon states that companies that have signed as partners include Hearst Magazines and AOL, which Verizon owns.

AT&T launched a sponsored data program in 2012, but only a few companies are participating.

T-Mobile does, however, exempt several dozen video and music providers from caps but doesn't charge for them. It claims it wants to draw customers who view many more videos without putting strain on its network. It lowers the quality of video across all video sources, including those that are not exempt from caps. T-Mobile says that lets customers enjoy more.

Government regulators have requested AT&T and T-Mobile for more details on their strategies. Although net neutrality rules that were enacted in the last year don't prohibit the practice of selecting and choosing services that won't count against data caps technically referred to as "zero rating," some advocates say it could hinder innovation or favor some companies over others. Net neutrality is the notion that Internet service providers should treat apps and websites equally.