The background of the entire image is a scene from the game Minecraft, showing two characters standing in a lush green forest. One character is on the left, wearing a green shirt and blue pants, facing away from the viewer. The other character is on the right, wearing a brown shirt and black pants, facing towards the viewer.

THE COMPLETE THERAPYCRAFT SYSTEM

HOW TO SAFELY AND
CONFIDENTLY USE MINECRAFT IN
THERAPY SESSIONS

WITH ASHLEY JANGRO
THERAPYCRAFT.IO

WELCOME TO THERAPYCRAFT

BRING THERAPY INTO THE WORLDS YOUR CLIENTS ALREADY LOVE

Whether you've never touched a game controller or you've spent years hearing kids talk about Minecraft, you're in the right place. Some of the therapists who pick up this guide will be starting from scratch, unsure of how Minecraft even works. Others may have played casually, or have children or clients who live and breathe the game. And a few may already know Minecraft inside and out, but aren't sure how to connect it with therapy.



TECHNICAL SETUP

You do not need to be a gamer to make this work. This guide will walk you through choosing the right version of Minecraft, creating accounts, and setting up Realms for your sessions. The steps are clear and simple so you can focus on your clients, not the technology.

HIPAA & ETHICS

Client safety is always the priority. Here you will learn how to protect confidentiality, manage privacy settings, and avoid common risks. The strategies in this guide will help you use Minecraft in a way that is secure, ethical, and fully aligned with professional standards.

MEET YOUR GUIDE

ASHLEY JANGRO, LPCC & LIFE COACH

Hi, I'm Ashley. I'm a therapist, life coach, and longtime educator. I specialize in helping kids, teens, and parents work through emotional overwhelm, trauma, identity, and relationship challenges. My approach blends evidence-based modalities with creativity and sometimes that even means using video games.

I created TherapyCraft after watching my Minecraft-loving clients come alive in session. Inside the game, they communicated in ways they couldn't always access in a traditional office. Once I saw how powerful this was, I began developing tools, safety systems, and frameworks for using Minecraft as a legitimate therapeutic space.

Now I teach other therapists how to bring this work into their practices too, ethically, confidently, and with creativity.



PURCHASING MINECRAFT

To get started, you'll need to purchase Minecraft. Go to Minecraft.net, click the Buy Now button in the header, and select Minecraft: Java and Bedrock Edition ➤ PC. This is a one-time cost of \$29.99. Skip the “Deluxe” version, you do not need any of those add-ons.

Most therapists use a PC for running sessions, since it allows them to keep their secure video platform and Minecraft open on the same system. While Minecraft Bedrock Edition can also be played on consoles (Xbox, PlayStation, Switch) or mobile devices, this guide focuses on the PC setup.

⚠ Important note: Realms do not run on Mac. If you are on a Mac, you'll only be able to purchase the Java Edition, which does not support cross-platform play or Realms. **For TherapyCraft, you'll need to use a Windows PC.**

WHICH VERSION SHOULD YOU CHOOSE?

✗ JAVA EDITION

Only available for computers (PC/Mac). This version is great for advanced modding but does not allow cross-platform play or Realms. Because TherapyCraft relies on Realms, **Java Edition will not work.**

✗ EDUCATION EDITION

Designed for schools and classroom licenses. It has limited features, requires separate setup, and is not flexible enough for therapy use. **Skip this option.**

✓ BEDROCK EDITION

This is the version you want. Bedrock runs across PC, Xbox, PlayStation, Switch, and mobile, and it works with Realms. This will allow you to invite clients no matter what device they use to play! **Select this option and click Check Out.**



SETTING UP YOUR MICROSOFT ACCOUNT AND GAMERTAG

Once Minecraft finishes downloading, you'll be prompted with a screen that says Sign in or Sign Up for a Microsoft Account. Because Microsoft owns Minecraft, this is the account you'll use to change account settings and sign in. I recommend you start with an entirely new account that you only use for playing Minecraft with clients, to keep things separate.

Choosing Your Gamertag

Your Gamertag is the name clients will see when they add you as a friend or when you invite them into a Realm. It's important to choose a neutral Gamertag that does not include your real name, your practice name, or anything that identifies you as a therapist. Think of it as your "in-game professional alias." Examples: StoneRiver28 or SkyGarden34. Microsoft gives you one free Gamertag change if you want to adjust later. **Not using an identifiable gamer tag is an important part of HIPAA compliance, because your clients' friends lists are likely viewable by their friends.**

Be Patient With the Download and Start Well Before Your First Session!

Downloading and installing Minecraft can take a while, especially if Windows needs to run updates at the same time. Plan to do this well before your first client session so you aren't waiting on installation or patches with a client ready to go.

Protecting Client Privacy

Before inviting clients, you need to change your privacy settings. This step is critical for HIPAA compliance because without it, clients could see your friends list and potentially discover each other's Gamertags.

Here's how to update the setting from inside Minecraft/Microsoft:

1. Once logged into your new account, click your profile icon in the top-right corner.
2. Select Settings.
3. Navigate to Privacy & online safety.
4. Under Others can see your friends list, change it to Only me.
5. Also review other options, such as hiding your real name and limiting who can contact you.

Now, when you add clients as friends, they will only see you — not each other.

Ready to expand your
CLIENT'S WORLD?

You're about to step into a space they already feel at home in.



Therapy Craft isn't just a game. It's a new kind of therapy room: safe, creative, and completely your own.



D I S C L A I M E R

HIPAA and TherapyCraft

Minecraft itself is not HIPAA compliant. That means you cannot treat the platform as secure for sharing or storing protected health information (PHI). It's important to set clear limits around how you use it in therapy.

What This Means in Practice

- No PHI inside Minecraft. Do not use the in-game chat to share or document anything private.
- Separate platforms for conversation. Always use a HIPAA-compliant video tool (Zoom for Healthcare, Google Workspace for Business, or your EHR's video system) for voice and video during sessions. You and your client will both have Minecraft open on one screen, and your secure video software open in another window. (If you're in person, your conversation simply happens in the room as you play together.)
- No clinical notes in Minecraft. All progress notes, session documentation, and sensitive discussions stay in your HIPAA-compliant systems. Minecraft is the setting, not the record.

Informed Consent

Because Minecraft is not HIPAA compliant, you must explain this risk to your clients in writing before beginning TherapyCraft. This should be included as part of your disclosure or informed consent form.

❖ Note: This guide does not provide disclosure forms. A sample disclosure is included in the paid version of this guide, but you are responsible for reviewing and customizing your forms with legal and ethical oversight before using them in practice.

Important Disclaimer

This guide is for educational purposes only. It does not provide legal advice, nor does it replace your responsibility to understand and comply with HIPAA, your state laws, and your licensing board's regulations. Always consult with your own attorney or compliance advisor before implementing Minecraft or any other third-party tool in your clinical work.

LAST UPDATED: OCTOBER 2025.

REALMS VS. WORLDS: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Here's where things can get confusing, so let's slow down. In Minecraft, there are Realms, and there are Worlds. Think of a Realm like the building you rent for your practice. Inside that building, you get three separate therapy offices, those are the Worlds. You decide which office is unlocked and ready when a client arrives, and you always lock it again when the session ends.

Here's the key: the building (Realm) is permanent. Once you lease it, you can't change what it is or repurpose it. But the offices inside (Worlds) are flexible. You can repaint them, reset them, or rebuild them entirely when a client leaves and a new one arrives.

That's why we give Realms neutral names (like "Realm A" or "Monday Sessions") and keep all client-specific information at the World level, privately tracked in your own notes.

HOW TO CREATE A REALM AT \$3.99 (NOT \$7.99)

If you go straight to "Create Realm," you'll only see the \$7.99 option. To unlock the \$3.99 plan, you first create a World, then convert it to a Realm:

1. Open Minecraft → Play → Create New World.
2. Set it to Creative mode and turn off Multiplayer.
3. Name it something neutral (you'll rename later if needed).
4. Save & Quit.
5. Back on the Worlds tab, click Manage → Convert to Realm.

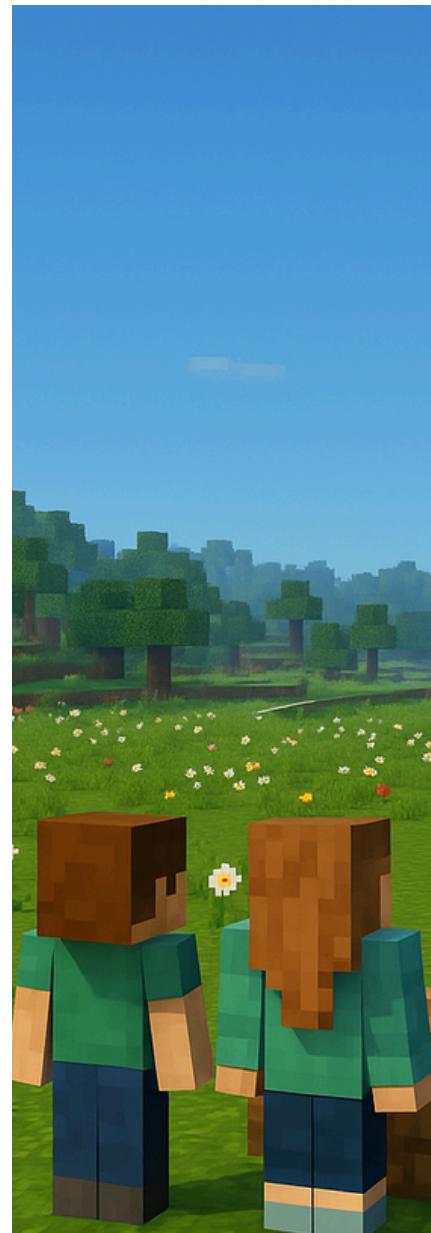
Now you'll see the \$3.99/month Realm option. Select it.

WHY WE USE THE \$3.99 REALMS FIRST

Minecraft allows 3 \$3.99 "3-person Realms" for each Minecraft game purchased (this is what you spent \$29.99 on). Each of these realms allows for you + one client in session. You are allowed up to 3 worlds live inside this one realm (only one world can be active at a time). This is the default for Minecraft.

- Each \$3.99 Realm = 3 offices (worlds).
- You can lease up to 3 buildings (realms) per account, for a total of 9 offices (worlds).
- Remember: buildings can't be repurposed, but offices inside can. Delete, reset, or remodel a world anytime you need to reuse it.

 **Tip:** Think of your Realms as three buildings you rent, and your Worlds as the individual therapy rooms where clients meet with you.



SCALING UP: \$3.99 VS. \$7.99 REALMS

At first, \$3.99 Realms are all you'll need. But eventually, you may fill those 9 office spaces and need more. Minecraft allows you to purchase three more Realms at a \$7.99 price point. These Realms allow for you + 10 other players at a time. However, you will only ever use them for you + one client at a time due to HIPAA practices (unless you were managing a group session which is not covered in this guide).

Similarly to the \$3.99 Realms, you can have up to 3 of the \$7.99 Realms, with three Worlds in each. This allows for 18 clients total, each with their own World. If you need more than this, you will have to purchase a new \$29.99 Minecraft game and create a second Microsoft login.

Though you can decide what's best for your practice, I do not pass these costs onto the client. I simply account for them when pricing my TherapyCraft sessions. I typically charge between \$150-\$250 a session (price varies due to sliding scale) and I consider the cost to pay for a realm included in that pricing.

USING A REALM DURING A SESSION

To use a realm during a session, begin the session like normal using your chosen video platform or in person. Once you are ready to play, open Minecraft on your computer, navigate to the realms tab. Select the realm for that client. Navigate to settings, then advanced, and turn the realm on. Leave the settings tab and navigate to that client's world. This allows for you to have a check in period to set goals before your client is distracted by the game.

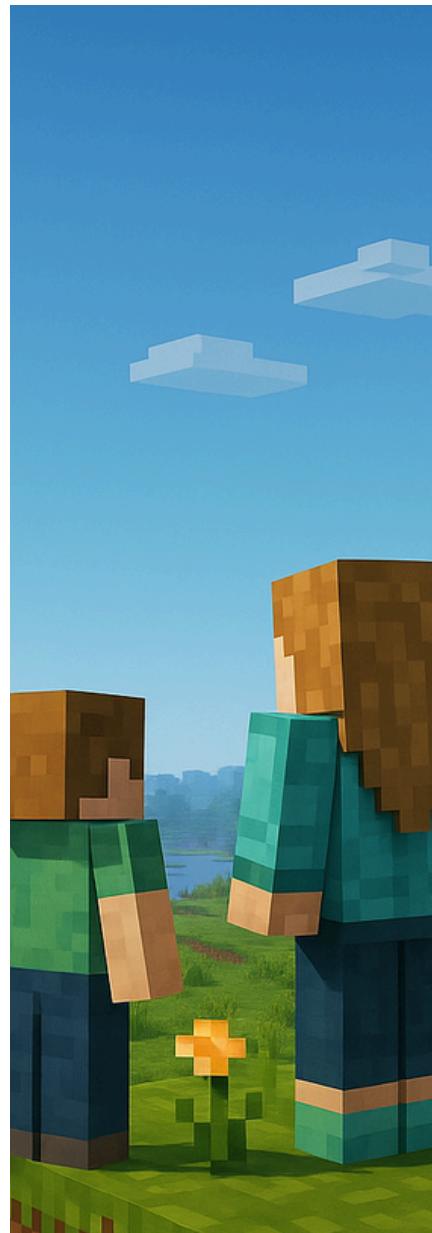
Once the session is over, exit the world, navigate again to settings, then advanced, and "close" the realm. This prevents the client from entering the realm outside of their designated session time.

IMPORTANT WORLD SETTINGS

When you create a new World inside a Realm, you'll see options that control how the game behaves. Most of these can be adjusted later, but there's one big exception: cheats.

- Cheats: You must decide at creation whether cheats are on or off. If cheats are disabled when you first make the World, you cannot turn them on later. I usually keep cheats off for stability.
- PVP (Player vs Player): This controls whether players can harm each other. I recommend turning PVP off.
- Sleep Rules: You can decide whether all players need to sleep to skip nighttime, or if one person sleeping is enough.
- Mobs and Daylight: You can also turn off hostile mobs (monsters) and freeze daylight to keep it always daytime. Both options help minimize stress and distractions during sessions.

I generally leave most settings at their defaults, but it's worth taking a quick look when you create a World. If a client has specific needs (like high anxiety around monsters or darkness), you can adjust these upfront to create a calmer play space.



CREATIVE VS. SURVIVAL

CHOOSING THE RIGHT MODE FOR YOUR CLIENT'S NEEDS

When you set up a new Minecraft world, one of the first choices you'll face is whether to use Creative Mode or Survival Mode. Each creates a completely different experience, and both can be useful in therapy. Most kids already know what they prefer, so it's often best to ask them. Sometimes, though, a parent has a good reason for leaning one way or the other. For example, I once had a client with a processing disorder whose parent wanted her to play Survival Mode. It was tough for her, but practicing quick thinking when fighting mobs gave her real-time cognitive practice that carried over outside the game.

I personally use Survival Mode most often, since that's what kids tend to choose. But for some children, especially those who play mainly for building or therapists who are new to Minecraft, Creative Mode is a perfect starting point.

CREATIVE MODE

Calm, safe, unlimited possibilities.

- ⇒ **No danger, no death, no pressure.**
- ⇒ **Access to every block and item in the game.**
- ⇒ **Fly, build instantly, break blocks in one tap.**
- ⇒ **Functions like a digital sandbox.**

Therapeutic Uses:

- ⇒ **For anxious or highly sensitive clients.**
- ⇒ **When building rapport or offering symbolic play ("show me what sadness looks like").**
- ⇒ **When a client needs safety and control.**

This mode works well with kids who need safety, space to express themselves, or the ability to focus on imagination without fear of failure. It's especially powerful for symbolic play, asking a client to build "what sadness looks like" or to create their own safe space.

SURVIVAL MODE

Challenging, emotional, real-time practice.

- ⇒ **Players gather resources, craft tools, and face danger (falling, drowning, mobs).**
- ⇒ **Risk and unpredictability lead to natural emotional reactions.**
- ⇒ **Consequences make success and persistence more meaningful.**

Therapeutic Uses:

- ⇒ **Practice emotional regulation and frustration tolerance.**
- ⇒ **Explore perseverance, problem-solving, and risk-taking.**
- ⇒ **Support clients in facing fear or disappointment with you alongside them.**
- ⇒ **Great for structured goals ("Can we build shelter before nightfall?").**

In Survival, kids often feel proud when they succeed, frustrated when they fail, or fearful when night falls and enemies appear. These natural emotional responses create powerful opportunities for in-the-moment coaching around regulation, persistence, and problem-solving.

SWITCHING & READINESS

You don't have to pick one mode forever. You can change between Creative and Survival in Realm settings at any time. That means you can start in Creative to build safety and trust, then switch to Survival once a client is ready for healthy challenge.

Remember: **Survival Mode should only be used when clients have enough regulation skills to handle it.** Some sessions will still need the safety of Creative, and that's okay. As the therapist, you can also 'co-regulate' by playing alongside your client, modeling calm responses, and guiding reflection in the moment.