TherapyCraft 101: A Complete Beginner's Guide to Minecraft-Based Sessions

For Therapists, Coaches, and Mental Health Professionals

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Meet Your Guide: Ashley Jangro, LPCC & Life Coach

Hi, I'm Ashley, a Licensed Professional Counselor Candidate (LPCC), certified life coach, and longtime educator. I specialize in helping kids, teens, and parents navigate emotional overwhelm, trauma, identity, and relationships using a mix of evidence-based modalities… and yes, sometimes video games.

I created *TherapyCraft* after watching my Minecraft-loving clients light up in session, communicating in ways they never could in a traditional office. Once I saw how powerful it was, I started developing session tools, safety systems, and frameworks for using Minecraft as a legitimate therapeutic space. Now I teach other therapists how to do the same, ethically, confidently, and creatively.

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Welcome to TherapyCraft

Whether you've never picked up a controller in your life or you've spent hours watching your own kids build castles and fight creepers, you're in the right place.

Some of the therapists reading this have **never played Minecraft** and aren't even sure where to start. Others have **played casually**, or maybe have kids or clients who talk about it nonstop but haven't considered how it could be used therapeutically. And a few of you may already be **seasoned gamers**, looking for ways to bridge your clinical skills with a platform you know well.

This guide is for all of you.

Wherever you are on the Minecraft learning curve, you'll walk away with:

- A clear understanding of how to **set up private sessions** using Minecraft Realms
- Guidance on how to keep your work **safe, ethical, and engaging**
- Ideas for creative, meaningful ways to integrate Minecraft into your therapeutic goals
- And the confidence to either begin—or expand—your Minecraft-based work with kids and teens

🧠 Why Minecraft Works in Therapy

Minecraft isn't just a game. It's a **creative sandbox** where kids and teens can express emotion, explore identity, regulate nervous systems, solve problems, and even rebuild trust.

It's non-threatening, familiar, and flexible. And most importantly—it's already deeply meaningful to many of the clients we serve.

Therapists can use Minecraft to:

- **Build therapeutic rapport** by entering the client's world
- **Use metaphor and play** to explore difficult topics safely
- **Promote emotional regulation** through structured, goal-based tasks
- **Co-create** visual representations of feelings, relationships, and memories
- **Practice communication, frustration tolerance, and repair** in real-time

You're not replacing traditional therapy—you're expanding the room you do it in. Minecraft becomes your **digital playroom** or **interactive sandbox**, where growth is visible, collaborative, and often joyful.

💡 But It's Not Just About "Getting It Working"

This guide isn't just going to show you how to launch the game and invite a client. We're going to help you:

- Set up Minecraft in a way that supports **emotional safety**
- Create a world that's **structured, private, and responsive** to your client's needs
- Choose **the right settings, game modes, and tools** to match your clinical goals
- Establish protocols so that each session is **therapeutically sound**—and never just "screen time"

- Avoid ethical pitfalls, tech stress, or safety compromises

You'll be able to confidently say:
✅ *"Yes, I offer Minecraft-based therapy—and I do it in a way that is intentional, trauma-informed, and grounded in best practices."*

Now that you know the "why," let's talk about what version of Minecraft to use—and how to set it up the right way.

Minecraft Setups – What You Need to Know

Before we get into the step-by-step setup, let's clear something up:
 There are *multiple* versions of Minecraft—and choosing the wrong one can lead to frustration, confusion, and wasted time.

Most therapists don't realize this at first, and it's often the #1 source of tech headaches when trying to get started with Minecraft-based sessions.

So here's the big picture:

Minecraft has **three main versions** you'll run into:

🟫 1. Minecraft Bedrock Edition

- This is the most *versatile* and *cross-platform* version.
- It runs on:
    - Xbox
    - PlayStation
    - Nintendo Switch
    - iPads and tablets
    - Windows 10/11 PCs
- This version is the **only one** compatible with **Minecraft Realms** for consoles.

Important: Minecraft Bedrock Realms cannot be hosted on Mac computers. You will need a Windows PC, console (Xbox, PlayStation, Switch), or tablet.

✅ This is the version we recommend for therapy.

🧪 2. Minecraft Java Edition

- PC-only (does *not* run on consoles or tablets)
- More customizable, with access to mods and plugins
- Not compatible with Realms for console users
- Requires a separate setup process

Use this only if you and your client both play on PCs and you're tech-comfortable setting up your own secure server (not covered in this guide).

🏫 3. Minecraft Education Edition

- Built for classroom learning
- Requires special school login credentials
- **Not compatible** with Realms or private therapy worlds
- Not suitable for therapeutic use

Avoid this version—it won't work for therapy.

🧠 Why We Use Minecraft Realms (Bedrock Edition)

There are many ways to set up a Minecraft world—you could build your own server, use a local LAN connection, or use mods and plugins.

But for therapy? **Simplicity, safety, and accessibility are everything.**

Minecraft Realms (Bedrock Edition) is the best choice for therapists because:

- 🎮 **It works on consoles, tablets, and PCs**
  (Most kids play on consoles, and Realms is the *only* way they can join a private game without jumping through complicated hoops.)

- 🔐 **It's invite-only**
  You control who has access, when they can join, and what they can do in your world.

- 🌍 **It's always online**
  Your Realm is hosted on Minecraft's secure servers—no need to keep your device on or open. Just toggle access before/after each session.

- 💻 **It doesn't require technical setup**
  No messing with ports, IP addresses, or custom plugins. Just create a Realm and invite your client.

🛑 A Quick Note About Timing

Setting up Minecraft takes more time than you might expect, especially if you're brand new.

You'll need to:

- Create or access a Microsoft account
- Purchase Minecraft Bedrock Edition
- Download the game (which can take a while depending on your internet speed)
- Install it, set up your Realm, and learn how to navigate the basic menus

Please do all of this *well before* your first Minecraft therapy session.
Don't wait until 10 minutes before a client logs in—it will lead to unnecessary stress.

Think of this as setting up a new therapy office. You wouldn't buy a couch, hang a painting, and test the lights all five minutes before your first session. Minecraft setup deserves the same care.

🎯 Summary

To make Minecraft work for therapy:

✅ Use **Minecraft Bedrock Edition**
✅ Host sessions in **Minecraft Realms**

✅ Use **one realm** per client
✅ Avoid Education and Java Edition unless you're experienced or have a specific reason
✅ Set everything up **at least a day in advance**

Once you've got the right version and you're ready to go, it's time to walk through the **exact steps** to create your therapy Realm and invite your first client. We'll cover that next.

How to Set Up Minecraft Realms for Therapy

Once you've got Minecraft Bedrock Edition, it's time to set up your Realm—the private game world you'll use for therapy sessions.

This step-by-step guide assumes you've **never done this before**, so if you're brand new, you're in good hands.

🛒 Step 1: Purchase Minecraft Bedrock Edition

Where to Buy:

Go to https://www.minecraft.net and choose **Minecraft for Windows** (not Java Edition).

> If you're on a tablet or console, you'll purchase through the App Store (iPad), Microsoft Store (Xbox), PlayStation Store, or Nintendo eShop.

Price ranges:

- Mobile: ~$6.99
- Windows 10/11 PC: ~$29.99
- Console (Xbox, PS, Switch): ~$19.99–$29.99

Important: Minecraft Bedrock Realms cannot be hosted on Mac computers. You will need a Windows PC, console (Xbox, PlayStation, Switch), or tablet.

💾 Step 2: Download and Install Minecraft

Once you've purchased the game:

1. Follow the download instructions on your device.
2. Allow time for installation—it may take 15–30 minutes depending on internet speed.
3. Log in with your **Microsoft account**. This account is what you'll use to manage your Realm and invite players.

   Pro Tip: Use a **professional-sounding Minecraft username** that doesn't include personal info. This is what clients will see when they join your Realm.

🌍 Step 3: Launch Minecraft and Create Your Realm

1. Open Minecraft.
2. From the main menu, click **Play**.
3. Select the **Realms** tab.
4. Choose **Create New Realm**.

(NOTE: The $3.99/month two-player Realm plan is only available if you first create a new world, exit the world, and then select 'Play on Realm' from the world menu. It's not visible when purchasing from the Realms Store directly.)

You'll be asked to:

- **Name your Realm** (this can be simple like "Therapy World" or "Client Sessions")
- **Choose a world template** (you can pick a flat world or a generated one—we'll talk about customizing later)
- **Select game mode** (start with Creative for now—you can change it later)

You'll be prompted to purchase a Realm subscription. We recommend the **2-player Realm ($3.99/month)** for 1:1 therapy. **Create one Realm per client to maintain total privacy and simplicity.**

🔄 **Alternate Option: Shared Realm (Not Recommended)**
 Another option is to use a single Realm for all clients by toggling access between sessions. If you choose this route, you'll need the 10-player Realm subscription ($7.99/month). However, maintaining privacy in a shared Realm setup is significantly more complex and comes with added risks.

To protect client identities, each client would need to:

- Create a therapy-only Microsoft account not linked to their personal gaming identity
- Purchase a separate copy of Minecraft using that new account

This reduces risk in the event that a username is accidentally exposed, but it does not eliminate the possibility that one client could attempt to contact another via username.

While this approach lowers costs, it requires careful session management, advanced knowledge of Realm settings, and explicit consent around potential risks. If you choose this method (against our recommendation), make sure you:

- Thoroughly understand the risks
- Toggle Realm access before and after every session
- Include specific language in your consent and disclosure forms

💡 **Best Practice: Use One Realm Per Client**
 While it's possible to rotate clients through the same Realm by toggling access, this approach can be complex and poses privacy risks. Creating a dedicated Realm per client:

- Eliminates all access toggling
- Keeps usernames 100% confidential
- Simplifies your therapist workflow
- Offers parents peace of mind

The 2-player Realm ($3.99/month) is affordable and purpose-built for 1:1 therapeutic work.

👤 Step 4: Add Yourself to the Realm

Once your Realm is created:

1. Click the **Edit pencil icon** next to your Realm.
2. Go to **Members**.
3. Add your own username (if it's not already there).
4. Click **Play** to enter the Realm and explore.

   This is a great time to look around and get familiar. You're the host—there's no pressure to build anything yet.

👬 Step 5: Invite Your Client

When you're ready to invite a client:

1. Go back to the **Edit Realm** screen.
2. Click **Members**.
3. Click **Invite Player**.
4. Enter their **Microsoft GamerTag** (their Minecraft username tied to their account).
5. Once invited, their name will appear in your list.

Now here's the important part:

✅ **If you're using a shared Realm (not recommended) toggle access ON for one client at a time.**

- Before a session, **enable their access** by clicking their name and selecting **Allow**.
- After the session, **disable access** to keep the Realm private and secure.

✅ **However, best practice is to create one unique Realm per client,** which avoids toggling access altogether and eliminates any risk of client crossover or username exposure.

🔁 Step 6: Manage Access Between Sessions

Think of each Realm as your client's private therapy room. **The preferred model is to have a dedicated Realm for each client**. This way, there's no need to toggle access or worry about mistakes.

If you're using one Realm for all clients, think of your Realm as a virtual therapy office. Only one client should be allowed 'in the door' at a time. **You must manually enable and disable access before and after every session—and carefully avoid any overlap**.

Before each session:

- Log in to Minecraft.
- Toggle access **ON** for that day's client.
- Disable all other client access.

After each session:

- Toggle their access **OFF**.
- Log out of the Realm.

This keeps the experience private, emotionally safe, and HIPAA-conscious (more on that later).

🎧 Step 7: Set Up Your Communication Tool

Minecraft's in-game chat is not private and is not encrypted. Instead, use a secure platform like:

- Zoom (with waiting rooms)
- Discord (if HIPAA compliance isn't required)
- Google Meet (Business version is HIPAA compliant, can be used for therapy or coaching clients)
- Your EHR video platform (for therapy clients)

Have your client log into voice chat at the start of the session so you can talk while exploring the world together.

📝 Summary

To set up your therapy Realm:
✅ Purchase Minecraft Bedrock Edition
✅ Download and install it early
✅ Create a Realm with your therapist account
✅ Invite clients by their GamerTag
✅ If using one Realm for all clients, toggle access ON/OFF for each session.
✅ Best practice: use one Realm per client to avoid access toggling altogether.
✅ Use a secure video platform for all verbal communication

What is Creative Mode vs. Survival Mode?

When setting up your Minecraft Realm, one of the first choices you'll make is:
 Should I use Creative Mode or Survival Mode?

These two game modes completely change how the world feels—and how your client experiences it. Choosing the right mode depends on your goals, your client's emotional needs, and the kind of interaction you want to foster.

🎨 Creative Mode: Calm, Safe, Unlimited

In Creative Mode, your client:

- Cannot die
- Cannot be hurt by anything
- Has access to every single block and item in the game
- Can fly, build instantly, and break blocks in one tap
- Experiences **zero danger or pressure**

Think of Creative Mode as a giant digital sandbox. It's ideal for **expression, safety, and imagination**.

💡 Use Creative Mode when:

- You're working with **anxious or highly sensitive clients**
- A child struggles with **frustration tolerance or emotional overwhelm**
- You're building rapport and want the client to feel in control
  You want to explore **symbolic play** or metaphors (e.g., "build what sadness looks like" or "create your dream safe space")
- You're helping clients **rebuild trust or autonomy** after trauma

🧠 Why It Works in Therapy:

Creative Mode removes all threats and scarcity, making it an ideal space for:

- **Trauma processing**
- **Play therapy techniques**
- **Family system metaphors** (e.g., building a home, mapping out roles)
- **Confidence-building**—especially when the therapist asks questions and lets the child "lead" the world

🧗 Survival Mode: Challenging, Emotional, Real-Time Responses

In Survival Mode, your client:

- Must gather their own resources
- Can be hurt or die (from falling, drowning, or mobs like zombies)
- Needs to craft items in order to build tools or shelter
- Cannot fly or instantly access blocks
- Feels the emotional impact of loss, fear, success, and persistence

Survival Mode introduces **risk, consequences, and unpredictability**—which can be powerful therapeutic tools in the right context.

💡 Use Survival Mode when:

- You're helping a client **practice emotional regulation**
- You want to explore themes like **perseverance, disappointment, or problem-solving**
- The client is ready to navigate challenges with support
- You want to reflect on **impulsivity, risk-taking, or frustration tolerance**
- You're doing structured or goal-oriented sessions, like **"can we build shelter before nightfall?"**

🧠 Why It Works in Therapy:

Survival Mode naturally brings up emotions—anger, fear, pride, surprise, defeat. This gives you powerful in-the-moment material to work with:

- "How did you feel when the creeper destroyed your build?"
- "What made you keep going after you died?"
- "Did you notice when you got overwhelmed? What helped you stay calm?"

It's **real-time emotional regulation practice** with natural consequences—and a perfect opportunity to observe patterns and offer coaching or reflection.

🔄 Can You Switch Between Modes?

Yes! You can switch a Realm between Creative and Survival mode **at any time** in the Realm settings.

This means you can:

- Start in Creative Mode to establish safety and rapport
- Shift to Survival Mode later to introduce healthy challenge
- Tailor the world to each individual client, or even switch modes within a single session

🧘 A Note on Emotional Readiness

Just like in real life, not every client is ready for challenge and stress. Survival Mode is best used:

- Once trust is established
- When clients have regulation skills or are practicing them

- When the game setting aligns with your clinical goals

And even then—you may choose to **"co-regulate"** by playing alongside them, modeling calm responses, and guiding their thinking with reflective prompts.

🎯 Summary

Creative Mode	Survival Mode
Calm, safe, unlimited	Risky, dynamic, emotional
Can't die or be hurt	Can be hurt or die
Access to all materials instantly	Must gather, craft, and survive
Ideal for symbolic play and rapport-building	Ideal for emotional regulation and problem-solving
Great for trauma work and younger clients	Great for older kids or goal-based sessions

Therapist Session Checklists

Running a Minecraft therapy session involves more moving parts than a traditional in-person session—but with a good system in place, it becomes simple and repeatable.

These **Pre-Session** and **Post-Session Checklists** are designed to help you stay organized, protect client privacy, and make sure every session runs smoothly—from start to finish.

✅ Pre-Session Checklist: Before the Client Joins

Task	Notes
✅ **Confirm session time**	Double-check your calendar to ensure the client is scheduled for today
✅ **Toggle Realm access ON (If using one realm for all clients. This step isn't needed if each client has their own Realm.)**	Log into Minecraft > Play > Realms > Edit Realm > Members > Allow access for this client only (If you created a separate Realm for this client, you can skip toggling—no extra steps needed.)
✅ **Disable access for all other clients (If using one realm for all clients.This step isn't needed if each client has their own Realm.)**	Prevent accidental overlap or chat exposure
✅ **Log into the Realm early**	Make sure the world loads correctly and that you're in the right place before the client arrives
✅ **Teleport or guide client to their area** (optional)	Use a command block or walk them to a private, calming space designed for their session
✅ **Open your secure communication tool**	Start Zoom, Google Meet, or whatever you're using for real-time conversation
✅ **Have reflection prompts or session goals ready**	Keep a few questions, metaphors, or challenges on hand depending on the client's needs that day

✅ Post-Session Checklist: After the Client Logs Out

Task	Notes
✅ **Gently end the session**	Thank the client, wrap up gently, and help ground them if needed
✅ **Toggle client access OFF**	Immediately remove Realm access for privacy and safety
✅ **Log out of Minecraft**	Always exit the Realm when finished
✅ **Document the session in your EHR**	Record observations, mood, insights, and any therapeutic moments that occurred
✅ **Note any world updates to follow up on next time**	For example: "Client started building a 'safe space'—follow up on meaning of glass walls next week"

✨ Want More Support? ✨.

Upgrade to the Full [Minecraft Therapy Starter System](#)

Everything you need to run confident, ethical, and creative Minecraft-based sessions—without reinventing the wheel including swipe files, treatment plan templates, editable consent forms, marketing materials, FAQs and steps for parents, Psychology Today add-on blurb, and more.

📄 1. Editable Forms & Disclosures

- 📝 Minecraft Therapy Consent Clause (HIPAA-compliant language)
- 📝 Parent Intake Add-On: Minecraft Setup + Expectations
- 📝 Supervisor Letter: Advocate for using Minecraft therapy at your agency

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💬 2. Communication & Marketing Swipe Files

- 📧 Welcome Email + Setup Instructions for Parents
- 📱 Text Reminder Template
- 🛠️ Trouble-Shooting Email for Login Issues
- 🧠 Psychology Today Profile Language for Minecraft Services
- 🌐 Website Copy and Referral One-Pager for Schools + Pediatricians

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🎮 3. Therapist Session Tools

- 🧠 Session Planning Templates (editable + printable)
- 🧱 12–24 Week Treatment Roadmaps (Diagnosis-Specific)
- 🎯 Sample Treatment Plans with Goals, Objectives, and Minecraft-Based Interventions
- 🗺️ Survival vs. Creative Mode Therapy Cheat Sheet

🧩 4. Bonus: Beginner's Guide to Minecraft for Therapists and Parents

- 🚶 How to Move, Craft, and Survive (WASD, tools, food gathering)
- 🎒 Basic Goals for Connection-Focused Play
- 👥 Helping Parents Use Minecraft to Strengthen the Parent-Child Bond

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💼 5. Real-World Clinical Application

- 🏡 Practical Examples from Ashley's Therapy Practice
- 🛠️ How Minecraft Sessions Align with Evidence-Based Interventions
- 📒 Best Practices for Progress Notes, Privacy, and Session Structure

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🔥 Download and have access to these powerful tools immediately.

[Get instant access today for just $29.99.](#)