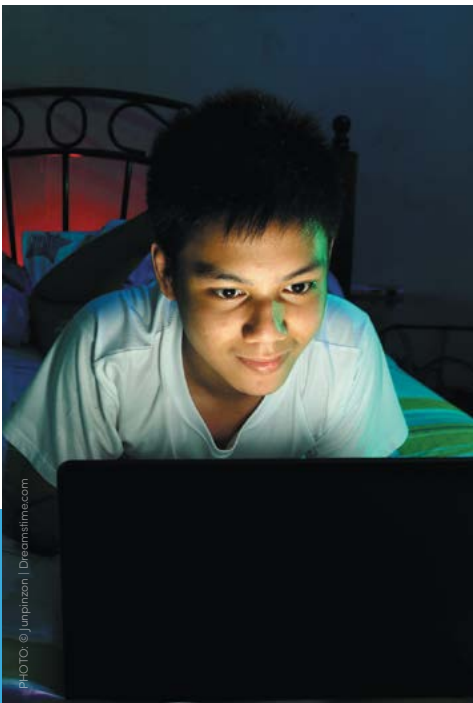




# Gaming

## Computer games with loot boxes

### A guide for parents and whānau



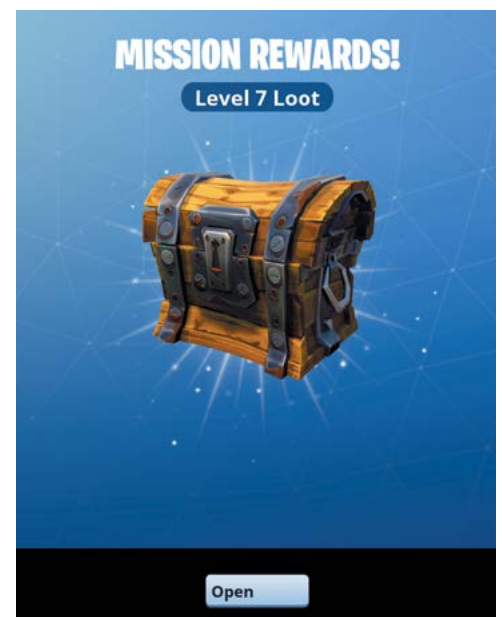
## What are loot boxes?

- Loot boxes are digital containers holding random items that players can use in a game.
- They are like a 'lucky dip'. Players don't know what they are getting until they've opened the box.
- Good items are rare, worthless items are common.
- Often, games encourage players to spend real money to get items in the boxes.

Gaming is a big part of many young people's lives. It can be fun, social and educational. As parents and whānau it's important that we know what's in the games our rangatahi are playing. Loot boxes are a common feature in games that can manipulate players into spending money and make them feel stressed, anxious or even angry.

## Why are loot boxes a problem?

- Loot boxes in many games have similar psychological effects to gambling. Like pokies, the odds are stacked against the player and many are designed to get them to spend money.
- When a player opens a box, an attractive animation with sound effects plays, similar to a pokie machine.
- New players are often given free loot boxes in a practice similar to casinos providing free credit.
- Due to the lucky dip nature of the boxes, you don't know what you're paying for until after you have made the purchase.
- This could lead to compulsive and gambling-like behaviours. Players might feel like they have to buy loot boxes.
- Young people might become upset at how much time they're spending in a game.
- Research shows a significant link between harmful gambling and loot boxes. This link is twice as strong in adolescents aged 16 to 18 than it is in adults.



# Let's start talking

While rangatahi might not start the conversation, it could really help them to talk with you about the games they're playing.

## HOW TO START THE CONVERSATION

- Ask them what they're playing and why.
- Play the game together.
- Keep it casual. If you make it heavy it will be harder for them to open up about concerns.

## USING GAMING AS A LEARNING TOOL

- Talking to young people about what they are playing is a great way to help them think critically.

## WHAT TO SAY

- Ask them to teach you about loot boxes.
- Ask them how it makes them feel if they don't get very good 'loot' in their box versus if they get great 'loot'.
- Ask what they think the positives and negatives of loot boxes are in a game.
- Ask how they feel about having to use their own money to buy loot boxes.
- Ask them what the impacts of loot boxes might be on their peers or younger players.
- Ask them if they think loot boxes are the same as gambling and why/why not.



# What else can you do?

Talking with your young person about the games they are playing is really important. But there are also other things that you can do to ensure their safety.

- Do a bit of research before buying games to make sure they're age-appropriate.
- All game consoles and mobile devices have parental controls that you can turn on to prevent in-game purchases from being made.
- Talk with your young person about the risks of using your credit card details to buy loot boxes.

Remember, playing a game should be fun, not something that makes your child feel stressed or sad.



PGF Services is part of the PGF Group along with Mapu Maia Pasifika Service and Asian Family Services. Free and confidential counselling and support services are available throughout New Zealand for anyone impacted by gambling.

Duty counsellors are available by phone, email or live chat between 8.30am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday to answer questions and provide immediate support. You can reach our counsellors at 0800 664 262 and [help@pgf.nz](mailto:help@pgf.nz)

PGF Services has a dedicated health promotion team who work in the community to raise awareness of gambling harm.

[www.pgf.nz](http://www.pgf.nz)

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