

Safer Gaming

A guide for parents

Gaming is the act of playing electronic games or video games on a game console (Xbox/PlayStation), personal computer, handheld device (Nintendo/Game Boy) or mobile device (phone/tablet). In other words 'playing video games.'

The term 'gaming' is also used to describe the practice of gambling (particularly casino gambling and poker machines).



Gaming Addiction

Modern electronic and video games are exciting, rewarding and engaging. Children also play because the games are popular with their peers.

Gaming can become addictive

Players can become completely absorbed in a game and play for long hours.

Increased skill can mean more time spent playing to get the same level of enjoyment.

Players can often experience withdrawal when trying to stop gaming.



It's important that when your child starts playing games that you understand the risks so you can help your child enter the world of gaming as safely as possible.

As with drug use and gambling, excessive gaming can overstimulate a chemical in our brain (dopamine) that helps to control our pleasure and reward centre. When overstimulated the chemical can make us crave activities that aren't good for us.

Gaming or Gambling?

Simulated gambling games look, feel and play like casino games (poker machines, Blackjack), but do not directly involve the exchange of money.

They are digital gambling-like activities that give players the opportunity to practice gambling. Players play for points or virtual coins.



Simulated gambling is not regulated like real money gambling and is easily accessible by children on social media and in-app purchases.

Early exposure can desensitise your child to gambling, make them believe it's harmless and fun and increase their risk of developing gambling problems.

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In-game Gambling

Some video games actually include gambling (The Sims, Grand Theft Auto) and allow players to engage in gambling activities in the game. Many games simulate gambling by using gambling imagery and terminology such as betting or bookies.

Counter Strike Global Offensive has been linked to underage gambling via third-party websites where players can place bets on teams. Instead of betting real money they bet 'skins' (virtual items), and rare skins can sell for thousands of dollars online.

It has also been suggested that purchasing lucky dip "loot boxes" (crates that contain virtual items) with real money, in games like Fortnite, could lead to young people developing gambling problems. This is because the mechanics of loot boxes is similar to that of a pokie machine.

Advertising

Free games on mobile devices make money through advertising in games. These games are largely unregulated so that means the gambling industry can use this as an opportunity to advertise to your

Games are designed to keep the player hooked and in 'the zone'. Game developers use techniques that make it hard for a player to stop and easy-to-play strategies that give the illusion of skill.

In-app purchases allow players to progress further in the game or gain advantage by purchasing credits or random rewards.



The only way to know what the game is advertising is to actually supervise your child whilst playing.

Signs your child is struggling with excessive gaming can include:

- Depression or anxiousness
- Anger or violence when asked to stop playing
- Missing school or work, less interest in hobbies
- Poor eating and sleeping habits
- Increased time playing video games
- Difficulty quitting playing
- Lying
- Less time for social activities and friends



Excessive gaming is defined as 'playing so often that it has a negative impact on your life.'

For more information visit:
www.pgf.nz/safer-gaming