



GAMING AND GAMBLING

FACT SHEET

Gaming and gambling are closely related, with the gambling industry often using the terms interchangeably. The key distinction is that gaming relies on skill to determine the outcome, while gambling is based on chance.

Nowadays, many gaming activities incorporate gambling elements, and vice versa.

The Gambling-Gaming Link

Modern video games are exciting, rewarding and engaging. People often spend extended lengths of time playing these games. Players can become completely absorbed in a game and play for 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.

As with drug use and gambling, excessive gaming can overstimulate a chemical in our brains called dopamine which helps control feelings of pleasure and reward. When overstimulated the chemical can make us crave activities that aren't good for us.

Is it gaming or gambling?

Simulated gambling is a digital, gambling-like activity where players play for points or virtual coins, but no money is wagered. They look, feel and play like casino games (i.e. pokie machines or Blackjack), and give players the opportunity to practice gambling.

Some video games include gambling (The Sims/Grand Theft Auto) and allow players to engage in gambling activities inside the game. Many games simulate gambling by using gambling imagery and terminology, such as betting or bookies. Games like Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (R16 in New Zealand) have been linked to underage gambling, and although the actual game does not feature gambling, players can place bets on teams in

E-Sports tournaments using third-party websites.

Frequently, in-game purchases (e.g., skins) can be bet for the chance to win something worth more, but at the risk of losing their purchase or ending up with something worth less. They can sell for thousands of dollars online.

Free games on mobile devices are largely unregulated, so the gambling industry can use this as an opportunity to advertise. 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 in-app purchases allow players to progress further in the game by purchasing credits or random rewards.

Keeping yourself safe while gaming

Plan ahead by arranging your day with other recreational activities in addition to gaming, or set a time limit.

Look out for signs that you're experiencing harm from gambling in gaming, such as:

- Thinking obsessively about spending money in games
- Becoming agitated or depressed when your gaming is interrupted
- Needing to play for longer and spend more money
- Limited or no social connections outside of gaming
- Celebrating a win by spending more money on a game
- Lying or being evasive about your losses

PUSH START



What you can do as a friend or whānau member?

Talk about it

- Talk to your friends or whānau member about the games they play online and about what information is appropriate to share. Sharing personal information online (name, age, birthday, location, contact information) can be risky.

Get to know the game

- How does the game work?
- Who does your mate play with?
- Who do they play against?
- What is the rating of the game?
- How good is your mate at the game?
- Can you spend real money on the game (in-app purchases)?

Time management

If your friend or whānau member is spending excessive amounts of time gaming, there could be a reason.

- Is their environment tense or stressful?
- Are they being bullied?
- Is the person struggling at school or at work?
- Are there other relationship issues?

DEFINITIONS

Monetization Features

These include free and paid virtual currencies or items. There's also the capacity for gambling, such as the use of real money to purchase loot boxes which offer chances to win random rewards. Example: Fortnite.

Potential harm: The likelihood of winning with loot boxes is slim. The anticipation and surprise elements may also affect player judgment. In fact, research shows that there is an association between loot box buying and problem gambling.

Embedded, simulated gambling environment

Gambling with other players through simulated poker, Blackjack and other traditional gambling forms using virtual currency are offered as a side activity. Example: Red Dead Redemption.

Potential harm: Greater exposure to and opportunity for gambling within game play. There is no legal age restrictions. Example: PlayStation 2's Casino Challenge.

NEED HELP?

We know it can be hard to ask for help, but if gaming or gambling is impacting your life or the life of someone close to you, contact us. At PGF Services we provide free, professional and confidential support.