

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

Include this article in your newsletters and communications to the parents and carers of your students.

How gambling has crashed gaming

If your kids play video games, they've probably asked for your credit card details to purchase virtual items more than once. That's because while many popular games are cheap or even free to begin with, they often involve in-game purchases any time a player wants to customise their avatar, progress to higher levels, or access special weapons. With the gaming industry's revenue model built around these irresistible 'microtransactions', there are many ways games are designed to keep kids playing longer and spending more.

Common gambling features in games include:

- **Loot boxes:** Mystery boxes offering random rewards. They mirror gambling because the outcome of purchasing a loot box is uncertain, and the thrill of reward encourages longer gaming and repeat spending.
- **In-game gambling:** Gambling scenarios within a game, like poker or roulette, can normalise gambling and teach young people how to gamble in a risk-free environment.
- **Social casino games:** Gaming apps like Zynga Poker and Slotomania simulate gambling - often with inflated odds - and can prime children to move onto real gambling products.

What's the issue?

Like any activity - too much gaming can be harmful to kids' health, wellbeing, finances and relationships. And with the rise of gambling tactics and features in video game design, kids are at greater risk of experiencing these harms – with parents often unaware it's happening.

What can you do?

Talking to kids about gaming is the best way parents can help kids understand the risks and protect them from harm. You don't have to be a gaming expert - simply show them that you're interested in the games they enjoy. Ask them if they have spotted any gambling-related features in games they play and whether they think they are being manipulated by them.

For more information about gaming, how to talk to your teen, and where to get support visit the Be Ahead of the Game website: beaheadofthegame.vic.gov.au

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