The lines between gaming and gambling have become more and more blurred. Although gaming does not traditionally involve the stake of money, online gaming has increasingly included features that look and feel a lot like gambling.

## Problem gaming: not all fun and games

Online gaming allows people from all over the world to connect and play games together. Gaming can be accessed across a variety of platforms such as PCs, consoles and even on mobile devices.

Gaming may start being a problem when:

- > gaming is persistent or compulsive
- > you feel a loss of control over gaming
- > you are missing real world opportunities or responsibilities due to gaming
- > you feel irritable, sad or bored when you are unable to play.

Problem gaming can lead to significant impacts on relationships, mental health and even physical health. Those who experience problems with gaming are also more likely to experience gambling harm.

## **Gambling elements in games**

Much like gambling activities, games are designed to be highly engaging and encourage the player to keep coming back for more.

Gambling or gambling-like features are sneaking their way into gaming and making the transition from gaming to gambling almost seamless. Games with gambling components are played by around 40% of young people aged between 12 and 17 (NSW Youth Gambling Study 2020).

#### Gaming features to look out for in online gaming

Social casino games Simulated versions of traditional gambling activities such as blackjack or poker machines, using in-game virtual currency or real money

Loot box Virtual treasure chests with unknown contents or prizes, that are earnt through gameplay or purchased with real money

E-sports

Organised competitive

video gaming often for a cash prize, sponsorship

or global recognition

Skins Purchasing virtual goods

(eg. skins to change the appearance of an avatar) that may enhance the player's experience using real money

Fantasy sport Online competitors assemble a virtual team with outcomes decided by the outcomes of real-life professional athletes

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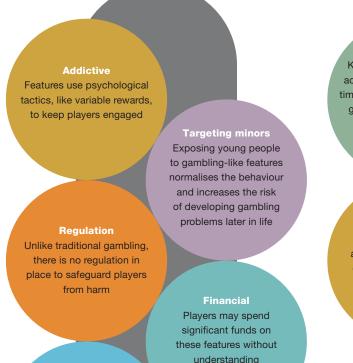


## What are the risks?

Gambling-like features in online gaming is a growing area of concern for many reasons.

# **Protecting yourself**

To protect yourself from experiencing harm because of gaming and in-game gambling features, here are some things you can do.



Mental health The constant desire for rewards can create a cycle of frustration and dissatisfaction - leading to increased stress. anxiety and depression

understanding implications

Monitor Keep track of your gaming activity, including how much time you are spending playing games, how often and the money you spend on in-game purchases

Physically It's easy to get lost in a virtual world - play with others in the same room so you can remind each other to take a break

Avoid alcohol or drugs

Limit drinking alcohol or using drugs while gaming

Know the risks Learn about the risks involved with gaming and in-game features like loot boxes

Do something off scre Enjoy other activities such as sport or art and make sure you balance your time on screen with activities off-screen

To learn more about gaming and gambling visit gamblinghelponline.org.au or for support with gaming and gambling contact us on the number below.



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