



TALKING TO TEENS ABOUT GAMBLING

Teenagers' attitudes towards betting start to form long before it's legal for them to gamble.

Gambling ads, Australia's betting culture and many mass media messages consumed by young people promote the idea that gambling is a normal, fun activity. When something feels normal, it doesn't seem risky.

Conversation starters

It is important to talk to your teen about the risks and potential harms associated with gambling so they are able to make informed choices down the track.

Much like having 'the talk' about drinking, drugs and sex, initiating a conversation about gambling may seem a bit uncomfortable.

These conversation starters can help introduce the topic of gambling in a non-threatening way.

- Have you noticed the betting ads on TV? What do you think of them?
- Do you think sports betting seems less risky than other types of gambling because it involves some skill?
- Do you think people feel they have to gamble to enjoy the footy or other sports?
- What do you think about gambling? Does it seem like an easy way to make money?
- Have any of your friends ever gambled? What did they bet on?
- This gambling ad has popped up on my phone. Have you seen anything like that on your phone?

Discussion points

Starting the conversation provides an opportunity to explore with your teen how gambling and the gambling industry work. Here are some points you may like to discuss.

- Betting companies need to make a profit to stay in business. Gambling is designed so that betting operators are more likely to win than punters.
- Gambling works on the rules of probability – the odds of winning don't change the longer you play.
- There's no such thing as a 'sure bet'. While a punter's knowledge and skills might statistically increase the chance of winning, luck and other factors outside their control will always influence the outcome.
- Gambling advertising can – incorrectly – make betting seem less risky through offers like 'cash back' and bonus bets.

How to communicate so the message lands

When communicating with teens, the delivery is just as important as the message. When the topic is gambling, it's important to create an open, non-judgemental dialogue. Here are some tips for a positive discussion.

1. De-personalise the conversation

Talking with empathy about the experiences of others can be a non-threatening way to get a point across. For example, 'A friend at work told me her son lost a lot of money betting on sport. She's really worried about him. Have you ever heard of this happening?'

2. Learn to listen

Teens are more receptive to discussing issues when they know you will listen to their thoughts or experiences. Respect their point of view, even if you disagree with it.

3. Choose the right time

Casual situations with no direct eye contact provide good opportunities to talk about gambling with your teen — driving to footy practice, sitting on the couch, or putting something in their room, for example.

4. Use humour

You might think that if you lighten things up, the importance of the message will be lost. But if the conversation becomes too intense, your teen may switch off.

5. Tailor your message

Keep your teenager interested in the discussion by making it relevant to them. For example, you might consider talking about the link between sports and gambling, or gaming and gambling.

6. Leave them wanting more

You might feel like you're on a roll and want to ram home the message with some more examples. It's actually more effective though to have lots of short conversations than a single marathon discussion.

Reinforce the message

Teens notice what you do, as well as what you say, and are influenced by it. If they see you gambling regularly or only ever talking about the wins, they are likely to think this is normal. Reinforce your discussions with them by explaining the risks involved in any gambling you do and that you only gamble what you can afford to lose.



UNDERSTANDING GAMING — A REFERENCE FOR PARENTS

The modern gaming world can seem foreign and overwhelming to many parents. This fact sheet gives you the run-down on the most common games on the market, how these games are played, the major gaming genres and the different pricing structures. Understanding these basics will help you communicate more effectively with your kids about gaming.

Types of games

Player vs player (PVP) – people play against each other in live action. This type of game is normally played online, with players in different locations.

Player vs environment (PVE) – the player fights against computer-controlled enemies.

Role-playing game (RPG) – players assume the role of a character with specific strengths and attributes in a fictional setting. Role playing games can be single-player or multi-player and normally involve completing quests by acting out their role through structured decision making.

Massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) – a vast, interactive world where thousands of people play together online and go on a mission to defeat an enemy.

First Person Shooter (FPS) – weapon-based game where the player assumes the character of a 'shooter' and sees the game through their eyes. You do not see your character but you can see the weapon you're holding. In a Third Person Shooter game, the view is from above and you can see your character.

Multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) – a game where a player controls a single character in a team that competes to destroy the opposing team's main structure.

Sandbox – a game without specific instructions or objectives where the player is free to roam through an 'open world' and select whatever task or activity they want

to participate in. This may include building structures, exploring different parts of a city, or interacting with various characters.

Ways to play and watch games

Console – a video game system that typically hooks up to a TV, but there are also portable, handheld versions. Popular consoles are Microsoft Xbox 360, Sony PlayStation, and Nintendo Wii or Switch.

Virtual reality (VR) gaming – a person experiences a 3-D environment, most commonly through a virtual reality headset, and can interact with that environment during a game.

Twitch – an online streaming technology that allows people to play games or watch others play them. It's important to be aware that games are live-to-air, so they are not regulated or edited.

Steam – a popular gaming distribution site where gamers buy, play, and chat privately with friends inside and outside of games. Battle.net is a similar site.

Pricing

Free-to-play (F2P, FtP) or freemium – these games are free to download and play but often incorporate microtransactions to generate revenue for the developers.

Microtransactions – in-game or in-app purchases, usually under \$10 and often for the virtual currency a player needs to acquire goods or premium content.

Pay-to-play (P2P, PtP) or premium – games that require an upfront or monthly subscription payment to play.

Popular games

Fortnite: Battle Royale (F2P) – an online shooter game in which 100 players fight to be the last person standing. Available on console, PC and as a mobile app. Rated M.

Red Dead Redemption II (P2P) – a Western-themed action-adventure game in which the player robs, steals and fights their way across America. Available on console. Rated MA15+.

Call of Duty: Black Ops 4 (P2P) – a multiplayer FPS game set in the future. Available on console and PC. Rated MA15+.

FIFA 19 / NBA 2K19 (P2P) – football (FIFA) and basketball (NBA) simulation games. Available on console and PC. Rated G.

Assassin's Creed: Odyssey (P2P) – set in ancient Greece, players control a soldier who fights for both sides as they attempt to unite their family and uncover a malign cult. Available on console and PC. Rated MA15+.

Super Smash Bros. (P2P) – a series of crossover fighting video games published by Nintendo that primarily feature characters from their various franchises. Available on console. Rated PG.

Marvel's Spider Man (P2P) – an action-adventure game where Spider Man uses his superhero abilities to protect the citizens of New York from different enemies. Available on console. Rated M.

Social casino games (F2P) – online versions of casino games like blackjack and poker with no monetary payout for winning. Available as mobile apps or through social media. Generally rated G or PG.

eSport – professional gamers playing against each other for the entertainment of spectators. These events are usually held in a stadium with a live audience, as well as televised via YouTube, Twitch or TV.

Fantasy sport – an online game in which players assemble imaginary or virtual teams of real players of a professional sport to compete based on the statistical performance of those players in actual games. There is sometimes a 'cost of entry' fee that creates a prize pool.

In-game actions

Loot boxes – 'treasure-chests' that contain virtual rewards of varying value, such as clothing, weapons, or game advantages. Players purchase them in microtransactions using in-game currency (credit that's earned as you play) or real money (via PayPal or credit cards). Loot boxes are chance-based – players do not know what's inside them before purchasing.

Skins – vanity items that serve no other purpose in gaming than to change the look of a character or weapon, but can be used as currency on special gambling websites. Skins can be earned while playing or bought using in-game currency.

Avatar – a graphical representation of the player, or the player's alter ego or character.

Experience points (XP) – used in RPGs to quantify a player's progress through a game.

Troll – a person who harasses others in a multiplayer game or online.

CLASSIFICATION OF GAMES

Like TV and movies, video games are classified by the Australian Classification Board. Video games are rated based on the presence and impact of the following elements: themes, violence, sex, language, drug use, and nudity.

G – suitable for all ages.


PG – parental guidance is recommended as it contains content that children may find confusing or upsetting.

M – recommended for ages 15 and over as it contains content of a moderate impact such as nudity, horror or depictions of violence.

MA15+ – legally restricted to people 15 and over as it contains content strong in impact, for example, realistic or graphic violence, aggressive coarse language or drug use.

R18+ – legally restricted to people 18 and over.

Gambling content falls under the broad category of 'themes' and it's important to be aware that these games are mostly rated 'G' (suitable for children) or 'PG' (parental guidance recommended by people under 15).



THE LINK BETWEEN GAMING AND GAMBLING

The line between gaming and online gambling is becoming increasingly blurry. Both activities comprise elements of skill and chance, with some featuring similar graphics and visuals, and they are accessible from the same devices and online channels. Further, game design has evolved to include gambling-like elements.

The blurry line

Online games with loot boxes

A loot box is an in-game 'reward'. Players pay for the chance to win a mystery virtual item, which may turn out to be worth less than the purchase price. Psychologically, loot boxes are similar to pokies and scratchies as they require no skill and the outcome is based on chance. In some countries they are considered to be gambling, for example, Belgium and the Netherlands.

Gambling with virtual goods ('skin gambling')

Skins are cosmetic items that change the look of a character or weapon. They can be earned while playing, won in a loot box, or bought using in-game or actual currency, including gift cards and vouchers.

The 'value' of a skin is based on its rarity. In 'skin gambling', players deposit skins on third-party gambling sites and use them as virtual currency to gamble.

Some famous online gamers ('influencers') promote skin gambling sites or produce sponsored content for them on Twitch and YouTube. Promotions typically show a person consistently winning large sums of money, which may lead young people to believe the activity involves no risk.

Simulated gambling

Simulated gambling games imitate the look, feel and play of gambling but do not involve real money. The most popular forms are poker, lotteries, pokies and casino-style games such as blackjack. Some non-gambling games contain gambling sub-games.

Simulated gambling games are often promoted through live online broadcasts, like gameplay streaming on Twitch, and sponsored advertising on social media. In Australia, video games with gambling themes are generally classified as 'G' or 'PG' by the Office of Film and Literature Classification.

Fantasy sport

In fantasy sport, the participant creates a virtual team of real-life players from a professional sporting code. Players are awarded 'fantasy points' based on their actual game performance statistics. Players typically accumulate points over an entire sporting season and play for fun, not money. However, pay-for-play models with prize pools and one-game competitions are emerging, which some people are concerned are too much like sports betting.

eSports

Competitive gaming, or eSports, has gained rapid popularity and gambling operators have responded by encouraging people to bet on matches. This form of gambling is only available through online betting sites, but it is advertised during live broadcasts that are open to all ages, as well as through eSports websites and social media.

Reducing your child's exposure to gambling content

It is too early to say how the exposure of young people to gambling advertising or simulated gambling may affect their future experiences. But we know that these activities can make gambling seem 'normal' to young people, who may not understand that gambling involves risks and can lead to harm.

To reduce your child's exposure to gambling advertising or simulated gambling, there are some practical actions you can take. For example:

- ask your child what games they play so you can find out more about them. Preview the gameplay on YouTube to get a feel for a game, or play it yourself to see if gambling ads pop up. Advertising is commonplace in free-to-play games to generate revenue for the developers

- encourage kids to use smartphones, computers and consoles in family areas, rather than bedrooms, so you can see what they're playing. This will help you talk to your child about the games they play and to intervene if anything concerning comes on to the screen
- prevent unintentional access to gambling sites by using a filter such as Gamblock or Betfilter to block them.

You can limit or monitor the purchase of games or microtransactions like loot boxes by:

- turning off in-app purchase options or setting up a password for paid activity through the App Store (note: this will not restrict the download of free apps)
- setting up alerts to your phone for any purchases so you can track your child's spending.

Gaming:

Keep calm and continue parenting

Pre-session questions

1. Do you feel well informed about online gaming? 1 to 5

Using the following scale, please answer Q.1

- 1: Very little knowledge to no understanding
- 2: Very little knowledge but I don't worry as they know more than me
- 3: I know enough to manage most of the questions I am asked
- 4: I know more than my child to support them adequately
- 5: I know everything I need to and actively guide them

2. How do you feel about your child's gaming? 1 to 5

Using the following scale, answer Q.2

- 1: Worried
- 2: Unsure
- 3: Neither good nor bad
- 4: Good
- 5: Great

3. Does your child have conversations with you about their online gaming experiences? 1 to 5

Using the following scale, please answer Q. 3

- 1: I have never had conversations with my child
- 2: I sometimes have had conversations with my child
- 3: I know enough to answer questions, should the conversation arise
- 4: Whenever a question came up, I have had conversations with my child
- 5: I regularly have conversations with my child

4. Do you sometimes wish you had information on particular topics about online gaming? Y/N

5. Do you assist your teenager in making informed decisions about the games they play? Y/N

6. Do you talk to your child about the amount of time they spend gaming online? Y/N

7. Do you know where to get support, resources and assistance regarding gaming issues if needed?

Using the following scale, please answer Q.7

- 1: No, but have never needed it
- 2: No, and have tried to find them
- 3: Unsure
- 4: Yes, but would like more
- 5: Yes, got it covered



Gaming:

Keep calm and continue parenting

Post-session questions

1. Do you feel well informed about online gaming? 1 to 5

Using the following scale, please answer Q.1

- 1: Very little knowledge to no understanding
- 2: Very little knowledge but I don't worry as they know more than me
- 3: I know enough to manage most of the questions I am asked
- 4: I know more than my child to support them adequately
- 5: I know everything I need to and actively guide them

2. Following this session, I intend to: 1, 2 or 3

- 1. Pay less attention to my child's gaming,
- 2. Pay the same amount of attention to my child's gaming
- 3. Get more involved with my child's gaming

3. Do you feel more informed about gaming and possible pitfalls to watch out for? Y/N

4. Did the session provide you with interesting topics for conversations about online gaming with your child? Y/N

5. Do you feel able to offer more support to your child and raise awareness of potential online risks and how to overcome them? Y/N

6. Will you be assisting your child to make informed decisions about the games they play and the amount of time they spend online? Y/N

7. If your child was showing an interest in under-age gambling would you know how to recognise the signs? 1 to 5

Using the following scale, please answer Q.7

- 1: Very little to no understanding
- 2: Very little but I don't worry as they know more than me
- 3: I know enough to manage most of the questions I am asked
- 4: I know more than my child to support them adequately
- 5: I know everything I need to and actively guide them

8. What is one take-away or action from the workshop that you'd like to implement to support your child?

9. Is there anything that you felt was missing from the presentation or would have liked to know more about?

