



Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport,  
Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

Australian  
Classification



# Conversation guide

**This guide helps you have conversations with your kids about gambling-like content in video games.**

You don't need to be a gaming expert to chat with your child about video games. There are some simple, but important things you can say about games that blur the line between gaming and gambling.



**Understand the issue** – read over our 'Key facts about gambling-like content in video games' to better understanding what it looks like and the risks



**Start a conversation** – we have tips to start conversations and set boundaries for:

- Parents and carers of 5 – 8 year old children
- Parents and carers of 9 – 12 year old children
- Parents and children of teens



**Establish healthy gaming habits** – try these ideas to help encourage healthy gaming habits



**More information and support** – get more advice and support when you need it.

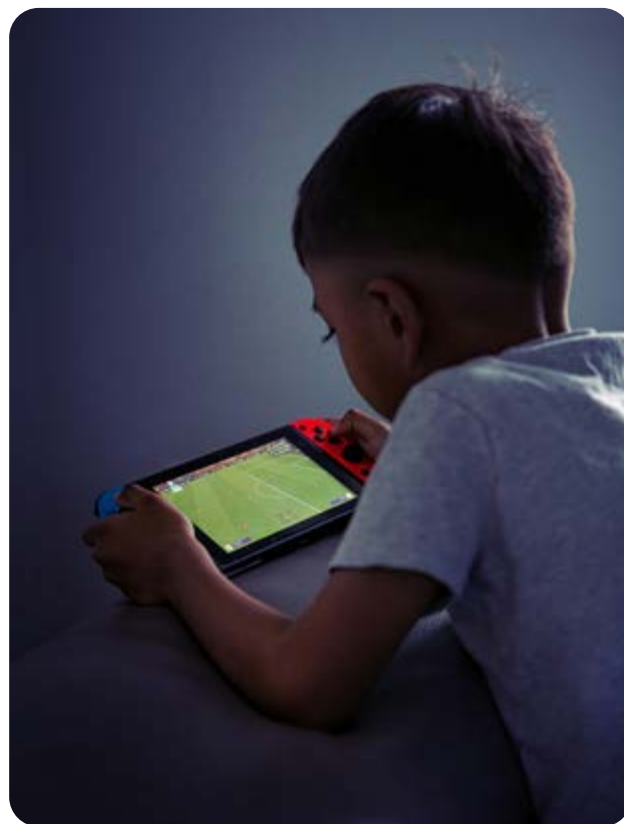


## What we know

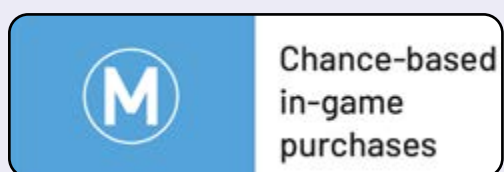
Kids across Australia use video games to have fun, relax and connect with their friends. Video games can offer entertainment and opportunities for learning or creativity.

In recent years, more games have started to include features that look and feel like gambling – like loot boxes, spinners and mystery boxes. These features can be flashy and exciting for kids, they're designed to keep players spending time and money in the game.

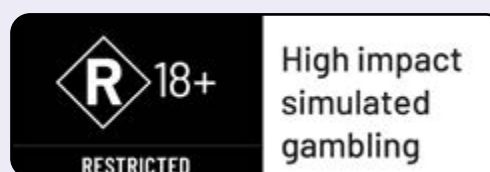
Not all kids who play games with gambling-like features will go on to develop problems, but research shows exposure to gambling-like content can increase risks of problem gambling, as well as psychological and emotional harm. Find out more at '[Understand the issue](#).'



Classifications or game ratings are in place to help parents and carers **spot video games with gambling-like content**:



In game purchases with an element of chance – like loot boxes where people pay for items (with real or in-game currency) and they don't know what they'll get until they buy and open it – are **rated M** (not recommended for children under 15).



Simulated gaming, such as casino-style games, are legally restricted to adults and **classified R18+**.

## There are simple steps you can take to protect your kids:



**Check the Classification [website](#)** for game ratings and find out if the game your child is playing or wants to play includes gambling-like features. There's an easy-to-use search bar on the website.



**Set up parental controls** to place limits on time or money spent in games. There's a [handy information sheet](#) on how to do this.



**Remove credit card details from gaming consoles and tablets** to limit the opportunity for accidental or unauthorised purchases.



**Have a chat with your kids** about the games they play and the risks – this conversation guide can help!





## First, understand the issue...

### Key facts about gambling-like content in video games

*It's important to understand how gambling-like features work in games so we can confidently speak to our kids, answer their questions and help them make safer and smarter choices about gaming.*

Gambling-like content in video games is designed to keep players in the game and spending money. They can look and feel a lot like gambling, but sometimes they are a bit harder to spot. Here are a few common features or things to know:



- **In-game currency:** Some games use their own money (e.g. coins) which can make it harder for players to keep track of whether they're spending real world money.



- **Loot boxes:** These are like a digital lucky dip – using real money or in-game currency for a chance to win random items. You don't know what you're going to get until you pay and open it. The rare items are usually harder to win and carry high value in later game play. Players are often tempted to keep buying loot boxes.



- **Spinner wheels:** These look like spinning wheels you might see on a game show – they're bright and colourful and have lots of possible prizes. Some games will give you a free spin a day, sometimes you need to spend in-game currency or pay real money for chances to spin and win.



- **Pay to win features:** Some games are designed to encourage players to pay for upgrades, power-ups or advantages. This can pressure kids to spend money or in-game currency to keep up or progress in the game.



- **Psychological tricks:** Games can be designed with bright colours and sounds to make rewards feel thrilling, countdown timers can create urgency and showing other players winning can trick kids into thinking they can easily win.

These mechanics can shape how kids think about money, risk and reward. Find out more about the risks with some [stats and facts](#).



If you're not sure whether a game has gambling-like content, go to [classification.gov.au/NewGameRatings](https://classification.gov.au/NewGameRatings) and search for its classification.

## Facts about the risks

Studies have shown there are links between kids playing games with gambling-like features and an increased risk in gambling harm, and emotional and mental health challenges. Here are some stats and facts.



Gaming is popular among children in Australia. By the time children are 12–13 years old, about **96% of boys, and 90% of girls play digital games.**<sup>1</sup>



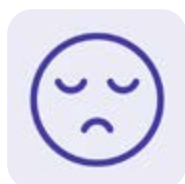
**Over a third** (about 34%) of children and adolescents aged between 8 and 17 years old **made a purchase in a game.**<sup>2</sup>



At 16–17 years of age, teenagers playing games that include gambling-like features are **40% more likely to spend real money** on gambling when they get older.<sup>3</sup>



People who purchase **loot boxes** in games are more likely to be **distressed** and experience **issues with money and gambling.**<sup>4</sup>



Gaming can cause **financial stress, poor wellbeing, a loss of trust and a loss of privacy** through personal information being shared without consent.<sup>5</sup>

- 1 Sakata, K., & Jenkinson, R. (2022). [What is the link between video gaming and gambling? Growing Up in Australia Snapshot Series, Issue 7](#)
- 2 Office of the E-safety Commissioner (2017) [Youth and Gaming](#)
- 3 Sakata, K., & Jenkinson, R. (2022). [What is the link between video gaming and gambling? Growing Up in Australia Snapshot Series, Issue 7](#)
- 4 Greer, N., Boyle, C. M. & Jenkinson, R. (2022) [Harms associated with loot boxes and simulated gambling in video games](#)
- 5 Gupta, C., Campbell, M., Robards, B. & Fordyce, R. (2025). [Playing the Player: Unfair digital gaming practices and their impact on Australians](#)







## Tips to help you chat to your kids...

*Talking to our kids is one important way parents and family can keep kids safe when gaming. Whether your child is just starting school or about to be an adult, here are age-appropriate suggestions to help you get the conversation started.*

### Younger children aged 5 – 8 years old

At this age the key is to **keep it simple** – focus on what’s fair and how they feel.

You could **ask**:

- Have you ever played a game where you had to open a mystery box or spin a wheel? What did you get? What did that feel like?
- What would you do if a game asked you to pay money to get a surprise item?
- If a game says to you – you can buy a surprise – do you think it’s worth it? Is that fair?



**Top tip:** Check out these [conversation cards](#) to help you chat with your kids.

You could **follow up** with:

- Some games have surprise boxes or spinning wheels where you don’t know what you’ll get – like opening a mystery toy or a lucky dip.
- Sometimes these surprises can cost real money – even if you don’t get what you wanted.
- Sometimes the game can try to trick us into playing again and spending real money.

Here are some different ideas to help you **set boundaries** that are right for your family:

- **Redirect to a different game:** Just like some movies or books are for older kids, I’ve had a look at this game and it’s not really for kids your age. Some parts are a bit tricky or confusing. I’ve found some different games we can play – do you want to pick one we can play together?
- **Allow them to play but with some supervision, limits or parental controls:** Games are fun but they’re also made to make money. They sometimes try to get people to keep spending money and time. We can talk about it together before you spend money in a game. We can make a rule to play games that are fun – without buying surprises.



Check out this handy information sheet on [setting up parental controls](#).

## Children aged 9–12 years old

Kids are starting to notice trends, be influenced by friends and may already use in-game currency. They're **ready to hear messages to help them build critical thinking skills**.

### You could ask:

- What games are you and your friends playing at the moment?
- Have you noticed some games make you pay for a chance to win something rare – have you ever seen that?
- Do you think it's better to earn items or buy them?
- Have you or your friends ever really wanted an item in a game but didn't get it? What did that feel like? Did it make you want to try again until you got it?
- Why do you think games use these kinds of rewards?
- There are ways that games are designed to get players exited or feel rushed into spending money. Have you noticed some games say things like 'only available for 1 hour'?
- Do you know what gambling is?



**Top tip:** Take your kid out of the equation by asking about their friends – this makes them feel more comfortable and less like they may be in trouble. For example 'Do your friends play this game?'

### You could follow up with:

- Help them make a connection between gambling and features like loot boxes, spin the wheel or card packs. 'You know how sometimes you pay coins to open a box? That's a bit like gambling.'
- It's totally normal to want new and exciting things in a game. Sometimes games are designed to keep people spending money – even if they don't get what they want.
- Games aren't just made for fun – companies want to make money and design games that help them do that. Sometimes they can use tricks and prizes or surprise rewards to keep people spending money.

Here are some different ideas to help you **set boundaries** that are right for your family:

- **Redirect to a different game:** I've checked the game rating and some features in that game are too much like gambling, and I don't feel comfortable with you playing it right now. Let's find another game that doesn't have gambling-like features.
- **Allow them to play but with some supervision, limits or parental controls:** I'm OK with you playing this game, but I'm going to remove credit-card details and change some settings so you can't spend real money in the game accidentally.

## Teens

Teens want respect, not lectures. **Learn from your teen** about the games they're playing and **help continue to build their critical thinking skills.**

### You could ask:

- What games are you and your friends playing at the moment?
- You know more about this game than I do, help me understand how this works?
- Do you and your friends spend much money on games? How much do you think you've spent?
- Have you ever regretted buying something in a game?
- Do you know that features in games can try to trick people into spending money?

### Follow up with:

- Have you noticed how some games ask you to spend money for random rewards – kind of like gambling – why do you think they do that?
- Do you think any games you play try to make you feel that you're missing out if you don't buy something right away?
- Do you think it's unfair that some games are set up so that players feel they need to pay money for things if you don't know what you're getting?
- Did you know that some games are rated R18+ because they mimic gambling – like poker style games?

Here are some ideas to help you **set boundaries or expectations** with your teen – you choose what's right for your family:

- **Redirect to another game:** I've checked the rating on this game and it's recommended for older kids or adults. Can we find another game to play instead?
- **Instead of banning, set expectations:** You can play this game, but let's just agree on spending limits.
- **Set up parental controls, with transparency:** I'm happy for you to play this game, but I'm going to put some settings in place so you can't spend more than we agreed.



### Key pointers from Gen Muir, parenting expert and mum of 4:

- We know that kids' brains are still developing, especially the parts responsible for impulse control, decision-making and understanding long-term consequences.
- So when they're playing games that give them a fast dopamine hit, like opening a loot box and the thrill of not knowing what they are going to get – it can start to wire their brains to crave those quick rewards, in the same way that gambling does in the real world.
- As a parent, I try to **stay curious** about what my kids are doing online, I'll ask my sons things like 'what happened in your game today?'
- I'm not a gamer, so having clear classifications is so important. We need that extra layer of help to make sure our kids are being protected while their brains are still learning how to self-regulate.
- Do your homework beforehand: **check the game's classification** and any warnings about gambling.
- You can sit your kids down and say that you've been learning more about how gaming and screens work in our house, and I'd like to make a few changes to keep things safer. They might not love it right away, but with calm and connected boundaries, you'll build trust – and they might even thank you later.





## And establish healthy gaming habits...

*Here are some tips to help you establish healthy gaming habits with your kids.*

- **Check the Classification:** Hop on [classification.gov.au](https://classification.gov.au) and check the rating of the game your child is playing or wants to buy. There's a handy search bar at the top of the website.
- **Be curious:** Find out about the games your kids are playing. 'What do you like about this game?' or 'Can you show me how that works?'
- **Set limits that suit your child's age and needs:** Younger kids may need more structure or firmer rules about screen time, while teens may need help balancing gaming with school, sleep, exercise and other activities.
- **Encourage balance:** Gaming is fun for kids and adults – help your child also enjoy outdoor play, time with friends in person or creative activities.
- **Talk about feelings, not just screen-time:** 'How do you feel after you play this game?' or 'Have you ever got upset after playing this game?'
- **Keep the conversation going:** Talking with kids about gaming is a series of small conversations, rather than one big 'chat'. Parents and carers can keep talking with their child to check in and adjust expectations as their child grows and plays different games.



### Trent and Harry's story

Sport-obsessed cousins Trent (12) and Harry (8) turned to video games when stuck indoors, but unknowingly spent hundreds of dollars on in-game purchases using their parents' saved credit card details. With no authentication or passwords required, Trent spent almost \$300 chasing prize wheel rewards, while Harry bought nearly \$250 worth of virtual currency to then purchase player packs – a game of chance. 'I felt kind of brainwashed, I was hooked into the game. After buying the gems (in-game currency) once, it seemed easy to buy more.' Harry said.

Read more about [Trent and Harry's story](#) and what steps their parents took.



## More information and support

If you need more advice, here are helpful resources and websites to keep your kids safe while gaming:

- [classification.gov.au/NewGameRatings](https://classification.gov.au/NewGameRatings)

Check out:

- [Information sheet for parents and carers](#)
- [Setting up parental controls](#)
- [Information for grandparents](#)
- [Stories from parents and carers](#)
- [Animation explaining classification changes](#)
- [Video from parenting expert Tasha Lawton explaining the changes and top tips for chatting to kids](#)

- [esafety.gov.au/parents/issues-and-advice/gaming](https://esafety.gov.au/parents/issues-and-advice/gaming)

If you're worried about your child and gambling, there are support lines you can talk to:

- [Gambling Help Online](#) on 1800 858 858
- [Kids Helpline](#) on 1800 55 1800
- [Lifeline](#) on 13 11 14.



**Kylie discusses classifications and how she manages gaming with her 3 sons**

