



Trent and Harry's story



Learn how easy it is for kids to accidentally spend real-life money on video games.

Cousins Trent* and Harry* are passionate about sports, but when stuck indoors, they turn to video games. Harry (8) and Trent (12) unknowingly spent their parents' money on in-game features that mimic gambling, like chance-based rewards and loot boxes.

The cousins began playing a free mobile sports game. Harry played it on his dad's iPad. Like many kids his age, he didn't understand in-app purchases. As he played, he earned coins and gems to unlock rewards. But when he couldn't upgrade his team without more gems, he unknowingly spent nearly \$250 through suggested pop-ups.

'I felt kind of brainwashed, I was hooked into the game. After buying the gems once, it seemed easy to buy more.'

The gems unlocked player packs, but their contents were random. The mystery rewards didn't guarantee the players he wanted. With gems and coins acting as virtual currency, Harry didn't realise he was spending real money until his dad got payment alerts.

'There were no passwords or any of that [authentication], I just pressed 'buy now' and the payment went through, and I got better players from it. It wasn't a good feeling, especially not knowing if I had used real money or not.'

Harry explained that when his dad talked with him, they realised they didn't have any parental controls on the iPad and didn't know that money could be spent in that way.

Trent had a similar experience with another computer game. It offered free spins on a prize wheel, which encouraged more spins—for a price.

'The chance to win was addictive, I just wanted to keep buying spins because I needed the prizes to be better at the game.'

His parents' credit card was saved on the computer and, over time, he spent nearly \$300 without realising.

'My parents were quite mad when they saw the charges. They deleted the card details, removed the game, and I wasn't allowed on the computer for a while.'

Now more aware of what gambling-like content can look like in their children's video games, both Trent and Harry's parents check game ratings before letting the boys download games, and regularly check that their credit card details are not saved on their devices.

Classifications are in place to help parents and carers spot video games with gambling-like content. Use classification advice to choose games that are right for your family.

Visit classification.gov.au/NewGameRatings for more information.

**Names have been changed to protect children's privacy.*