

**GAMBLING AWARENESS
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**



WHY TEENS LIKE GAMING

Most Australian teens play video games, whether on a console, a computer or on social media. For many, gaming is a part of daily life.

From the outside, it might be hard to understand why your teen wants to game so much, or what they get out of it. This fact sheet outlines some of the common reasons.

You can also ask your teen why they like gaming. This understanding can help you set boundaries or, if needed, provide alternative activities that match their needs.

ENTERTAINMENT

The most obvious reason for gaming is that it's fun!

Gaming is highly stimulating and heightened sensory experience. Gamers actively participate and drive the action, unlike more passive activities like watching TV.

Video games are designed to be as engrossing as possible. This is what keeps people wanting to play. Through gaming, people can sometimes experience 'flow', that is, a state of optimal focus and engagement. Often, people also refer to this as 'getting into the zone'.

EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Gaming can have a positive effect on wellbeing.

Through rewards and accomplishments, players feel gratification and other positive emotions. Gaming can help teens feel calmer and more in control. These factors can help buffer the rollercoaster of adolescent emotions.

Teens may be dealing with challenging situations, like bullying or pressures at school or home. Gaming can offer a safe place to 'escape' and take their mind off what's happening in the real world.

WHY TEENS LIKE GAMING

SOCIAL CONNECTION

Gaming may seem like a solitary activity but most gamers actually play with other people. They may play in competition against others or as part of a team working to reach a common goal.

Online gaming allows people to play with their friends, even if they're not in the room with them. Players can chat to each other via text, voice or video throughout the game. There is also the opportunity to make new friends online by connecting with other players anywhere in the world.

Gaming also fosters a sense of belonging. People playing the same game connect over their shared interest, or form bonds within a team by working together on a mission.

For teens who feel anxious socialising in-person, gaming can provide a less threatening way to connect. For example, interaction can occur without eye contact through online chat. They may also feel more confident in the gaming realm, which can allow friendships to develop more easily.

ACHIEVEMENT AND MASTERY

Progression is the objective of most games. For example, getting to the next level, beating a high score or defeating an enemy. There is an intrinsic reward for these achievements – a sense of accomplishment. But players are also rewarded in a more tangible way. For example, by gaining 'experience points' that give them access to new weapons or improved character attributes.

Many teens seek out opportunities to be challenged and improve their skills. Gaming offers a way to achieve mastery. For example, games get harder as they progress and feedback is given through leader boards and progress bars.

AUTONOMY

A big part of being a teen is establishing greater freedom and independence. Gaming allows them to be in charge. They decide what to play, how to customise their character and, sometimes, how the game is played. For example, 'sandbox' games like Minecraft have no predetermined goal. Players choose how to create their own experience.