



Blurring Lines Between Gambling and Video Gaming

Can you really become addicted to video games?

Yes. The World Health Organization lists *Gaming Disorder* as pattern of gaming behavior (“digital-gaming” or “video-gaming”) characterized by impaired control over gaming, increasing priority given to gaming over other activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activities, and continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences.

What are some signs you might have a problem with digital or video gaming?

- Gaming to escape difficult life situations
- Playing for longer periods as time goes on
- Skipping showers and meals to play
- Poor performance at work or school
- Lying to others to hide gaming activities
- Exhibiting signs of irritation when forced to stop gaming



What’s the Gambification of digital and video gaming?

This is the video game industry practice of using gambling techniques to “hook” players into a game and increase profit. This is most common with casual games (think mobile apps) and online based video games (think Fortnite). Here are some of the most common ways gambling is normalized through video games.

1. **Simulated Gambling** – These are games that simulate casino games, often slot machines. They utilize virtual currency, however when the player runs out of “money” the game will encourage him to purchase more virtual coins via a microtransaction. While you will never win any real money via these games, you do have the ability to spend money.
2. **Social Gambling** – These are games that let you bet virtual currency against other players. Once again, if you run out of coins the game allows you to purchase more via microtransactions.
3. **In-Game Gambling** – This is where video games include gambling as part of the larger game. For instance, you could have your video game character engage in poker or blackjack, giving you the ability to win extra items or coins to progress further in the game.
4. **In-App Purchases** – This is where the video game encourages player to pay for an additional virtual item to progress further in the game or gain an advantage over other players. Game developers design the in-app purchasing model using well known techniques from the gambling industry, including:
 - Random Reward Schedules
 - Illusion of skill
 - Audio and visual tricks
 - Immediate and easy to play with no complicated rules or strategy
 - Social, competitive nature

These techniques keep the player in ‘the zone’ making it hard to pull away from the game. The game then suddenly prevents you from playing by introducing a level that seems unachievable, or a time limit. The only way to keep playing is to buy an in-app purchase.

Where can I go if I need help?

- **ReSTART** – www.restartlife.com | 800.682.6934
 - A treatment center based near Seattle that provides residential treatment as well as outpatient treatment for adults and youth with gaming disorder.
- **Game Quitters** – gamequitters.com
 - Game Quitters is the largest support community for video game addiction. They offer a supportive community for both gamers and the loved ones of gamers to help answer questions as well as tips on how to cut back on your gaming.