

Game over! Knowing when to stop

Information for parents about managing online computer gaming



Parents may be concerned that their children spend too many hours alone on the computer and the effect of online computer gaming.

Online computer gaming involves playing games, often with other players, over the internet.

Addiction to playing online computer games can have negative consequences for children. It can reduce their ability to concentrate at school, put stress on family relationships, socially isolate them and even affect their health.

Nearly 50 per cent of Australian children with access to the internet after school use it 2-6 days a week and 25 per cent used it every day. On average, children spend 7.9 hours per fortnight playing online games.

Concerns about online computer gaming can stem from fear and unfamiliarity about the gaming subculture that has its own set of rules, social structures and social networks.

Parents are encouraged to be proactive in managing this issue by learning more and talking with their children about it.

Tips for parents

- Educate yourself about online gaming – find out what it is and what it means to your child. Be curious and interested; this will help your child understand that you want to know about their life and interests.
- Set the computer up in a public area of the house, not in a bedroom, where it will be easier for you to supervise.
- If necessary, negotiate boundaries and limit the number of hours your child spends playing games. It might work to trial new boundaries for a week and then discuss it again.
- Assess how online computer gaming is affecting your child. Do they have other friends and social connections, are they performing school and household tasks normally, do they have other interests, and is gaming impacting their health? Are they aware of these effects?
- If you have concerns, focus on resolving the issue rather than the gaming, eg if your child is lacking sleep, address how they can organise their lives so they get the sleep they need.
- Recognise that each generation of parents faces new issues. Think back to your own adolescence and how your parents were concerned about emerging issues for your generation.
- If you are worried that your child has an addiction to gaming, seek professional help from a counsellor.



Further information

Parents wanting advice about online computer gaming can contact Parent Line on 1300 1300 52