



EVERGREEN  
council on problem gambling



# Your incredible brain:

How gaming, gambling and addiction affect the brain, and how to take good care of the only brain you'll ever have

# Tana Russell, SUDP, NCTTP, WSCGC-II (she/her)

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Evergreen Council on Problem Gambling

[trussell@evergreencpg.org](mailto:trussell@evergreencpg.org)

Website: [www.evergreencpg.org](http://www.evergreencpg.org)



Wife, daughter,  
grand -daughter,  
sister

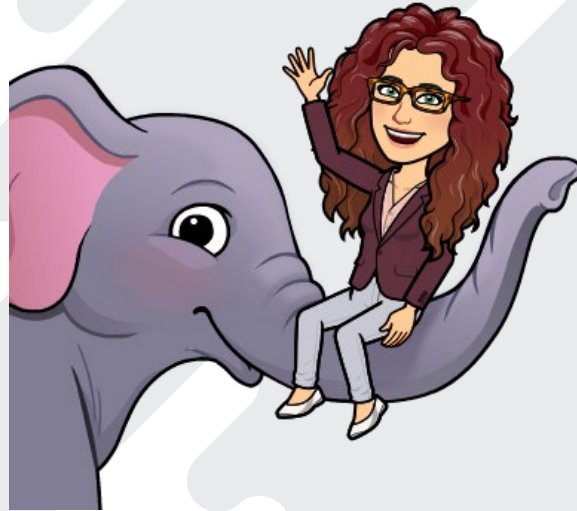
Dog  
owner

Crocheter /  
Crafty -person

MK in Kenya,  
Africa,  
World -view  
formed by 10  
countries

Non -profit  
Asst. Dir.

SUDP  
NCTTP  
WSCGG-II



Favorite color is  
green

Person of faith,  
Forgiven much

Creative  
thinker

Heterosexual,  
cisgendered

American,  
Caucasian -mut,  
privileged

Work hard,  
Play hard,  
Work out hard

# ECPG is neither FOR nor AGAINST Gambling and gaming

- We are very much FOR help being available to anyone and everyone who needs it, to cope and recover from problems related to gambling and gaming
- Our Mission: The Evergreen Council on Problem Gambling is dedicated to increasing awareness of public health issues around **problem gambling and gaming**, expanding the availability and integration of services, and supporting advocacy, research, and programs for education, prevention, treatment, recovery, and responsible gambling **and gaming**.



# What you'll learn...

1

How exactly does playing a video game or gambling, change the brain?

2


Why are addictive disorders considered diseases of the Brain?

3

Can a damaged brain become healthy again?

4

How can young people take good care of their super-powered brains?



**1.  
Learn the brain,  
using your hand**






**TEMPORAL LOBE**

Independent (Oct. 2019)

- <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/gaming/fornite-lawsuit-gaming-addiction-epic-games-a9146486.html>

Epic Games is accused of purposefully making Fortnite 'very, very addictive' (AFP/Getty Images)



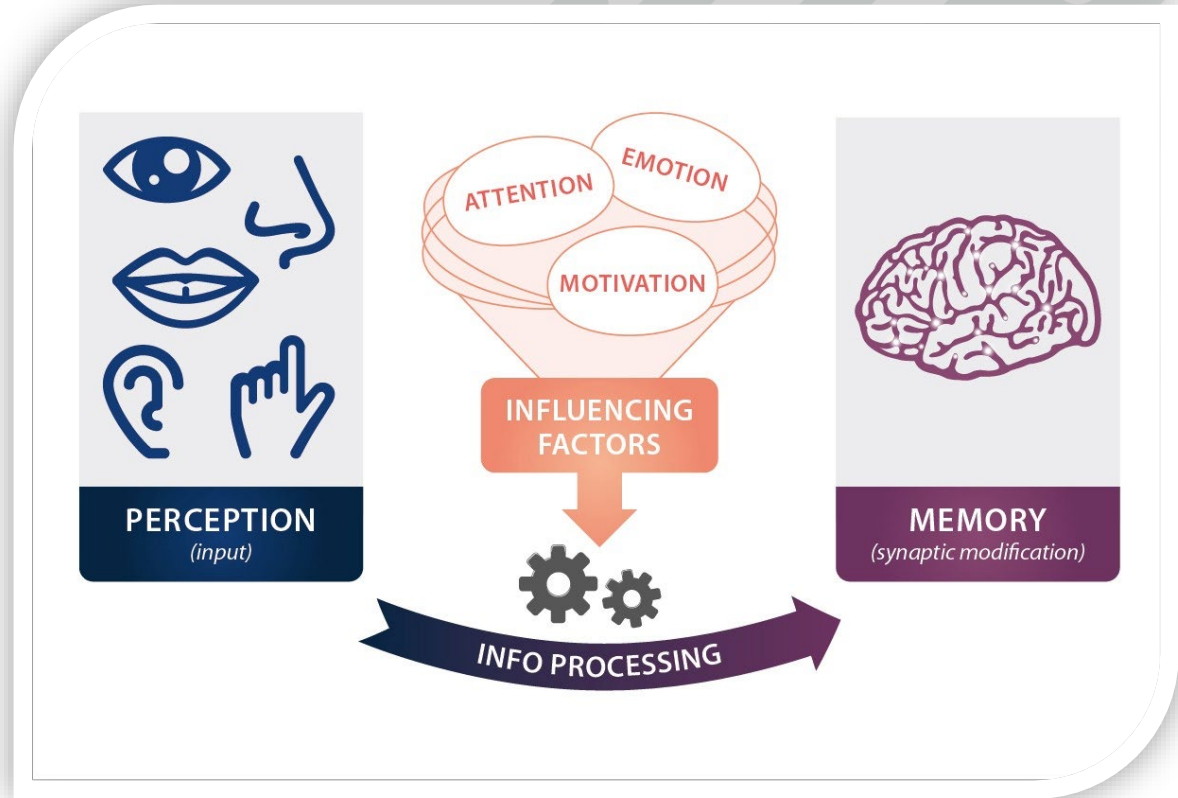
**FORTNITE LAWSUIT: EPIC GAMES HIRED  
PSYCHOLOGISTS TO MAKE GAME 'VERY,  
VERY ADDICTIVE'**





# “Game User Experience” (UX) framework

<https://uxdesign.cc/the-psychology-behind-the-success-of-fortnite-15ad5d4bb6a4>



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## USER EXPERIENCE

- Signs & Feedback
- Clarity
- Form Follows Function
- Consistency
- Minimum Workload
- Error Prevention / Recovery
- Flexibility

USABILITY

- Motivation**  
*competence, autonomy, relatedness  
meaning, rewards, implicit motives*
- Emotion**  
*game feel, presence, surprises*
- Game flow**  
*difficulty curve, pacing, learning curve*

ENGAGE-ABILITY



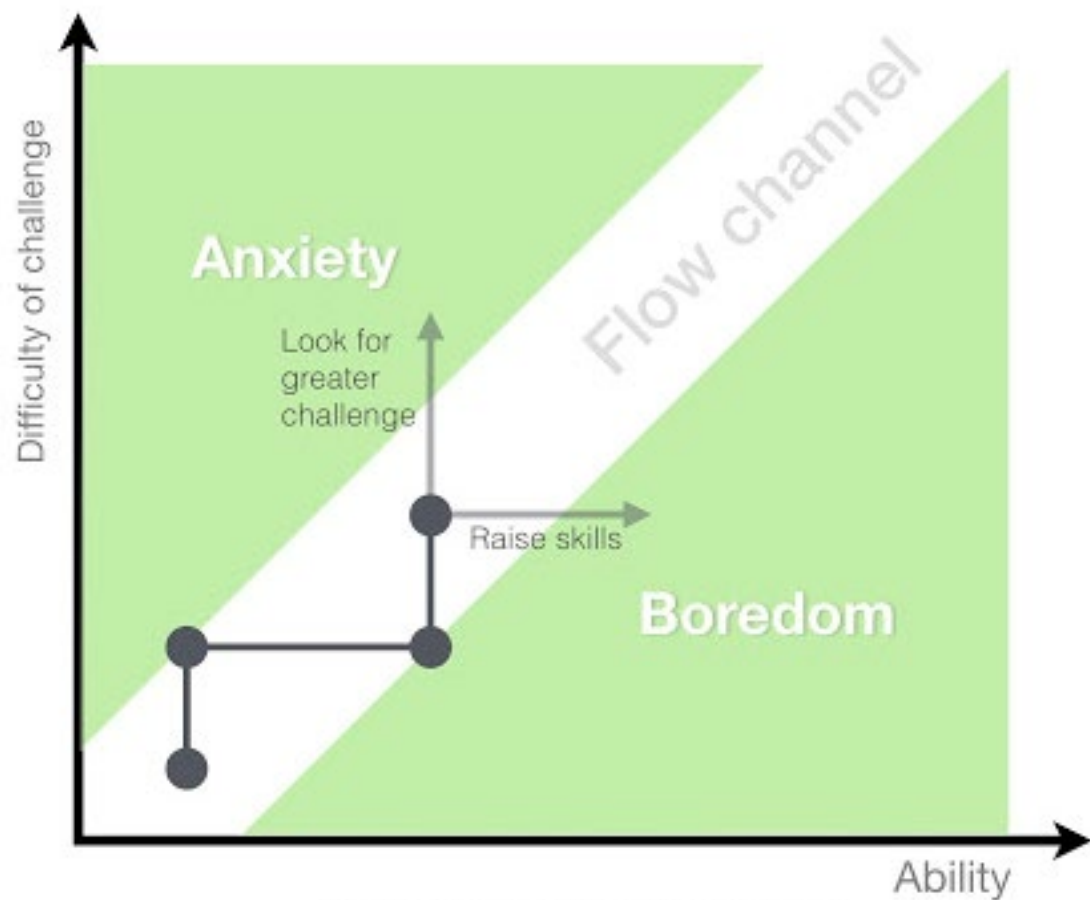
# “Game User Experience” (UX) framework

<https://uxdesign.cc/the-psychology-behind-the-success-of-fortnite-15ad5d4bb6a4>

## Why Fortnite was so successful:

- Usability
- Avoid as much confusion as possible
- Remove frustrations
- Constant progression toward goals
- Those who lose in “Battle Royale” mode can quickly start again and hopefully get better
- Cosmetic options and dance moves allow for self-expression
- In “Creative Mode” players can build whatever they want
- Strong social component: compete, cooperate, hangout, chat, dance, be creative, watch concerts together
- Goofy and encourages experimentation
- Offers surprises and mysteries





Source: Flow by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi



# Why play one game over another?

- It's what friends are playing
- Ability to interact
- Skill-building
- Spent money on it





## Can you name 5 ways that “free -to-play” games/apps can end up making millions off consumers?



- Advertising
- Microtransactions
- Virtual currencies
- Putting items “on sale”
- Extreme discounts for first time buyers
- Battle bundles and booster packs
- Loot boxes
- Time-limited offers
- Anchoring
- Gachas (slot-machine-like kiosks, delivering game paraphernalia collectables)
- Wealthy in-game economies
- Impulse purchases
- Vanity items
- Power enhancements
- Consumables (one time or limited use items)
- Multiple payment methods
- Player retention strategies
- Add-ons
- Pay-walls (game is free for a limited time of initial play)
- Subscriptions
- ....and more



# Wait what?

Do any of these things sound like gambling?





# SHOP



**2 LOOT BOXES**



**BOXES**



**24 LOOT BOXES**



\$59.95

**50 LOOT BOXES**



freegifmaker.me

1 friend playing Overwatch.

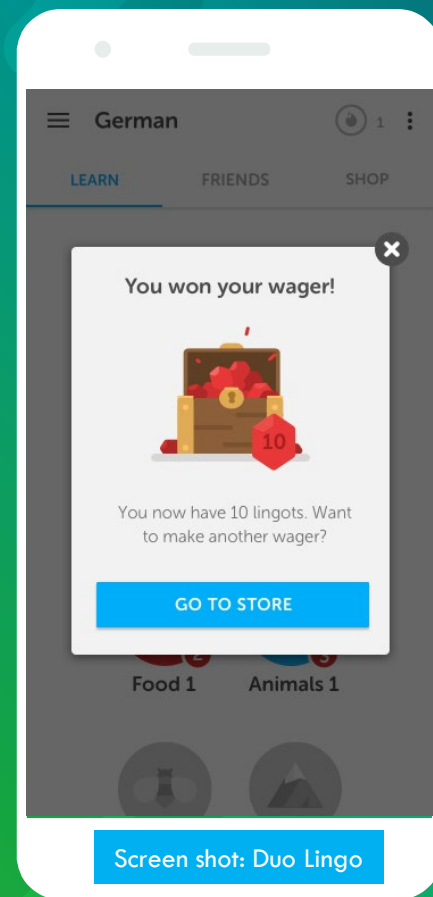
PRESS ENTER TO CHAT

PAYMENT INFORMATION



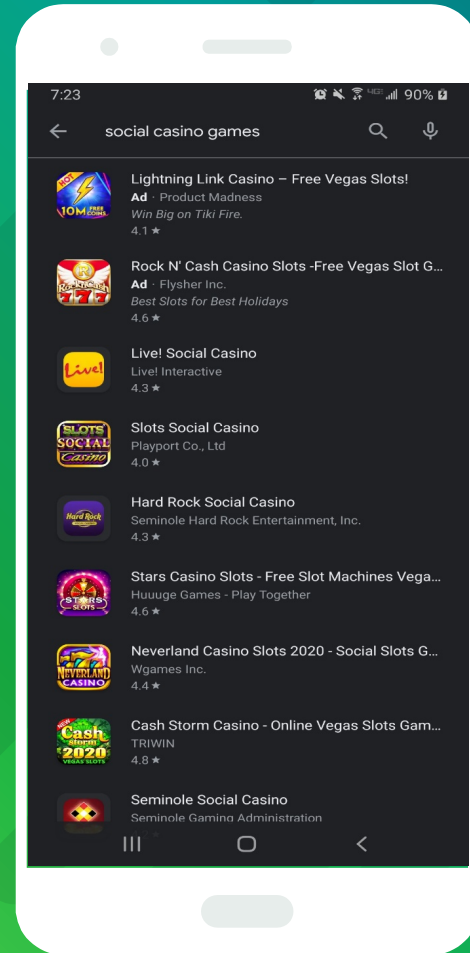
Maybe it's not  
"REAL gambling",  
but it sure looks  
similar!

Games with slot-based  
mechanics are  
everywhere, and for all  
ages.



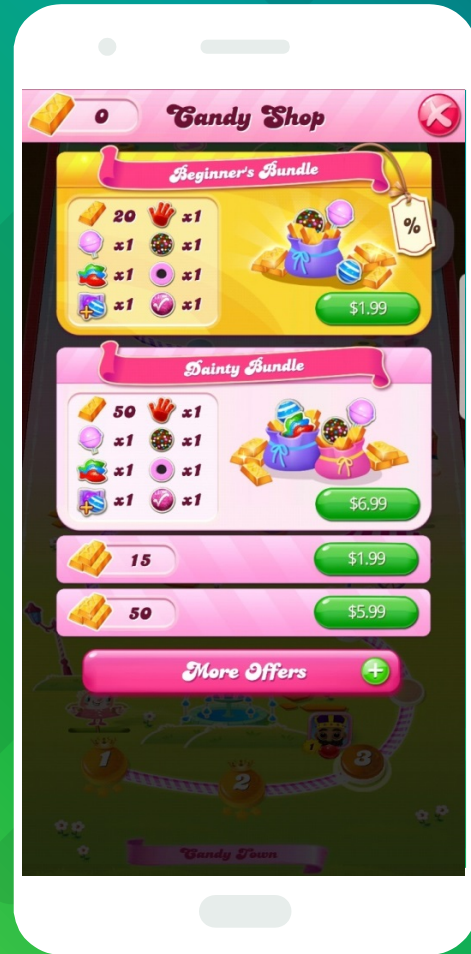
# 97% of social casino games are accessible to under 12

- Source: Zendle & Scholten (2020, 3/23/20, in press)
- Screenshot: Hynes / Google Play Store



# Microtransactions = BIG bucks

- Real \$, Virtual prizes
- (BTW, this game earned \$18M in May 2020)
- Data source: [sensortower.com](https://sensortower.com)



# Play smart, stay in control

- How are players encouraged to spend more time in the game?
- How are players encouraged to spend money in the game?
- Do you set time limits to you play and stick to them?





Please enter the code

Submit

The code is found on the screen in front of you

Then you should see  
this...

Go to: [www.menti.com](https://www.menti.com)

Enter this code:

---

A screenshot of a Mentimeter poll displayed on a mobile device. The interface is white with rounded corners and a blue "Submit" button. The poll question is "How are players encouraged to spend more time in a game?". Below the question is a text input field with a character count of 250. The input field contains the text "Short answers are recommended. You have 250 characters left". Below the input field is a blue "Submit" button. At the bottom of the screen, it says "Powered by Mentimeter" and "Terms".

Mentimeter

How are players encouraged to spend more time in a game?

Short answers are recommended. You have 250 characters left

You can submit multiple answers

Submit

Powered by Mentimeter [Terms](#)

# Healthy gaming

<https://learn.problemgambling.ca/PDF%20library/problem-tech-use-video-gaming-healthy-choices.pdf>

## VIDEO GAMING: HOW TO MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES



- Set priorities** (e.g., homework before gaming).  **Don't eat in front of** your computer/device.
- Turn off** computer/smartphones at a certain time each night.  Have **tech-free days**—challenge yourself to a “media fast”.
- Take part in **offline activities** such as sports and in-person events with family and friends.  Set an alarm to go off after a **certain amount of time** online.
- Limit** the number of hours you play video games.  Play games that have **less of an addictive quality**, such as ones that have a definite end.
- Keep tech devices in an **assigned area** in your home and away from your bedroom at night.  Pay attention to **how much time** you are spending and what you are doing online.
- Program your home wi-fi to only be on at **certain hours**.  **Listen to others** who may recognize the problem first and know when to ask for help.
- Be aware** of things that might trigger you (e.g., tell your friends not to discuss game play).  **Maintain a log** of daily video game play and note thoughts and emotions while playing and not playing.



Adapted from *Soul Crash: Story – A Resource to Help Awareness of Healthy and Meaningful Video Gaming* Facilitator Manual, CAMH, Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario

 [learn.problemgambling.ca](https://learn.problemgambling.ca) 



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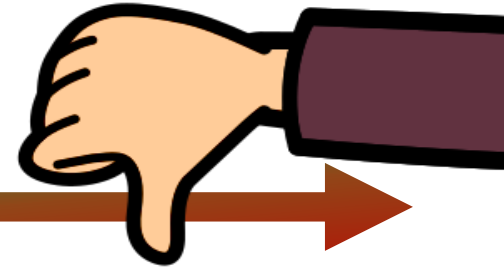
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# Healthy behaviors vs behaviors

# unhealthy -addictive



## Healthy Behaviors

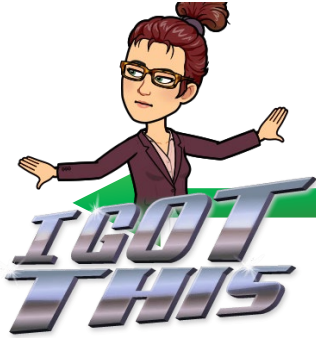
- Self-Controlled/Deliberate
- Immediate Discipline/long -term benefit
- Slow fix to deal with problems

## Unhealthy Behaviors

- Compulsive/Impulsive
- Immediate Benefit/long -term negative consequences
- Quick fix or avoidance of problems

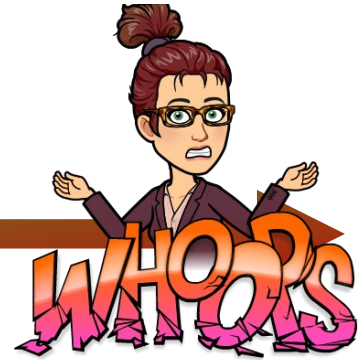


# Healthy behaviors vs unhealthy -addictive behaviors



## Healthy Behaviors

- Limited in time/amount
- Balanced
- Increases confidence, esteem, self-image



## Unhealthy Behaviors

- No limits
- Out of balance
- Decreases confidence/esteem/self-image



# Healthy behaviors vs unhealthy -addictive behaviors



#ADULTING



## Healthy Behaviors

- Guilt-free
- Bio/psych/ rel/ voc growths
- Outer brain decision-making (logic, reason, planning)

## Unhealthy Behaviors

- Guilt/shame
- Bio/psych/ rel/ voc damage or disruption
- Inner brain decision-making (instincts, fight/flight, pleasure -seeking)





# Problem Gambling (which is correct?)

- A. When someone gambles every day and spends at least \$500 per week.
- B. A term used loosely to refer to any range of problems associated with gambling, from losing more than you can afford, to a severe loss of control, cravings, and major life problems.



# Compulsive Gambling (which is correct?)



- A. A term generally used to describe compulsive gambling behaviors. Used in GA literature.
- B. Someone who has gambled every dollar, to the point of living under a bridge.



# Pathological Gambling (which is correct?)

- A. When a person resorts to lying, cheating, and stealing to support their gambling habit.
- B. The diagnostic term used in the DSM-IV. Also used in many research studies.



# Gambling Disorder (which is correct?)

- A. A silly phrase that professionals use to talk about someone's moral ineptitude.
- B. The current diagnosis according to the DSM-5 (published May 2013). Mild, Moderate, or Severe Gambling Disorders can be episodic or persistent, or in early or sustained remission.





# BONUS! – Professional Gambling (which is correct?)



- A. Someone who gambles on skill-based games as a profession, usually are sponsored, and generally does not display life problems associated with their gambling.
- B. Someone who is so good at a gambling game that they win more than they lose.



YOUR  
**WORDS.**

YOUR  
**POWER.**

CHOOSE  
**KINDNESS.**

**LOVE THE PERSON.  
FIGHT THE DISEASE.**



# What constitutes as “gambling”?

## PRIZE

Anything of value the sponsor awards in a promotion in the event of a certain outcome.

## CHANCE

Outcome is beyond the participant’s direct control.

## CONSIDERATION

Staking something of value as consideration.  
(Investing something of value, the bet, the wager)



Physical Health

Mental Health

Addictive Disorders

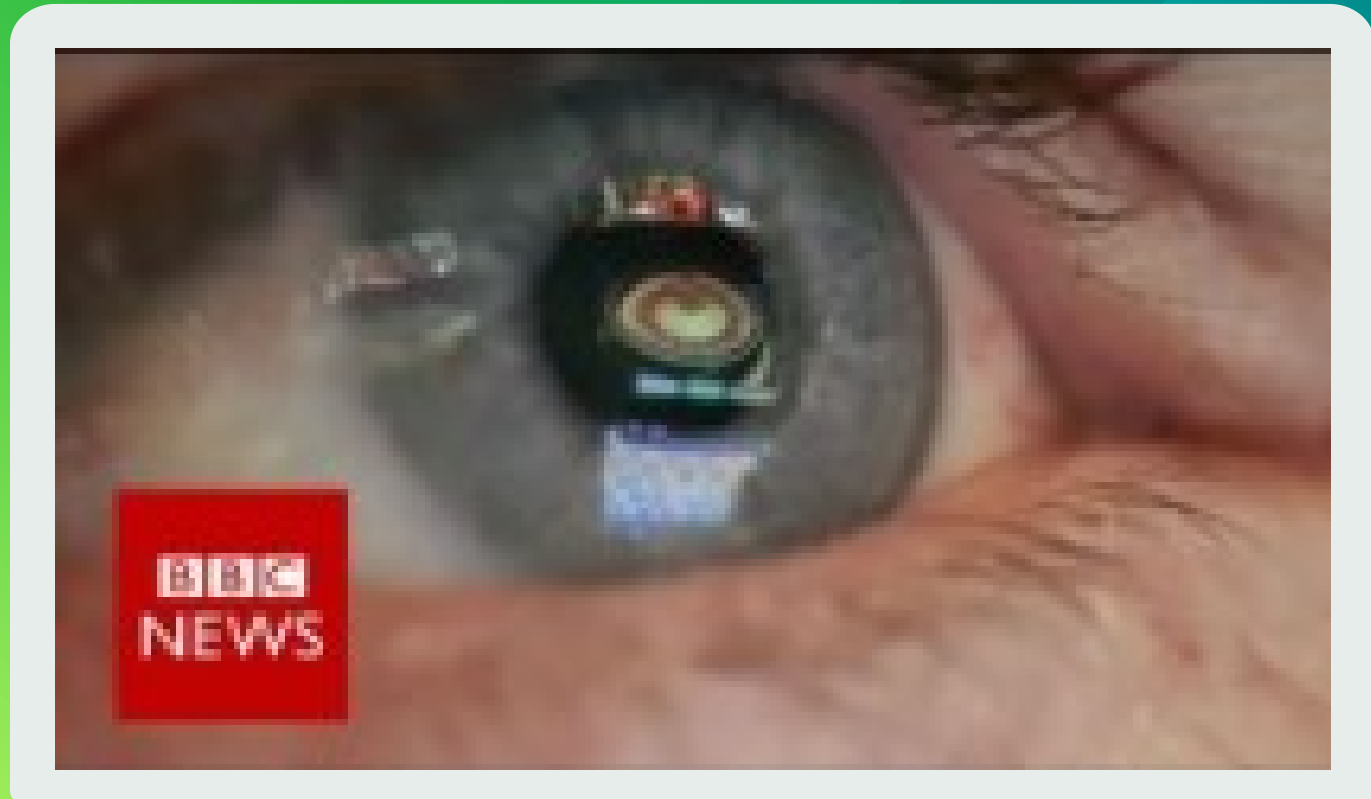
Social/Spiritual/  
Cultural Health



# Continuum



# Gambling – inside the brain



# Maintaining Healthy Play

## DO

- Set a time limit (before you go) and stick to it
- Set a money limit (before you go) and stick to it
- Gamble only for fun (it's an expense for entertainment)
- Accept losing as part of the game (paying to play a game)

## DON'T

- Borrow money to gamble – not even from yourself
- Let gambling interfere with family, friends, or work
- Gamble to win back losses (expect to lose)
- Gamble to get money (don't think of it as an income)
- Gamble to cope with emotional or physical pain



# Signs of gambling problems





# COVID-19 Impacts

Casinos closing / Large numbers resuming play at re-opening

Increase in lottery sales

Less calls to helplines

Less treatment seeking

Increase telehealth services

Increased online support groups



# Where to find help for gambling problems

[ECPG website](#)

[Gamblers Anonymous](#)

[Gam-Anon](#)

[HCA Problem Gambling Program](#)

## Social Support

- PG Recovery Social Media
- PG Recovery Podcasts





## 2. Gaming

What is gaming and problem gaming?



# Moderate gaming can be positive

- Hand Eye Coordination
- Can Reduce Anxiety and Depression
- Enhances Memory
- Training Tool
- Solving Science Problems
- Coping with PTSD
- Pain Management
- Prosocial behavior



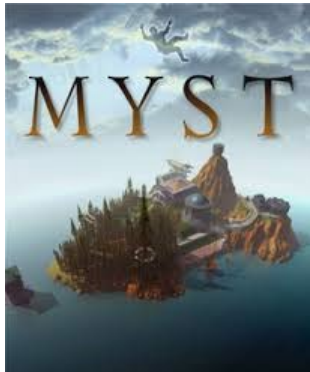
15

12



Fort Kearney  
April 30, 1848  
Press SPACE BAR to continue

Gaming  
has come a  
long way



# The Gaming Evolution



Stones



Checkers



Board Games



Video Games



PC Games



Game Consoles



Mobile Games



Tablet Games



VR Games



AR Games

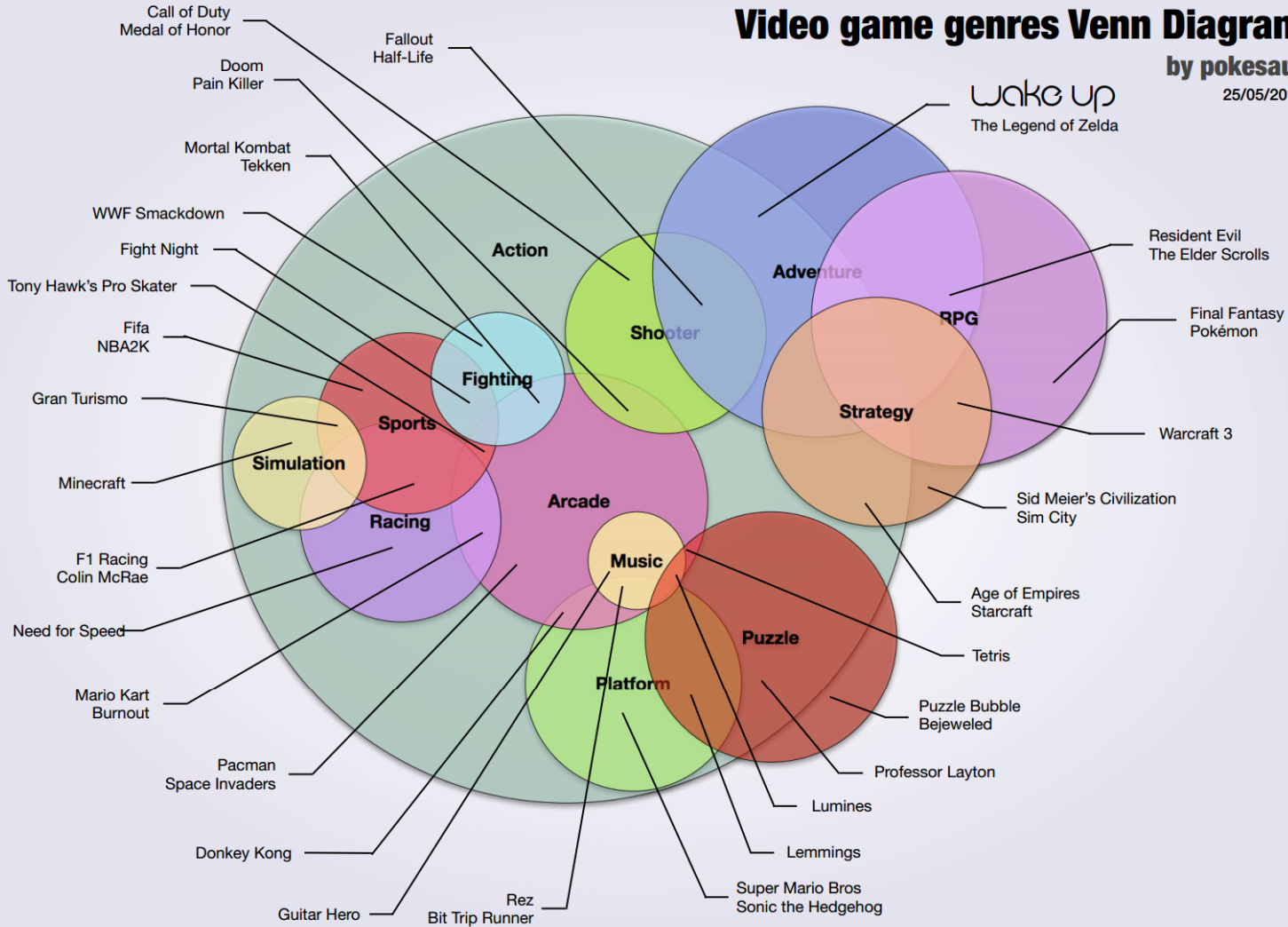




# Video game genres Venn Diagram

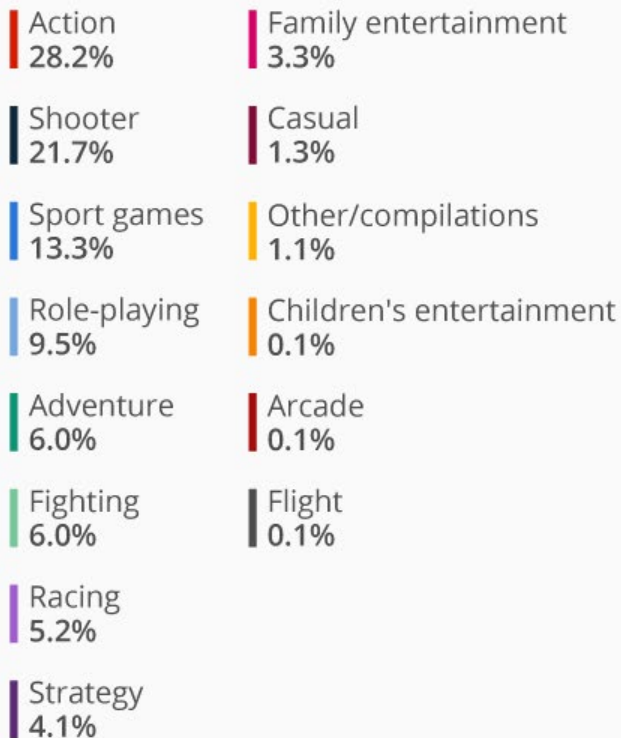
by pokesaur

25/05/2011



# America's Favorite Video Game Genres

Distribution of all U.S. video game sales by genre in 2014



@StatistaCharts

Source: Entertainment Software Association

statista





# COVID-19 Gaming Trends

- A. 30% growth in gamers playing > 5hrs/week
- B. 39% growth in money spent
- C. 11% increase in time spent gaming

<https://www.simon-kucher.com/en-us/blog/new-global-gaming-industry-study-gamers-spend-more-money-and-time-increase-social-contact>

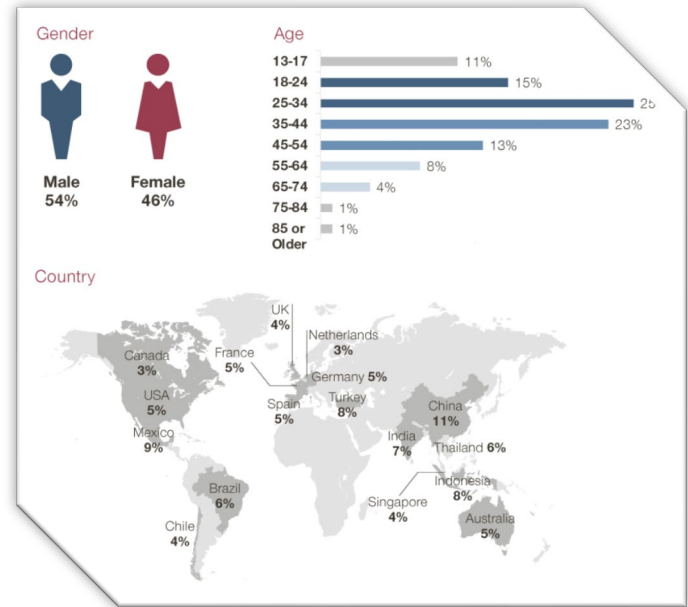


# Simon -Kucher *Global Gaming Study: Impacts of COVID-19* analyzes gamer's behaviors

Our study identified two key effects the pandemic has had on gaming:

1. A lasting **increase in money and time** spent on gaming, and
2. A shift in what types of games are being played (more **multiplayer games**) and how gaming content is being consumed (more **video game streaming**).

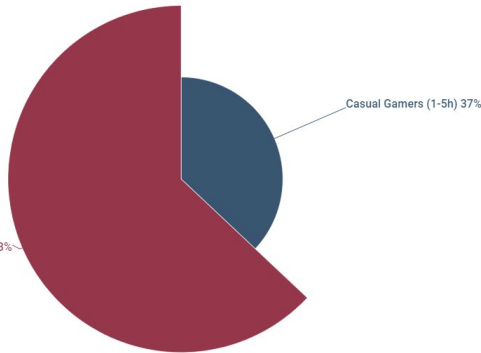
<https://www.simon-kucher.com/en-us/blog/new-global-gaming-industry-study-gamers-spend-more-money-and-time-increase-social-contact>



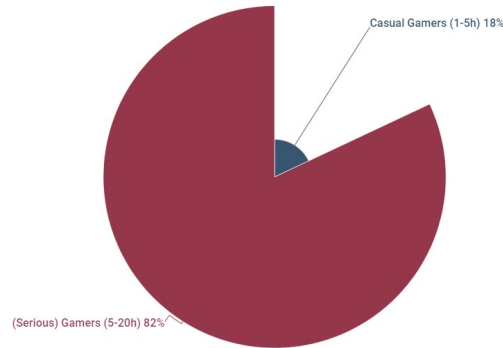
Increase in Serious Gamers during COVID, expected to remain higher than pre-COVID rates.

<https://www.simon-kucher.com/en-us/blog/new-global-gaming-industry-study-gamers-spend-more-money-and-time-increase-social-contact>

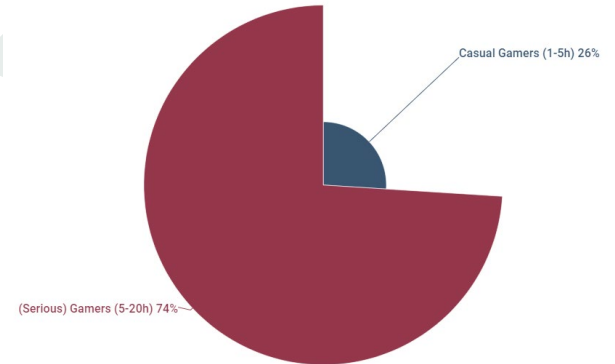
Pre-Covid



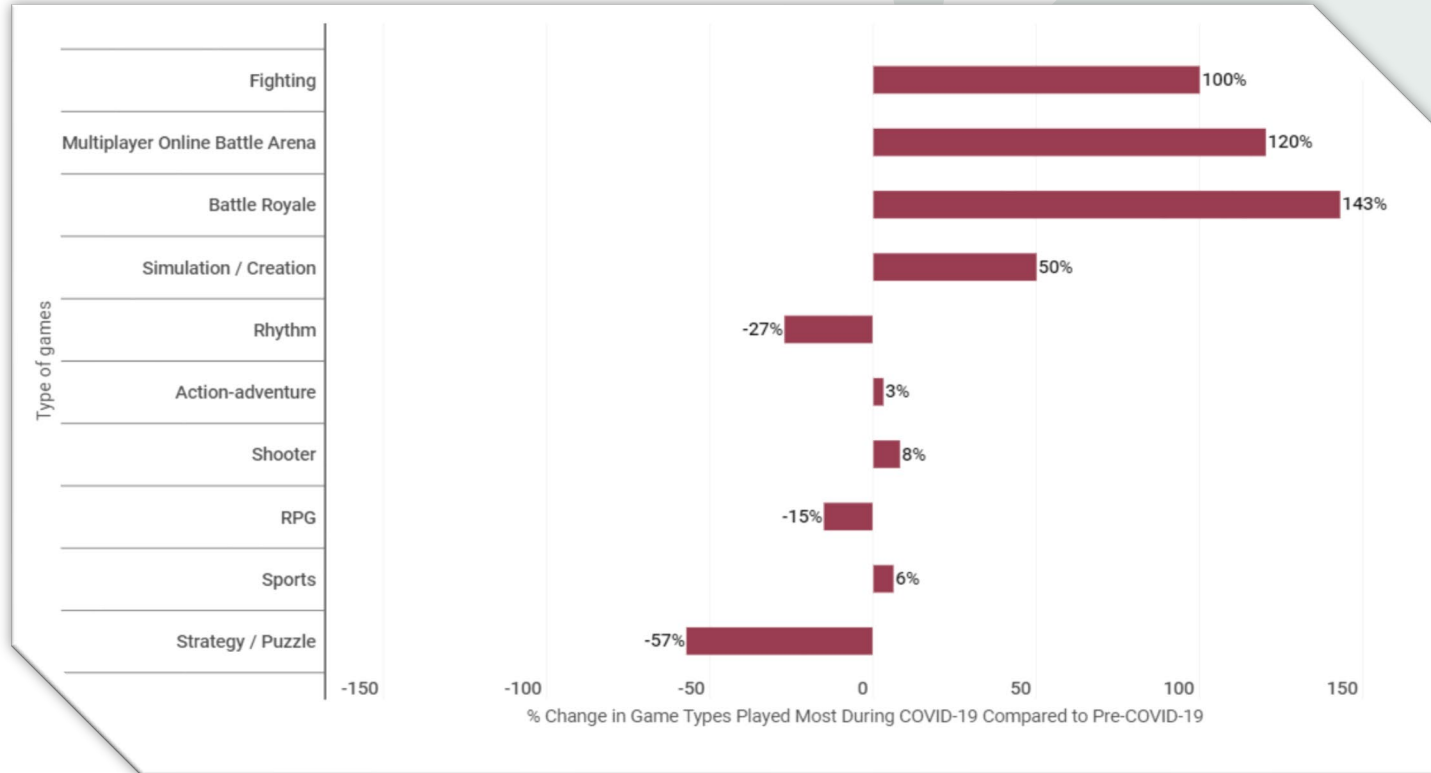
During Covid



After Covid

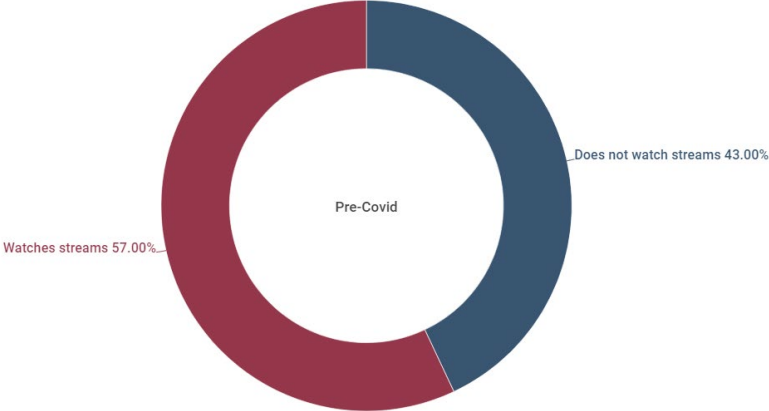


# Gamers are selecting more social games, compared to pre -COVID

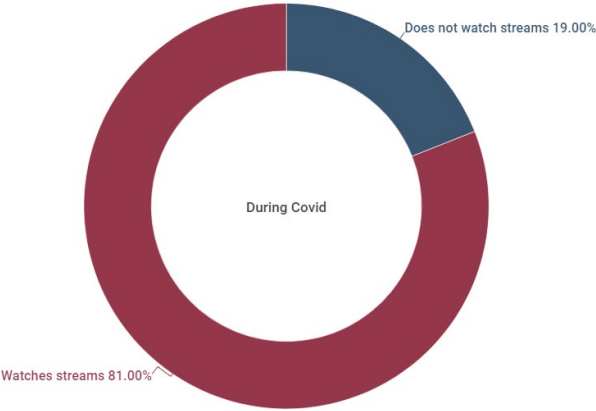


# Streaming is now mainstream

Pre-COVID



During COVID



# What is Gaming Disorder?

- Gaming disorder is defined in the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as a 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.
- For gaming disorder to be diagnosed, the behavior pattern must be of sufficient severity to result in significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational or other important areas of functioning and would normally have been evident for at least 12 months.
- <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/addictive-behaviours-gaming-disorder#>



# Similarities with other Disorders (DSM-5)

| <u>Substance Use Disorders</u>              | <u>Gambling Disorders</u>                                 | <u>Gaming Disorders</u>                 |
|---|---|---|
| Using larger amounts than intended          | Chases losses   |   |
| Unable to cut back or quit                  | Unable to cut back or quit                                | Unable to cut back or quit              |
| Excessive time spent doing it               | Preoccupied with it                                       | Preoccupied with it                     |
| Cravings                                    |   |   |
| Interfering with role obligations           | Lies  | Deceiving family members                |
| Interfering with activities                 | Jeopardized relationships, job, educational opportunities | Giving up other activities              |
| Interfering with relationships              |   | Jeopardized job or relationships        |
| Use in hazardous situations                 | Bail outs for desperate financial situations              | Continued despite problems              |
| Use despite physical/psychological problems | Gambles when distressed                                   | Use of gaming to relieve negative moods |
| Tolerance                                   | Tolerance   | Tolerance                               |
| Withdrawal                                  | Withdrawal  | Withdrawal                              |

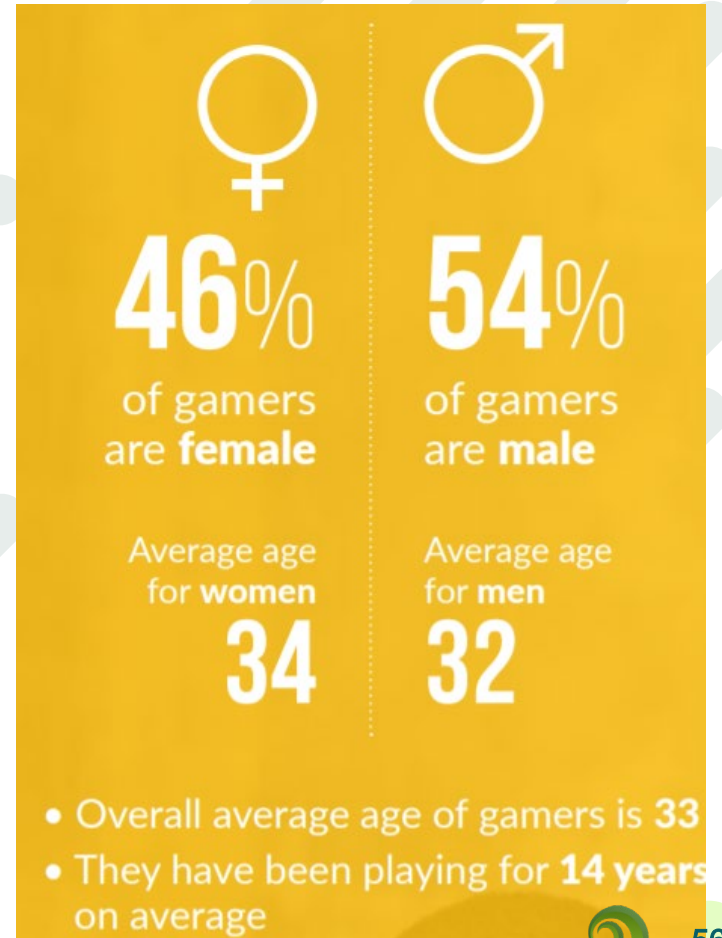


# Prevalence of Gaming

- 65% of American Adults plays video games
- The average age of a gamer is 33 years old
- They have been playing for 14 years on average
- 75% of Americans have at least one gamer in their household

Source: Entertainment Software Association. Essential Facts about the computer and video game industry. (2019)

[https://www.theesa.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ESA\\_Essential\\_facts\\_2019\\_final.pdf](https://www.theesa.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ESA_Essential_facts_2019_final.pdf)





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## VIDEO GAMING: HOW TO MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES



**Set priorities** (e.g., homework before gaming).



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Take part in **offline activities** such as sports and in-person events with family and friends.



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Adapted from Soul Crush Story – A Resource to Help Awareness of Healthy and Harmful Video Gaming Facilitators Manual, CAMH, Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario

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## Other problematic internet use issues:

Internet  
Addiction

Social Media

Screen Use

Pornography

Gambling

Other...



# Gaming Addiction Resources

- Computer Gaming Addicts Anonymous: [www.cgaa.info](http://www.cgaa.info)
- Game Quitters: [www.gamequitters.com](http://www.gamequitters.com)
  - Online support group for those dealing with gaming addiction.
- Internet and Technology Addicts Anonymous (ITAA): <https://internetaddictsanonymous.org/>
- Online Gamers Anonymous (OLGA & OLG-Anon): [www.olganon.org](http://www.olganon.org)
  - Follows the same principles of AA - 12-Step Program and Anonymity
- reSTART Life: [www.netaddictionrecovery.com](http://www.netaddictionrecovery.com)
  - WA based treatment center for those dealing with gaming/internet addiction.



3.

# The Convergence

How are the worlds of gaming and gambling converging?





# Traditional Gambling

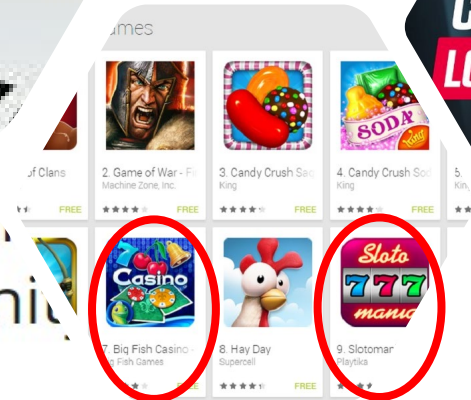






Setting is esports' biggest and underappreciated opportunity

KEVIN WIMER | JUNE 3, 2019 3:35 PM



Modern Gambling

# What's the difference?

- Fantasy Sports



- eSports





# eSPORTS Tournaments

- Demographics: 85% male and 15% female. Majority between ages 18 and 34. (Major League Gaming)
- Prizes are in the millions of \$'s
- One of the largest eSports tournaments is called The International, held in Seattle, WA and Vancouver, B.C.

Most common genres:

- Real-time strategy (RTS) – i.e. **StarCraft**
- First-person shooter (FPS) – i.e. **Counter-Strike**
- Multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) – i.e. **League of Legends** and **DOTA 2**
- Battle royale games – i.e. **Fortnite**



# Professional gaming

[Esports: Inside the relentless training of professional gaming stars](#)



# Betting is esports' biggest and most underappreciated opportunity

KEVIN WIMER | JUNE 3, 2019 3:35 PM

## eSports Betting



Above: Overwatch League

Image Credit: Robert Paul for Blizzard Entertainment

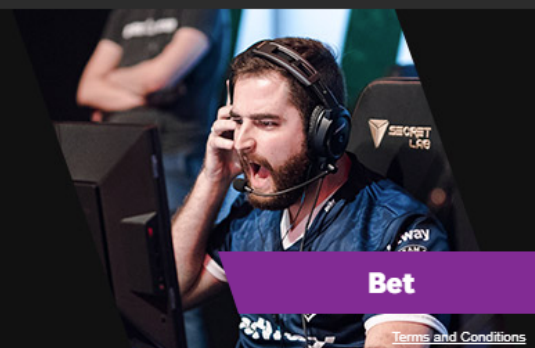
Home

### Esports

# 10 BONUS NIP SPINS EVERY DAY

when you bet \$/€10 in-Play

Min. Stake: \$/€10. Bonus Spins: 10 at 10c per stake. Min odds: 1.50. In-Play bets on the ESL Pro League Finals only.

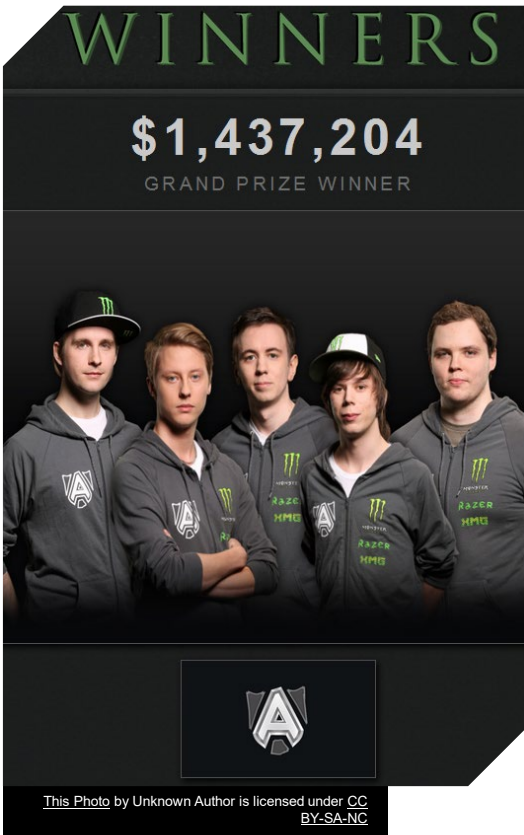


**Bet**

[Terms and Conditions](#)

|                                    |  |  |  |
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| <b>\$/€30 Free Bet</b><br>Register | <b>Bet 10 Get 10 Spins</b><br>ESL Pro League | <b>4.50 - Betway Boost</b><br>ESL Pro League | <b>Esports Objectives</b><br>Weekly Reward |
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## Gaming an Olympic Sport?

- Multinational tournaments such as *League of Legends World Championship* and *DOTA 2's The International* provide live broadcasts of the competition and prize money to competitors.
- Recently, competitions began having salaried players and regular season and play-off series – similar to American professional sports.
- The International Olympic Committee has explored incorporating these competitions into future Olympic events.





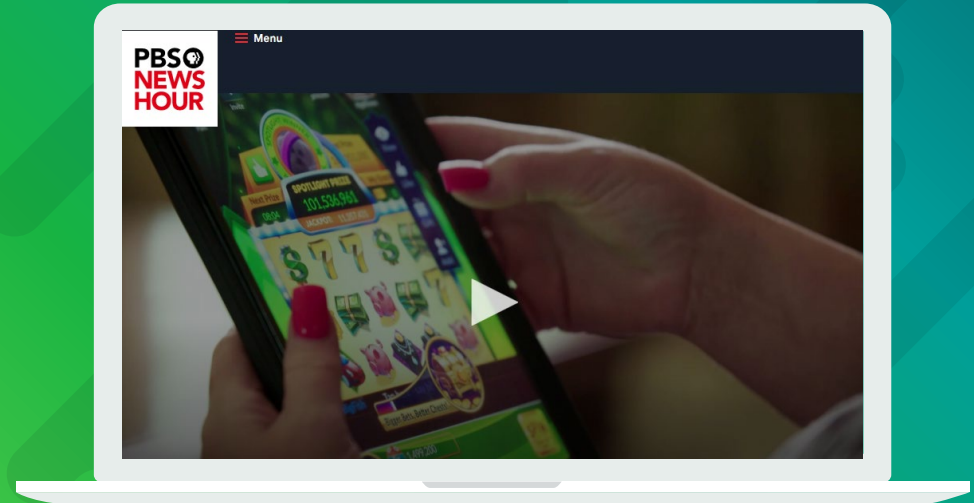
# What is a social casino?

- A. A casino where they have a lot of parties
- B. A party that has a casino theme
- C. An app game that looks like a casino game, usually hosted by social media sites



# What are Social Casinos?

- **Big Fish** recently lost a lawsuit for operating “unlawful gambling devices”. They had to pay back players over \$155 million and agreed to implement “addiction-related resources” and a “self-exclusion policy”. But they are still able to operate, based in Seattle, WA.  
<https://www.geekwire.com/2020/big-fish-games-pay-155m-tweak-games-part-class-action-settlement-gambling/>



**“How social casinos leverage Facebook user data to target vulnerable gamblers”**

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-social-casinos-leverage-facebook-user-data-to-target-vulnerable-gamblers>

## Articles in this section

Steps You Can Take If You  
Need a Break

Disabling Game  
Notifications

Steps You Can Take to Limit  
the Money You Spend

If You Need More Help

Self-Exclusion Policy

# Self-Exclusion Policy



Big Fish

Updated 8 days ago

Playing video games can be a fun part of a balanced life, but Big Fish Games recognizes that there can be too much of a good thing. We want to ensure we're providing you with a safe, enjoyable experience; that includes empowering you with the ability to permanently exclude yourself from our games. This Self-Exclusion Policy explains how you can implement this type of change, and how this change will impact your ability to access Big Fish Games games in the future.

Please read this policy carefully. If you have questions after reading this policy, please reach out to our Customer Support team for assistance.

Regardless of your reason -- for example, you may be struggling to exercise control over your gameplay, your gameplay may be having a negative effect on your life, or you simply no longer wish to have a Big Fish Games account -- you can contact our Customer Service team at any time to request that your account be banned. The Customer Service team will promptly action your request, no questions asked. Once implemented, your access to the app will be blocked.

Please note that all account bans are permanent, regardless of whether you proactively requested that your account be banned, or a ban was imposed on your account at the discretion of Big Fish Games. There are no exceptions to this permanent ban status.





[Big Fish Casino](#) > [Submit a request](#)

## Submit a request

Please choose your issue below

- Account Issue
- Purchase Issue
- Submit Feedback/Other
- Technical Issue
- Game Odds





## Let's go whaling: Tricks for monetising mobile game players with free-to-play





## How a 16-year-old gamer turned into a compulsive gambler

OTL sits down with Elijah Ballard as he opens up about how playing Counter-Strike: Global Offensive sent him down a dark road. JAY FRAM FOR ESPN

**Skin in the Game** - Counter-Strike has spawned a wild multibillion-dollar world of online casino gambling; it's barely regulated and open to any kid who wants in. ESPN.com 1/20/17

<http://www.espn.com/espnw/video/18516328/how-16-year-old-gamer-turned-compulsive-gambler>



# Thanks!

Any questions?

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