

The Video Game Addiction Questionnaire with Families Managing Media

Dr. Gentile administered a test to 1,300 kids to screen for video game addiction. Kids were asked to answer each question with either a "Yes," "No," or "Sometimes." Kids were considered to be pathological gamers if they responded with a "Yes" or "Sometimes" to at least 6 of these 11 questions. If your child answers "Yes" or "Sometimes" to any of the questions, he/she may be at risk for problematic gaming.

**Families Managing Media has included the "evidence" section below each survey question to help parents further evaluate the potential problems in their home.*

1. Overtime, have you been spending much more time thinking about playing video games, learning about video game playing, or planning the next opportunity to play?

Evidence that the above question is true may appear in the home as:

- Your child cannot list more than three activities he loves more than video games.
- Your child says he is bored when not playing video games.
- Your child begs you to play.
- Your child spends significant time researching and watching YouTube videos about his video game.
- Your child is preoccupied during the weekday with anticipation for the allotted "game time" permitted on the weekends.
- Your child does school projects about video games.

2. Do you need to spend more time and/or money on video games in order to feel the same amount of excitement as other activities in your life?

Evidence that the above question is true may appear in the home as:

- Your child needs to play video games every day.
- Your child sacrifices social activities with friends and family to play video games.
- Your child quits sports or other hobbies, replacing the time with more gaming.
- When gaming with friends at your home, your child keeps playing even after they leave.
- Your child games when non-gaming friends come to play and wants them to watch him play.
- Your child's best friends are gamers, and if they are teens they tend to game all through the night.
- Your child has diminishing passion for age appropriate childhood activities, replaces those times with gaming and is visibly excited about gaming.
- Your child asks mostly for video games and gaming or computer equipment as gifts.
- Your child wants gaming to be his reward for any positive contribution he makes to your home.

3. Have you tried to play video games for shorter durations of time but have been unsuccessful?

Evidence that the above question is true may appear in the home as:

- Your child gets less and less exercise and outside play, replacing the time with gaming.
- Attempts to cut back game time fail. There is conflict over gaming in your home.



4. Do you become restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop playing video games?

Evidence that the above question is true may appear in the home as:

- You are arguing with your spouse over your child's gaming and the conflict gaming is causing.
- Your child gets restless, mean or irritable towards you or others if he can't play.
- Your child gets depressed when gaming is not allowed.
- Your child exhibits gamer rage, angry outbursts, and violence when asked to stop playing games or when he loses in the game. He is not kind to others and has no initiative to help others.
- Gamer yells at or threatens siblings if they interfere with his game.
- Gamer protests his lack of play by sitting out of family activities and doing nothing, demonstrating that he would rather do nothing else if he can't play his game.
- Your child plays his game on family vacations and doesn't enjoy much else. He stays in the hotel room when others are out.

5. Have you played video games as a way of escaping from problems or bad feelings?

Evidence that the above question is true may appear in the home as:

- You have a gut feeling that your child is addicted to video games.
- Your child pleads for video game time as a way to escape from daily stress.
- Your child states video gaming is the "only thing he loves."
- Your child retreats to his bedroom to play when he has had a disappointment in life.
- Your child skips meals to play; eating candy and junk instead of coming to the table.
- When your child is hurt, you want to let him play so he will feel better.

6. Have you ever lied to family or friends about how much time you play video games?

Evidence that the above question is true may appear in the home as:

- Your child grossly underestimates the time spent playing video games.
- Your child lies about gaming sessions.
- Your child pretends to be ill to stay home from school and play video games.
- Your child claims to be doing homework but is really gaming instead.
- Your child closes or changes the screen when you walk into the room.
- Your child sneaks devices into bed at night.

7. Have you ever stolen a video game from a store or a friend, or have you ever stolen money to buy a video game?

Evidence that the above question is true may appear in the home as:

- Your child runs up your credit card bill with gaming items and video game purchases.
- Your child steals money to purchase virtual items in video games.
- Your child uses your passwords/credit cards for his gaming or steals money from your wallet.



8. Do you sometimes skip household chores in order to spend more time playing video games?

Evidence that the above question is true may appear in the home as:

- Your child's gaming affects his obedience towards you.
- Your child asks for "just one more level" before he does his chores or homework.
- Conflict is increasing around gamers responsibilities at home, and you are arguing more with your spouse.
- You are exhausted over arguing about his chores, and you have lowered the bar for his help around the house, cleaning his room, taking out the trash, etc. It is easier for mom to just do it in order to keep the peace.
- Your child lies about chores being done in the hopes that you won't notice.

9. Do you sometimes skip doing homework in order to spend more time playing video games?

Evidence that the above question is true may appear in the home as:

- Your child rushes through homework in order to play, and he does not read for pleasure.
- Your child rarely spends extra time studying or reading for pleasure..
- Your child is not prepared for school on Monday, claims he forgot about homework.
- Your child makes excuses about why his homework is not done and talks negatively about teachers and other authorities.

10. Have you ever done poorly on a school assignment or test because you spent too much time playing video games?

Evidence that the above question is true may appear in the home as:

- Your child plays at night, sacrificing sleep, while you are in bed.
- Your child is "very smart" but is under-achieving in academics, e.g. getting B's or C's when he is an 'A' student.
- You are confused over the difference between normal teen behavior and addicted gamer behavior.

11. Have you ever needed friends or family to give you extra money because you spent too much money on video game equipment, software, or game/Internet fees?

Evidence that the above question is true may appear in the home as:

- Your child is constantly asking for money as birthday and holiday gifts, only to spend it on video games and virtual items in the games. Games are on the top of his gift list.
- Your child only spends his money and allowances on video games and virtual items in the games.
- You find yourself driving him to get the newest game the day it comes out.



Common Mistakes Parents Make:

- Allowing child to start gaming before the age of twelve.
- Using gaming as a digital babysitter.
- Using gaming as a reward system for homework, grades, and chores.
- Letting child try to manage content and time spent gaming on his own.
- Believing child must or can learn to manage content/time spent when child has shown they cannot.
- Not playing the game with your child to understand the content.
- Not knowing how many hours are really being spent on the game.
- Putting the game system or computer in the child's room or in the basement (isolated access).
- Having a false security in the game rating systems or not following ratings.
- Tolerating gaming disobedience: "Just one more level mom!"
- Seeing gaming as a way for your child to be popular with friends.
- Allowing him to say no to outings with friends/family or quit activities so he can game more.
- Letting your kids always use gaming for down time activity.
- Believing that he will outgrow it once he goes to college.
- Using the game to overprotect and shelter your child, allowing gaming to keep your child under your close watch, safe in your home from the dirt, skinned knees, and social risks that are a natural part of growing into an independent young adult.
- Believing that the game obsession/over-use/addiction is your child's fault not yours.
- Allowing excessive gaming because "he's good at it," "the only thing he's good at," or because you feel he's struggling in life and you want to indulge him.
- Letting fear of tantrums, boredom, or arguing dictate how you set screen-time limits.
- Acquiring so many devices that child virtually always has access to electronics.
- Giving in because you feel helpless to fight against the screen culture.
- Assuming other parents won't agree to screen-free play dates without asking them.

