

VIDEO GAMES – WHAT DO



THEY LEAD TO?



There is constantly new forms of games and technology that enable young people to feed into their imagination and let their thoughts run wild, and half of the time, **video games are looked upon as cool sources of recreation and something fun to occupy children and young people.** We all had a phase of obsessing over a particular game when we were younger! From Mario Kart to Minecraft and all the games in between, there was definitely a video game created that suited every type of person. **The fact that video games were so accessible with Xbox, Playstation and even portable devices like the PSP and DS's, they were made seem like a great asset to technology and the developing world.**

However, there is definitely a downside to video games. Violence, misogyny, addiction. These are all things every parent wants their child to avoid, but unfortunately some of the games children are playing normalise this and thus lead to children believing there is no wrong in fighting, downgrading women or spending all hours of the day in front of a screen. **Let's delve in further to the laws around gaming, the age restrictions and the popular games that may be harming children in more ways than we think.**

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'VIDEO GAMES'?

Well firstly we have to understand what we are talking about here. **Video game is a blanket term used to describe virtually any game that can be played online or offline, it is any vision-based gaming activity.** So, this term is not just secluded to console games or the xbox, playstation etc. This can be anything from a game played from a website on a laptop or computer (e.g. Stardoll, Club Penguin, Fortnite), games played on portable devices such as Nintendo Switch and PSPs (e.g. Animal Crossing, The Sims) to games played on Xbox's and Playstations (e.g. Grand theft Auto, Legoland), so the term does cover a wide range of games!

If played excessively, **they can hinder social relationships, performance at school or work and impair the way you interact with reality.** Not only can it cause all of this to happen but it is also **widely associated with mental health, too much gaming and time spent in front of the screen can cause people to refrain from showering, eating and leaving the house which all links to depression and anxiety.**

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THE NEED FOR AGE RESTRICTIONS

Touching on the age restrictions that are set in some video games, it can be said that makers and creators of certain video games set an age restriction as some explicit content may be shown that is not suitable for young children. However, it was found that **one third of 8-year-old boys are viewing this content and have played video games where the age restriction is over 18s!** It is definitely very hard to regulate how this occurs, as more than likely parents probably think the content viewed through video games is harmless, however unfortunately this is not always the case.

Video games can show violence, causing children to become increasingly aggressive in reality and it can show misogynistic views, portraying women as objects which can be easy to mirror in the real world. Statistics show that boys play video games a total of three times more than girls, is this because of the way women are painted to be in some video games? Albeit, not all video games are like this, we are referring to the likes of Call of Duty, Grand Theft Auto and Manhunt.

The **age categories for video games are 3, 7, 12, 16 and 18.** This means that the content is suitable for that age and above only. Games with age restriction of 3 will not show violence of any kind. For 7, the violence will be not be detailed or a major part of the game. Age restriction of 12 will show unrealistic violent content. The 16 and 18 ratings will have more realistic graphic violence included that may make up a lot of the content shown.

Here are the age restrictions for some popular video games that we think you should know about:

Minecraft – 7+

Fortnite – rated T (for teen, children ages 13-17 are suited for this game)

Grand Theft Auto – rated M (for mature, content suited for 17 year olds+)

Call of Duty – 18+

Animal Crossing – 3

League of Legends – 12+

Manhunt – 18+

Mario Kart – 3

Fifa – 12+

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LOOT BOXES

But wait, there's more! Have you ever heard of loot boxes? **They are hidden treasures that are contained within some video games that can be bought with real money or virtual money earned through game playing.** It has been feared that these loot boxes mirror **gambling** too much and are affecting young people. There is little legislation on loot boxes and gaming in general within Ireland today. Any video game that is deemed unacceptable for viewing is banned in Ireland and as far as loot boxes go, **the government looked to the video gaming authorities to play into this concern** and come up with ideas to regulate it somehow. This was spoken about in 2020 and since then, little progress has been made.

GAMING LAWS

So, what are the laws around gaming in Ireland? Are there any at all? Well, there is definitely gaps in legislation when it comes to gaming. As you know, we are a democracy, so we believe in freedom in everything we provide and do in Ireland. So, all games that are visually acceptable are accessible here. This is not the case in every country!

Often, the **creators of the video game must include rules and regulations that are in line with the government,** for games that have a chat/messaging function, you must comply with the rules or risk being blocked from the game (to reduce bullying, verbal abuse etc.) And, as mentioned above, any game that is not acceptable for viewing will be banned from the country.

Majority of the laws around gaming in Ireland **apply to gambling and lottery functions, leaving the management of video games very much up to the creators of the game itself.** Remember to **read the terms and conditions of the games you buy and follow those regulations accordingly!**

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The gaming world is a whole other planet that a lot of us may not be on, but it is important to be aware of the risks that can appear if a child does engage in certain video games. We must remember that children are impressionable, and more often than not, mirror the actions they see. **Video games need more monitoring and regulation, children deserve to enjoy playing and gaming, they do not deserve to be exposed to violence or aggression.**



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