

s c r e e n **STRONG**

Gaming Overuse Checklist for Parents: Is your child in danger?

This list of questions for parents may help you uncover a gaming problem in your home. If you answer 'yes' to more than half of these, you may have an overuse problem on your hands.

Following this list is a more scientific Questionnaire for Video Game Addiction.

- Gaming is the most important hobby in my child's life. Yes or No? (Can you list three activities that your child loves more than video games? If not, gaming may be his most important or only hobby.)
- Does your child want to play every day?
- Does your child say he is bored unless he is gaming?
- Does your child get restless, mean or irritable to you or others if he can't play?
- Does your child sacrifice social activities with friends to play?
- Has your child/teen quit sports or other hobbies to get more game time?
- Does your child rush through (or lie about) homework in order to play?
- When gaming with friends, does your child keep playing even after friends go home?
- Does your child/teen have diminishing passion for age appropriate childhood activities?
- Does gaming affect your child's obedience to you?
- Does your child/teen often beg for one more level when you ask them to stop?
- Does your child/teen play on games after you are in bed at night?
- Does your child get at least one full hour of regular cardio exercise every day?
- Does your child/teen get visibly depressed if he isn't allowed to play?
- Do you argue with your spouse about your child's gaming/screen habits?
- Do you have gaming conflict in your home over limits and gaming related attitude problems?
- Do you have a feeling in your gut that your child/teen is addicted to video games?

How does your own child rate?

Dr. Gentile administered a scientific research test to 1300 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, your child may be at risk for problematic gaming. (How the question relates to the home added by ScreenStrong).

The Video Game Addiction Questionnaire (Gentile 2006)

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

The above question may appear in the home as:

- Your child cannot list three or more activities he loves more than video games.
- Your child says he is bored when not playing video games.
- Your child bargains with you and begs you to play.
- Your child wants to go play with friends who have video games and also 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. He thinks about it all the time.
- Your child does school projects about video game themes.
- Your child rushes through homework to play his games.
- Your child is not interested in getting his license or traditional dating.
- Your child seems to have no down time or very limited non-screen time.

- 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?**

The above question may appear in the home as:

- Your child needs to play 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 for teens, they game when they are together all through the night.
- Your child has diminishing passion for age appropriate childhood activities and is visibly more excited about gaming than other activities.
- Your child tries to convince you that he is going to be a game designer when he is older.
- Your child says he is learning computer code through his game.
- Your child asks mostly for video games and gaming or computer/phone 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 times but have been unsuccessful?**

The above question 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.
- Your child has no concept of the actual time he is playing—he always underestimates it.
- Your child talks about other friends who he claims play more than he does.

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

The above question may appear in the home as:

- Your child gets anxious, mean or aggressive to you or others if he can't play.
- Your child gets depressed when gaming is not allowed.
- You are arguing with your spouse over your child's gaming and the conflict gaming is causing.
- 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 takes no initiative to help others.
- Gamer yells at or threatens siblings if they interfere with his game.
- Siblings don't like gamer and may make negative comments about the gamer.
- 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; he can't enjoy much else. He stays in the hotel room gaming when others are out.

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

The above question may appear in the home as:

- Your child pleads for video game time as a way to escape from daily life conflict or stress between spouses.
- Your child states that video gaming is the "only thing he/she loves."
- Your child retreats to his bedroom to play when he has had a disappointment in life.
- When your child is hurt, you want to let him play so he will feel better.
- You have a gut feeling that your child is addicted to video games.

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

The above question may appear in the home as:

- Your child grossly underestimates the time spent playing video games.
- Your child lies about gaming sessions. He says he is reading articles when you know he is gaming instead.
- Your child pretends to be ill to stay home from school, replacing time with gaming.

- Your child claims to be doing homework on his computer but is really gaming instead.
- Your child closes or changes the screen when you walk into the room.
- Your child is getting overweight and/or eating poorly.
- Your child sleeps with his smart phone.

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?

The above question 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 (using debit or credit cards) to purchase virtual items in video games.
- Your child gets your passwords for credit cards and secretly uses them or steals money from your wallet.
- Your child does not ask you before he makes online gaming purchases.
- Your child denies online purchases or acts like he has no idea what he was doing.

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

The above question may appear in the home as:

- Your child's gaming affects his obedience to you.
- Your child asks for "just one more level" before he does his chores or homework. The game comes first - the chores may never get done or they are fast and sloppy.
- Conflict is increasing around gaming and you are arguing more with 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.
- You have actually done child's chores so spouse won't get mad; It is easier for you to do it to keep the peace at home.

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

The above question may appear in the home as:

- Your child rushes through homework in order to play.
- Your child does not like to read for pleasure; you can't remember the last novel he read for fun.
- Your child rarely spends extra time studying or reading about school subjects.
- Your child is not prepared for school on Monday.
- Your child makes excuses about why his homework is not done and talks negatively about teachers and other authority blaming others when homework is not complete.
- Your child's grades are OK or good, but you know he could do better.

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

The above question 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, 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?

The above question may appear in the home as:

- Your child spends birthday and holiday money mostly on video games, headphones and virtual items in the games. Game-related suggestions are on the top of his gift list.
- You find yourself driving him to get the newest game the day it comes out.
- You secretly want to buy him the latest games because you know it makes him happy.

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, chores.
- Letting child try to manage content and time spent on game on his own.
- 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 their room or 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 to 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 risks that are a natural part of growing into an independent young adult.
- Believing that the game obsession/overuse is your child's fault, not yours.