

Loot boxes and skins betting

What are they?

Loot boxes: a feature of online games where players pay to get unknown rewards, like items or modifications for their character. It's similar to gambling, because most of the time you don't know what you're going to get before you pay. One example is FIFA player packs, where you buy a 'pack' of players, but don't know who you're going to get when you make the purchase.

Skins betting: where people use 'skins' as betting currency ('skins' are extra items in online games that e.g. upgrade a weapon or character into a better one). You can earn real money if you win. People usually do this through specific websites that let you use skins to bet.

What's the problem?

- Some children say they end up chasing a win with loot boxes, like gamblers do
- Skins betting is a backdoor way for children to gamble underage
- Gambling can be addictive, like drugs or alcohol, with a severe impact on emotional health and wellbeing
- Teens have reported spending hundreds of pounds in a year on loot boxes, and losing skins worth thousands through gambling

Three steps you can take

1. Make sure your child knows the risks

Your child might not realise they could lose hundreds or thousands of pounds. They might not understand the risk of addiction or that, in general, it's illegal to gamble when you're under 18.

Explain that websites which guarantee wins or have offers that seem too good to be true are using these as a way to entice you in. Ultimately, behind these promotions is a business looking to make money.

Explain how loot boxes are also like gambling as you take a risk for the chance of a reward.

Tell them they should report skins gambling websites to the Gambling Commission:

<https://bit.ly/2JnBtm7>

2. Set limits on in-game spending to control how much your child can spend

This will also help you stop them from spending loads of money without realising it.

Please note: when following the instructions below, the exact steps you need to take may be a little different depending on the device and software version you're using.

On Xbox:

- Go into your family settings and choose a child account

- Select Privacy & online safety
- Xbox Live privacy
- View details & customise
- Buy & download
- Select 'On' in the 'Ask a parent' box.
- To learn more about how to set up a family account with 'child' profiles for your children, see this page: <https://bit.ly/2pnrPZI>

On Android devices:

- Open the Play Store and tap the 3-lines button in the top left
- Select Settings
- Tap require authentication for purchases
- Tap for all purchases through Google Play on this device

On Apple devices:

- Go into Settings
- Select Screen Time
- Tap Content and Privacy Restrictions (enter your passcode if asked)
- Select iTunes and App Store Purchases
- Choose a setting (for example, inapp purchases) and set to 'Don't allow'

On PlayStation:

- Go to Settings > Parental Controls/Family Management > Family Management
- Select the user you want to set a spending limit for
- Select 'Applications/Devices/Network Features' under the 'Parental Controls' section
- Select 'Monthly Spending Limit' and press X
- You'll need to set up accounts for family members, with adult and child accounts, and make sure you and other adults have family manager or parent/guardian status. Read more about how to do this here: <https://bit.ly/2Wk3Jer>

3. Know the signs of problematic activity

Look out for signs, like if your child:

- Is short of money or has unexplained sources of money
- Becomes secretive or starts lying
- Loses interest in school and other hobbies, as well as in their health and appearance
- Has mood swings if they're not able to access games or devices
- Speak to our school if you're concerned about your child, and seek support from organisations like BigDeal (<https://www.bigdeal.org.uk>) and the Gambling Commission.